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# MORE THAN TOIL

A 5 PART DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY FOLLOWING  
THE LIFE OF JOSEPH; UNPACKING THE LESIONS  
FOR EVERYDAY DISCIPLES IN BUSINESS  
LEADERSHIP

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## WEEK FIVE: Justice

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**Read:**

### **Genesis 47:13 – 31**

<sup>3</sup> There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine. <sup>14</sup> Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace. <sup>15</sup> When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is all gone."

<sup>16</sup> "Then bring your livestock," said Joseph. "I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone." <sup>17</sup> So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

<sup>18</sup> When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. <sup>19</sup> Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate."

<sup>20</sup> So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, <sup>21</sup> and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other. <sup>22</sup> However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. <sup>24</sup> But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children."

<sup>25</sup> "You have saved our lives," they said. "May we find favour in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh."

<sup>26</sup> So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt—still in force today—that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's.

<sup>27</sup> Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.

<sup>28</sup> Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. <sup>29</sup> When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favour in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried."

"I will do as you say," he said.

<sup>31</sup> "Swear to me," he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

**Amos 2:6 – 16**

- <sup>6</sup> This is what the LORD says:  
“For three sins of Israel,  
even for four, I will not relent.  
They sell the innocent for silver,  
and the needy for a pair of sandals.
- <sup>7</sup> They trample on the heads of the poor  
as on the dust of the ground  
and deny justice to the oppressed.  
Father and son use the same girl  
and so profane my holy name.
- <sup>8</sup> They lie down beside every altar  
on garments taken in pledge.  
In the house of their god  
they drink wine taken as fines.
- <sup>9</sup> “Yet I destroyed the Amorites before them,  
though they were tall as the cedars  
and strong as the oaks.  
I destroyed their fruit above  
and their roots below.
- <sup>10</sup> I brought you up out of Egypt  
and led you forty years in the wilderness  
to give you the land of the Amorites.
- <sup>11</sup> “I also raised up prophets from among your children  
and Nazirites from among your youths.  
Is this not true, people of Israel?”  
declares the LORD.
- <sup>12</sup> “But you made the Nazirites drink wine  
and commanded the prophets not to prophesy.
- <sup>13</sup> “Now then, I will crush you  
as a cart crushes when loaded with grain.
- <sup>14</sup> The swift will not escape,  
the strong will not muster their strength,  
and the warrior will not save his life.
- <sup>15</sup> The archer will not stand his ground,  
the fleet-footed soldier will not get away,  
and the horseman will not save his life.
- <sup>16</sup> Even the bravest warriors  
will flee naked on that day,”  
declares the LORD.

**Read More:**

Genesis 47 - 50

**Reflect:**

Amos has a lot to say about oppression and the plight of the poor in Israel. Nowhere in the whole book of Amos does God ever suggest that poverty is in some way the fault of the poor. Rather it is difficult not to assume from the book of Amos that God looks sternly on those in positions of power who use their position to take advantage of and fail to care for the poor.

What is clearly seen from Amos is that God does expect a certain type of behaviour from one to another, and he will not tolerate injustice. Note that he treats both Israel and other nations similarly in this regard (1:11; 2:1; 2:6). Justice is universally applicable and desired by God for all.

It is clear that those spoken about in Amos were ruthless and self-centred, motivated by what they could gain for themselves no matter the cost to others. We've seen from the previous reflection on Galatians 5:13 – 26 that such selfish ambition is not part of Christ-centred discipleship. We ought to be challenged then when we read Genesis 47:13 onwards, because we are faced with an account of Joseph who appears to take advantage of a global crisis by rather than making his stockpiles available free of charge he accepts money, possessions, livestock, land and eventually the people themselves as slaves in payment for his stockpiled food. If anything, this behaviour appears like a ruthless capitalist willing to maximise his return irrespective of the cost to others.

However, note verse 25; as a result of Joseph's actions in time of crisis, what first seems like oppression leads to a situation that the Israelites, who were on the brink of death, stated "you have saved our lives". We then go on to read that "the Israelites settle in Egypt, in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased in number."

Joseph's God-centred leadership and business mindedness enabled the nation not only to survive but thrive. God calls us to be co-creators with him in his world and this includes the creation and Godly leadership of our organisations. With bold and prophetic vision, you can achieve great things that may just transform whole nations.

**Pray:**

The Lord has equipped you to be his hands and his feet in the world, using what you have in your business and workplace to co-create a world in which justice reigns. Never underestimate what you can achieve when you are in line with God's purpose and plan.

We have seen from the life of Joseph that leadership is far from easy; and business, commerce and governance is full with risk. However, his life also shows that God's plan for his creation and people is made manifest by the hands of faithful disciples committed to honouring him in the work they do.

Pray that today you might take the next step in your leadership journey and that God will guide you towards the opportunities in your work to be agents of transformation and signposts to Christ.