

## SEVEN ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN JOSEPH'S LIFE

- *There are seven essential relationships that each believer needs to develop with God to live a fruitful and victorious life. Each relationship requires us to pass a specific test. Once we pass the test we are able to move on to the next essential relationship.*
- *During our lives we will revisit these relationships numerous times to deepen and grow in them until they become an integral part of our spiritual lives.*

*We will explore these seven relationships using the analogy of how an ancient Israelite potter progressed through seven steps to produce a clay vessel. We will also study the life of Joseph and observe how these seven essential relationships were developed in his life. Joseph is the most perfect Old Testament prophetic picture of Jesus Christ.*

### 1<sup>ST</sup> ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP—RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S WORD

- *The test that relates to this relationship is the Obedience Test.*
- *The very first step an ancient Israelite potter took was to dig clay from the earth and wash it in a series of basins to remove dirt and impurities that clung to it.*
- *Our first relationship is with the Word of God. We heard the Gospel Message and we responded to the Gospel by obeying it and turning to Christ in repentance and putting our faith in Him which resulted in our being born again. From that moment we became a new creation in Christ. While we still live in the world we are no longer part of the world. "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." (John 17:14).*
- *There are three aspects of being washing in the Word of God, each reflecting a step of obedience:*
- *The first washing in the Word is the washing of regeneration when we responded in obedience to the Gospel and were born again. "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5).*
- *The second washing represents another step of obedience to God's Word as we take water baptism in response to Christ's command to become disciples. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19).*

- *The third washing represents the daily washing as we wash our hearts and minds in the water of God's Word daily as we read, meditate, and above all apply the Word of God to our lives. "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." (Ephesians 5:26).*
- *Joseph developed a relationship with the Word of God as God spoke to him in two dreams which revealed God's purpose for his life. Joseph valued and pondered these revelations that God gave him. These revelations provided Joseph with hope for the future when he had to pass through times of trials and disappointments. God's promises for Joseph's life provided an anchor he could hold on to until he saw them fulfilled. Like Joseph, we too can cling to God's promises to see them fulfilled.*

**Genesis 37:5-7 (NKJV)**

**5** Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more.

**6** So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:

**7** There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."

**Genesis 37:9-11 (NKJV)**

**9** Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

**10** So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

**11** And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

- *Early in Joseph's life he had developed an obedient heart as seen in his response when Jacob, his father, asked Joseph to go on an errand—he immediately obeyed. "And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am." (Genesis 37:13). Joseph passed the Obedience Test.*
- *Joseph developed the first basic relationship by instantly obeying.*

## **2<sup>ND</sup> ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP—RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD**

- *The test that relates to this relationship is the Separation Test.*
- *After the clay was washed it was too wet to be worked and it needed time to dry. The clay was placed on the side of a hill where the sun and wind evaporated excess moisture.*

- *As we begin to read and study God's Word we need to learn to apply the truths of Scripture to our lives. It is our interaction with the world and day to day living that changes God's Word from something theoretical to something we experience and put into practice.*
- *There are two aspects to our relationship with the world:*
- *Christians are called to be witnesses to the world. We are to act as salt and light to a dying world with the salvation that is found only in Jesus Christ. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16).*
- *Our relationship with the world is one of tribulation and trials that help purify and refine us and make the Word of God both real and precious as it instructs and comforts us. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).*
- *Christ overcame the world and therefore Christ in us can overcome the world. Obedience is not based on our ability to obey, but our willingness to be obedient. In our relationship with the world we have the opportunity for our willingness to be manifest in a real way.*
- *The Separation Test is where we are in the world but where we do not allow the world to bring compromise or defilement into our lives. "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one." (John 17:15).*
- *In Joseph's life we see how he passed the separation test in relationship to the world.*
- *Because of the dreams the Lord had given Joseph, his brothers hated him. "Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"" (Genesis 37:18-20). God's hand was on Joseph's life, and instead of his brothers killing him they sold him into slavery.*
- *Joseph's brothers tried to cover up their betrayal of Joseph to their father, Jacob, by dipping Joseph's coat in the blood of a goat to make it appear he had been killed by a wild animal. "So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. Then they sent the tunic of many*

colors, and they brought it to their father and said, “We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son’s tunic or not?” And he recognized it and said, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.”” (*Genesis 37:31-33*).

- *When we identify with Jesus we will be hated by the world. “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.” (*Matthew 24:9*).*

### 3<sup>RD</sup> ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP—RELATIONSHIP WITH AUTHORITY

- *The test that relates to this relationship is the Submission Test.*
- *The potter takes the clay and begins to step on it to produce a consistency that can be easily molded and shaped. Initially, some portions of the clay will be too soft and other portions too hard. As the potter works the clay with his feet the texture becomes consistent and malleable. Without the pressure of the potter’s feet the clay could never be shaped into a vessel.*
- *The potter’s feet represent being placed under authority of the master potter. “I have raised up one from the north, And he shall come; From the rising of the sun he shall call on My name; And he shall come against princes as though mortar, As the potter treads clay.” (*Isaiah 41:25*).*
- *The Relationship between obedience and disobedience; submission and rebellion:*
- *Obedience requires a lesser level of maturity. Submission reflects a deeper work having been done in a person’s heart.*
- *Obedience is an outward action while submission is an inward attitude.*
- *We can be obedient but still rebellious or we can be disobedient and submissive. The difference is one of attitude.*
- *In Joseph’s life we see his relationship with authority and how he passed the submission test.*
- *There can be three aspects to our relationship with authority. Each aspect tests the level of submission in our hearts.*
- *We can submit to those in authority when they act favourably toward us. “The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found*

favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority.” (Genesis 39:2-4).

- *With the right heart attitude we submit to those in authority—not for our benefit, but out of a desire to honour, bless, and benefit those whom God has placed in authority over us. “And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”” (Genesis 39:7-9).*
- *We can submit to those in authority even then they treat us unjustly and unrighteously. “So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, “Your servant did to me after this manner,” that his anger was aroused. Then Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.” (Genesis 39:19-20).*

#### **4<sup>TH</sup> ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP—RELATIONSHIP TO GOD’S PERSONAL DEALINGS**

- *The test that relates to this relationship is the Preparation Test.*
- *The potter cuts through the clay with a wire that is tightly drawn. This opens the clay and exposes any air bubbles. Then he pounds the clay with a wooden mallet to bring the clay together. This process is repeated until no air bubbles remain. Unless the air bubbles are removed, the vessel will explode when heated in the kiln.*
- *Air bubbles can symbolize pride that is hidden in our hearts which can puff us up when God begins to use us. When the air bubbles burst it can symbolize discouragement. We can easily become discouraged when our own proud plans are squashed.*
- *In God’s Personal Dealings the Lord engineers circumstances which expose the hidden motives of our hearts. Any pride or selfish motivations are exposed and must be removed before they harm or destroy us.*
- *As we submit to God’s Personal Dealings and allow the hidden flaws in our hearts to be exposed and dealt with, we will pass the Preparation Test. We must not avoid this process no matter how uncomfortable, unpleasant, or painful it may be at the time. We need to remember that “no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the*

peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”  
(Hebrews 12:11).

- *In Joseph’s life we see his relationship with God’s Personal Dealings and how he passed the Preparation Test.*
- *Joseph was thrown into prison for what could have been a life sentence only because he had been faithful to his master and refused Potiphar’s wife’s adulterous advances. This injustice could have caused resentment, bitterness, and anger to have sprung up in his heart, toward Potiphar and his wife, toward his brothers who sold him into slavery, and perhaps even toward God for allowing it. “Then Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.” (Genesis 39:20).*
- *Joseph would have faced many inner struggles while in prison. However, God was with him extending His tender mercies as he had to face matters of the heart that needed to be dealt with so Joseph could be purified and become the vessel of glory God had called him to be. “But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” (Genesis 39:21).*
- *Psalms 105 beautifully summarizes Joseph’s experience in prison as he learned to submit to God’s Personal Dealings and pass the Preparation Test. “He sent a man before them—Joseph—who was sold as a slave. They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the Lord tested him. The king sent and released him, The ruler of the people let him go free.” (Vs 17-20). The Word of the Lord tested and refined Joseph’s heart.*
- *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12). The Word is what cuts us open to expose what is in our hearts. Unless we allow the Word to expose our faults we may blame others and cover up our issues, stunting our spiritual growth.*

## 5<sup>TH</sup> ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP—RELATIONSHIP TO GOD’S PLAN

- *The test that relates to this relationship is the Possessive Test.*
- *Four steps have been completed and the clay has yet to be formed into anything. However, these four steps are essential in preparing the clay to be shaped. God is not in a rush to move forward with His plans until the preparation work has been properly completed. God desires the work that He wants to do in and*

*through us to produce eternal fruitfulness and not to be transient and temporary.*

- *The potter takes the clay and with great skill throws it into the center of the potter's wheel. If the clay does not land in the very center of the wheel it cannot be molded. Similarly, if we are not Christ centred we cannot be shaped properly.*
- *Then the potter places his hands around the spinning vessel and puts his thumbs down to hollow out the vessel and raise up the sides. We have to give a thumbs down to our own will so we can be shaped by the master potter. We need to be emptied of ourselves so we can be filled with His presence.*
- *The potter frequently applies water to his hands to prevent friction. This is a picture of grace. Those who preach the Gospel must minister with grace or friction will result and things will get pretty hot.*
- *The Possessive Test is the one that relates to God's Plan. We need to remember it is God's plan and not ours. Ministries often fail because those in ministry forget that it is not their church or their ministry—it is God's church, it is God's ministry, and it is God's plan. God decides what type of vessel He is going to shape us into and how He is going to use us. The clay is not to complain about how it is being shaped, and we are not to compare ourselves with others. Comparing ourselves with others brings only jealousy, resentment, and discouragement.*
- *In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul encouraged two sisters in Christ to work together in the ministry, "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord." (Philippians 4:2). The name Eudia means "prosperous journey" and the name Syntyche comes from a root word meaning "to meet with" implying befalling difficulties. Although their walks with God were different they were cautioned not to judge or envy one another but accept the unique way that God had shaped them, the specific gifts He had given them, and the special ways in which He was using them.*
- *We can see Joseph's relationship with God's Plan and how he passed the Possessive Test.*
- *God blessed and prospered Joseph even in prison and gave him favour with the chief jailor so he was in charge of all the rations and supplies for the prisoners. "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper." (Genesis 39:22-23).*

- *Although God gave Joseph authority over all the food, clothing, and supplies for all the prisoners, Joseph himself possessed nothing. The supplies were given into his hands not for his own benefit but for those to whom he ministered. Joseph passed the possessive test by failing to covet anything.*
- *When God gives us a ministry it is not to meet our need but to meet the needs of those we are to serve. True leadership serves by equipping others to fulfil their potential.*

## **6<sup>TH</sup> ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP—RELATIONSHIP TO GOD HIMSELF**

- *The test that relates to this relationship is the Priority Test.*
- *The priority test is broken into three parts relating to each part of the Triune Nature of God.*

### **A) RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER: THE REST TEST**

- *After the clay vessel was formed it was placed on a shelf to dry until it was leather hard. If it was handled before it dried it would be susceptible to damage. This stage of development is referred to as “green ware.” We may think because we have the form of a vessel, we are ready for ministry, but we may still remain “green.”*
- *Our relationship with the Father must be our first priority above ministry or anything else. It is here we develop a deep intimacy in the presence of the Father. We need to be God-aholics and not workaholics. Our priority is to be in intimate relationship with the Father.*

### **B) RELATIONSHIP TO THE SON: THE FAITHFULNESS TO THE VISION TEST**

- *After being leather dried the vessel is placed on the potter’s wheel upside down. At this time in our lives everything seems upside down and things may not make sense. This is the time when we must keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus and remain faithful to the vision. If we keep our focus on Jesus even when everything seems upside down we will be able to have peace in our hearts by resting in Him.*
- *The potter inscribed his name on the bottom of the pot while it was upside down, signifying it was his work. It is during this time that Christ makes His imprint on us. We cannot focus on any one or any thing besides Christ without becoming confused or discouraged.*



- *The vessel is then spun and any small indentations or bulges are filled in or removed. Our priority is to be perfectly shaped into the image of Christ so “that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:27). Our priority is to be Christ centred and to become just like Jesus.*

### C) RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT: *THE GRACE TEST*

- *The potter decorated the vessel by applying powder that penetrated the vessel’s surface, so it became part of the vessel. The pigment looked dull when first applied but after firing the colours became brilliant. This is in contrast to Egyptian pots which were decorated with a superficial glaze. “Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.” (1 Peter 3:3-4, NIV). God doesn’t want superficial beauty, but true inner beauty.*
- *The decoration applied to the vessel can represent the gifts of the Holy Spirit that enhance our lives and His Church. When Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for His son Isaac, he adorned her with jewellery. Similarly, the Holy Spirit wants to adorn Christ’s Bride with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*
- *Then the vessel is placed in the kiln for an initial firing to set the powdered decoration. This portrays being baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire.*
- *When the vessel is taken from the kiln it is burnished with broken pieces of pottery that polish the vessel, and intensify its colours to reveal its beauty. God uses the brokenness in others to rub us to bring out His beauty and to really perfect us.*
- *God uses the brokenness in others to perfect us as we interact with love, patience, and forgiveness. Although we sometimes think people rub us the wrong way, God is using the sharpness in others to correct our faults. God’s sandpaper brings forth the beauty of Jesus if we submit to the Holy Spirit and put Him first in our lives.*
- *In Joseph’s life we can see his relationship with God and how he passed the priority test while he was still in prison.*

#### Genesis 40:1

**1** It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.

**2** And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker.

- *During his time in prison God worked in three essential relationships in Joseph's life: God's Personal Dealings, God's Plan, and now Joseph's Relationship to God Himself.*
- *Sometimes when we feel we are hemmed in and restricted and life is going nowhere is when God is doing the most in our hearts and our lives to prepare us for His ultimate plan for us. We all enjoy mountain top experiences, but we grow most in the valley where the soil is rich and moist.*
- *God was preparing to speak to Joseph prophetically about his own life by using two men—the chief butler and the chief baker. One would represent the spirit and the other the flesh and revealed the battle Joseph had to overcome so his priorities would be in line with God's.*
- *In prison Joseph had to learn to wait and rest in God—the Rest Test.*
- *When the butler came it looked like this was God's way of freeing Joseph, but the butler forgot all about Joseph. It appeared as if everything was going backwards, but Joseph remained faithful to the vision (the dreams) God had given him. Joseph passed the faithfulness to the Vision Test.*
- *During this time Joseph's relationship with the Holy Spirit had to grow for there would be a time coming soon when he would stand before Pharaoh and he would need to be confident to give him the Word of the Lord as revealed and led by the Holy Spirit.*

## 7<sup>TH</sup> ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIP – RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S GLORY

- *The test that relates to this relationship is the Faith Test.*
- *This is where the vessel is fired and through the flames of trial the finished product of all the labours, skills, and creativity of the master potter is seen. The fire will prove the quality of the work. If it passes the test, it will be used for honourable use. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you." (Isaiah 43:2).*
- *If we pass through the fires faithfully we will become a vessel of honour prepared for the Master's use and for His glory. "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter (dishonour), he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." (2 Timothy 2:21).*
- *In the final step, Joseph was brought before Pharaoh and the quality of the work that God has done in his life would be tested and revealed as he related to God's glory and the Faith Test. "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and*

they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.” (*Genesis 41:14*).

- *Joseph was faced with an imposing challenge. Pharaoh had two dreams which no one in his kingdom was able to interpret. “And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.”” (*Genesis 41:15*).*

**A) THE GLORY OF HIS NAME: *CREATIVE FAITH TEST* – error of vision**

- *Joseph must confront the first aspect of the Faith Test—the Creative Faith Test. Would he be able to interpret Pharaoh’s dream? Joseph first confessed that he did not have the answer within himself but without a moment of hesitation, and before he even heard the dream, he confidently confessed that God would provide Pharaoh with the answer. “So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” (*Genesis 41:15*). Joseph passed the faith test because it was all about God and not all about Joseph as it would have been years ago.*

**B) THE GLORY OF HIS WORD: *DOCTRINAL FAITH TEST* – error of doctrine**

**Genesis 41:33-36**

**33 “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.**

**34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years.**

**35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.**

**36 Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”**

- *Joseph also passed the Doctrinal Faith Test because he provided the correct interpretation to Pharaoh’s dreams along with the correct application through a word of knowledge and a word of wisdom.*

**C) THE GLORY OF HIS LIFE: *THE PERSEVERING FAITH TEST* – error of lifestyle**

**Genesis 41:33-41**

**37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.**

**38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”**

**39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.**

**40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”**

**41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”**

- *The glory of God was seen because Joseph’s godly character was evident to all. They all agreed “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”*

**D) THE GLORY OF HIS PRESENCE: *THE GOD CONSCIOUS FAITH TEST* - error of attitude**

**Genesis 41:42-46**

**42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.**

**43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, “Bow the knee!” So he set him over all the land of Egypt.**

**44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”**

**45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.**

**46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.**

- *Joseph was named Zaphnath-paaneah, which means “treasury of the glorious rest.” “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Psalm 16:11).*
- *There was no arrogance in Joseph. He was fully confident to fulfill all that God had called him to do because he had God-conscious faith and He knew that God was with him.*
- *Only when Joseph became the person God created him to be, was he fully able to perform what God called him to do. Godly character is essential to a fruitful ministry, one that brings glory to God. The seven essential relationships that Joseph developed with God enabled Joseph to rule with Pharaoh and become the saviour of Israel to preserve the Messianic lineage.*
- *Whatever God’s calling on our lives, we too will need to establish these seven essential relationships with God.*