

Celebrating Gods work through us

Pastor Brian Coles

12.30.18

If you could turn to Genesis chapter 37 we will end up there in just a few moments.

Today we are going to take a look back, this is a rearview mirror. I've always thought that the relative size of a windshield and a rearview window were appropriate. Being able to see what is behind you is important and can be really important at certain times.

However, seeing what is in front of you is almost always important that's why the windshield is gigantic compared to the rearview mirror. It would be odd if the sizes were reversed.

Some of us live life that way, always looking back and never looking ahead. We have an addiction to the good old days, and how things used to be. We long for times that are now gone, and we live in our present clinging to memories that are slowly fading, all the while missing the blessing and opportunities that rest directly in front of us. Right there in arms reach if we would simply take our eye off the past.

Others of us never look back, looking to the future as a perpetual escape from our past and present circumstances. Desperately wishing away the right now. Reaching and striving living in a constant state of forward motion wishing, hoping, dreaming about that one day when you finally arrive. All the while missing the beauty and the richness and the lessons of the past. Unaware that the blessing and purpose of God for your life was on the park bench you just passed. You know that park bench? You were probably driving too fast to notice. Of course the park bench is just a metaphor the things you're driving too fast to notice are opportunities, people, and God.

So, I'm calling for a truce, calling for balance, next week we will be in a new year and we will stare out the gigantic windshield of 2019 with all its possibilities and all of its potential.

But for today let's peek at this past year. 2018

We as a church had a theme this year. We have been

"Celebrating Gods working through us"

Each week we have had an honoree; someone in our church family that has been the hands and feet of Jesus in our church, in our community, in some cases around the U.S. and in other countries around the world.

It's been so much fun to hear the different things God has been doing, using each of us in our own way to build the kingdom of God and the be the Light to the world.

If you don't mind, I'd like to make it a little more personal today as you look in the rearview mirror I hope you are able to see how God has been working through you. Throughout my message I hope to share some of the stories of this past year, and we as a church will rejoice in the wins. But my hope is that you will recognize some of these as I say them because you were there. God was using you.

Updates: We had some transitions in our staffing. We are pleased to celebrate the addition of Crystal Martin (Worship Ministry) and Andrea Kaufman (Children's Ministry) and Shane Yoder (Media Producer.)

Celebrate Recovery – recovery/healing – 3 churches working together (that's a win) –
Ministering to 50+ people weekly

Pure Desire Ministry – Men & Women – over 50+ are in the healing process or completed the program in 2018

Marriage LIVE - fall study about 20 Couples
Cleansing Stream – May 2018 – great success
Counseling – 5 counselors ministering many days a week

Staff & Admin Team who support all the happenings at Petra.

Petra Fall Fest – Local Outreach

Field Ministries – ministry to Plain Community; several are involved in training, educating, and praying on a regular basis.

Student Ministries

We sent 75 students from Student Ministries on missions this year.

We rallied together 470 students to be empowered to go teach the lost in their sphere of influence. We gave Christmas gifts to each student at Christ's Home.

We raised \$3,000 dollars for an orphanage this Christmas.

We smashed our Petra Bible Quizzing participation from 8 teams last year, which tied the record for the most teams we have ever had. This year we have 11 teams.

Women's Ministry

We started to launch a new mentoring small group for women and quickly realized there was a lot of interest – amazingly instead of one group, it turned into five groups with approximately

eight women in each group – studying the Word, hearing from the Lord, and having fun together!

Petra Men

Men of Iron STRONG27 (2017/2018) - all 12 of the proteges graduated this past April. That is 100% graduation! The typical graduation is about 80%. We then began the new STRONG27 (2018/2019) season with 21 proteges. Almost double the men wanting to grow in their relationship with God, in accountability, in leadership, and in balance. Right now, we are in the middle of registration for the (2019/2020) season.

Conquer Series- We continue to see more and more men and families being healed through the Conquer Series and Pure Desire ministries. We have reached more than 500 men since 2014 here at Petra and in the community.

Men's Fraternity/33 Series continues to impact men through helping them understand how they were designed by God, understanding their Story, giving them a battle plan to avoid the Traps of life, activating their call in their Work, bringing clarity and strength in their Marriage, and strengthening and affirming their call as Fathers.

Children

1. VBS – record number of kiddos (over 300 each night) raised \$4,000 for Zoe Children's Home in Thailand
2. Fiesta Meal – Appreciated our volunteers. (230)
3. After over 10 years we launched a new curriculum called *Dig In* that has received tons of great feedback. The kids are getting into their Bibles and discussing what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. They are asking questions and applying the principles to daily life. Sometimes they spend so much time discussing they don't get to the activities!
4. Early Childhood – Learning to pray out loud and acting out stories.
5. Elementary – Learning how to read a passage in the bible and how to apply it.
6. OCC – Ministry happened, not just about numbers. But the numbers are....728 shoeboxes. 4,172 shoeboxes total. Collected \$1,351.00 Kingdom Bucks at the Treasure Chest store.

The Tech Team

Got some new toys, with our new screens.

It touches every ministry at Petra. Although you may not notice the work of this team, unless something goes wrong, they work many extra hours to ensure the message of God is clearly seen and heard without distraction.

This year our off campus, Online congregation has grown. On average, there are 170 devices around the world watching us online each week. We receive notes from people who are shut in, recovering from illness or surgery, on vacation, or who have simply found us online and are faithful viewers and they consider us their church.

Pastor Brian Flewelling our community life pastor.

BELONG 2018

- 177 participants go through BELONG in 12 months
- 83 became Church members
- I.e. helped some find their niche in the community through opportunities to cook, work with children, mentor, driving bus, carpentry, or teaching.

SMALL GROUP

Several times our CONNECTIONS teams have asked if we could help a new couple find a small group community only to find out that they had been invited into a community by people in a group already.

GENERAL

This was an email testimony from a church member:

“...THANK YOU. I come to church each Sunday many times feeling burdened by health, financial, and relationship issues and I am reminded that God is greater than anything I am experiencing. I come burdened and leave refreshed ready to start a new week, with the reassurance of God's love. What a wonderful gift.”

- Another of our Petra members graduated from the police academy
- We sent another family into full-time missions in Thailand
- We sent out one of our pastors to be lead pastor in a Hopewell Network church

Let's thank God together for his faithfulness.

As we look back this year I thought it would be fun to look at someone else's rearview mirror. I would love to look what Joseph saw when he looked back.

Some of you would be aware that the Patriarchs of our faith are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob had a son named Joseph and Joseph eventually brought the family down to Egypt. After Joseph's death the people of God were made slaves to the Egyptians which later gave rise to Moses and the exodus.

Genesis 37

3 Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. 4 But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

Joseph has two dreams, the first dream places him over his brothers

His second dream places him over his brothers and his parents

These dreams would later come true, but he didn't know that at the time, and neither did his family.

Did you have any awkward family moments this year?

Jacob sent Joseph to go find his brother...and he wore the coat. Maybe a lapse in judgment. His brother made a plan to kill him.

26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime. 27 Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed. 28 So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

First point of the morning.

Did you get to do any traveling this year?

1. God will use difficult circumstances to position you for future blessing.

- favor with his father and a gift from his father
- dream
- sold into slavery
- Dreams that are unrealized
- Enemies come against you
- Life take a turn
- I can't wait for this year to be over
- Hundreds of years of Israelite history resulted of this decision.

And we see for the first time this principle at play.

God's Favor at work, Joseph's gift at work

2 The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. 3 Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. 4 This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. 5 From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. 6 So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over

everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

God's favor at work, Joseph's gift at work

- just because things did not go to plan does not mean it's time to shut down, Joseph got to work.
- Bloom where you are planted.

Proverbs 18:16 (ESV)

16 A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before the great.

God will use difficult circumstances to position you for future blessing.

Joseph's success gained the attention of the people around him. Some were for him and some against. It was long until Potiphar's wife noticed Joseph and wanted to know if they could hang out more.

How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

2. Joseph's faithfulness to God in the face of temptation.

- Did you have any moments of temptation this year?
- Temptation that is designed to railroad the purpose and destiny of your life. Have you labeled it what it is?
- Hopefully 2018 was a year of growth for you. If not, I encourage you to make a real plan for 2019
- Every victory in the faith is multiplied, every dollar is a vote, every click is a declaration.

19 Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her.

20 So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained.

Joseph is falsely accused.

21 But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. 22 Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. 23 The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

God's favor at work, Joseph's gift at work.

(Interpret dreams)

14 Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. 15 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it."

16 "It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."

37 Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. 38 So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. 40 You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

God's favor at work, Joseph's gift at work.

3. God has called us to reconciliation.

3 "I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. 4 "Please, come closer," he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. 5 But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. 6 This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. 7 God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. 8 So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

Please come closer.

4 "Please, come closer," he said to them. So they came closer.

- Did you use this year to bring people closer to you?
- I had to practice what I preach

I don't know what this year is going to look like. But I will trust...

- God will use difficult circumstances to position you for future blessing.
- Joseph's faithfulness to God in the face of temptation.
- God has called us to reconciliation.
- God's favor at work, Joseph's gift at work.

Stand for prayer of blessing.

Psalm 91

1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

3 Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

5 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

8 You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. 9 If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, 10 no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

11 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; 12 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. 13 You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

14 "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

15 He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.

16 With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."