Thrive Without Compromise — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 46:31–47:31 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, November 10, 2024 · *Living The Dream*

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If you have your Bible in Genesis chapter 46, the tail end is where we're going to be this morning, and we're going to finish up chapter 47 as we get ever so close to the end of Genesis and this great chapter, or this great book, I'm sorry, this great book of the Bible and the many series that it has produced for us over the last couple of years. And as you're turning there, I mentioned in the welcome the election. I know it's on a lot of people's minds and I don't like to mention it in partisan terms.

I try to not put my cards on the table of where my politics actually lie, but in any kind of election there's winners and losers. And the thing that really struck me after election night and I woke up the next day, the stock market made my retirement account happy. But besides that, a lot of the stuff in my life hadn't really changed. I mean, I just kind of had to still go brush my teeth, I had to make my bed, I do all the things that I normally do on a daily basis.

There was a sense in which I was a little more optimistic maybe than usual. But at the end of the day it's just like, you know, somebody got elected and everything leading up to that moment felt like if it doesn't go a particular kind of way or if it does this happens or that happens, the rhetoric was, well this might be the end of our country, this might be the last election we ever have. There's all kinds of like really intense rhetoric. And at the end it was just kind of anticlimactic.

It's like, well, you know, the world's still spinning, you know. And I know that I think some of that comes from a Christian conviction that it doesn't matter who's in office, whether it's a person you want or don't want that at the end of the day, even if every policy you wanted was enacted and you could rule the government exactly like you wanted to rule it, even under

your best wisdom, the world would still be kind of crummy, right? Because we're sinful people, we don't have all the wisdom we need to have.

And it's just complicated, you know, politics is really complicated because it's the art of dealing with people and people are complicated and messy and sinful. So even at the very best, I think a Christian would be tempered in their hope. And especially at the very worst, a Christian ought to be able to say even if the world burns and this doesn't go according to the way I envision it or planned it, my hope is not in this world. I should love the world, I should seek the welfare of the world.

I think it's good and important that Christians participate and vote in all of those things, but not hopelessly, so when things don't go according to your plan that you get despondent because again this world is not our home. And the reason I mention that is it's related to where we're at in the book of Genesis in chapter 47 where Joseph and his father and his brothers, they kind of relocate into Egypt. Egypt was not their forever home. It wasn't the promised land that God had given to them. But God had brought them there to that season for a particular purpose, and they lived their lives as sojourners.

The word sojourners just means someone who is temporarily staying in a particular place. And that's how the Bible refers to God's people. God's people are referred to as sojourners in this world. We don't use the language very often. Some people say we're aliens. I don't love that language either because none of you look like green Martians or anything like that. It just means you don't necessarily belong here and that's how God's people interact with the world. We are like, what do they call the Harfoots in Lord of the Rings?

Not Lord of the Rings, it's the new one on Amazon Prime. What's the name of that show? Rings of Power. You're like the Harfoots on the Rings of Power, you're the whatever Bilbo was. Hobbits, yeah. Always, always wandering. That's how Christians ought to live their life. So the way Jesus would put it is we're in the world but not of the world. John 17, you're not of the world, but I've sent you into the world for a reason. The reason that Jesus has sent us into the world is not so that we would shun it or hate it or be afraid of it, but that we would seek the welfare, the good of the world, that we would build it up, that we would be a light to the nations, that we would accomplish God's purposes for our life and give Him glory through the way that we live our life.

And that's what I'm going to call thriving without compromise. How to thrive without compromise in a godless culture. And that's exactly where Joseph found himself, along with his brothers and father, and sisters and cousins and aunts and all the other people who were with him and like Christians today. And it's something that every Christian ought to learn how to master. And I think there's some really helpful practical pointers or instructions on how to go about that from the narrative of Genesis chapter 46 and 47. So if you're taking notes, we're sent into the world according to God's purpose.

Let's pick it up in chapter 46, verse 31. Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's family, remember the whole family had gathered. We're talking hundreds of people. I'm going to go up and inform Pharaoh, telling him that my brothers and my father's family who were in the land of Canaan have come to me. I'm going to tell Pharaoh that the men are shepherds and that they raise livestock and that they brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have here. Before I keep reading, just if you're new to the story, I know some of y'all hate me catching everybody up, but if you're new to the story, Joseph and his brothers, this big family reunion that's going on in verse 31.

Has been a long time coming. They had been separated for decades. Joseph and his brothers used to hate each other. They hated him for being the father's beloved child. Jacob, who was Joseph's dad, thought Joseph had died, been torn to pieces by an animal, but it turns out the brothers had just sold him into Egyptian slavery. Joseph went from top man in Potiphar's house to the top man in Pharaoh's prison to the top man in Pharaoh's court. He's basically second in command over all of Egypt. And Pharaoh made him that position because Joseph interpreted a dream wherein he could wisely save Egypt from the famine that was coming their way.

They had seven years of plenty, everybody was happy. While that happened, Joseph was storing away grain and food and all of these things. And then the seven years of famine hit. About halfway into that famine, Joseph's brothers, Jacob the dad, they run out of food, and so he sends the brothers to Egypt to get grain. That happens, they have no idea they're talking to Joseph when they ask for the food, but Joseph realizes these are my brothers and this is kind of cool. I have an opportunity to totally destroy their lives.

So he doesn't destroy their lives. He tests them to see if God had truly changed their lives. And turns out God used that process to transform their hearts. Big happy... Oh, what's that show, the women's, Lifetime, not Lifetime, Hallmark movie. It was like a good nice Hallmark movie. Everybody got back together. And that's where we are in Genesis 46. Okay? Everybody's back together. But Joseph has a very difficult task of basically persuading Pharaoh, let my family stay here. So he's giving his family a plan. Here's what you need to do if you want to be successful.

You've got to tell Pharaoh a particular kind of answer to a very important question. And the question is, what do you do for a living? So in verse 33, when Pharaoh addresses you and asks you, what is your occupation, you are to say, your servants, both we and our ancestors have raised livestock from our youth until now. In other words, we don't know how to do anything else other than livestock, we are shepherds. He says if you'll say that, you'll be allowed to settle in the land of Goshen, because the shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians.

Sounds like really great advice, does it not? We're going to make you do what nobody likes to do. Sound good? Are you excited? Sign me up. You know. Of course that's probably not what they thought. But the fact that Joseph knows that's exactly what he needed to say is really instructive and illustrates the first posture of thriving without compromising in a godless culture, and that is to be someone who understands your culture. Be a student of the culture in which God has placed you. This is taught throughout the scriptures. Jesus told his disciples to be innocent as doves, but also what?

Wise as serpents. Paul says to be wise in the way you live, so that you may know how you ought to answer every person. He says in Ephesians 5, don't be foolish, but be wise. Understanding what the will of the Lord is, because the days are evil. We live in a godless culture. What's required living in a godless culture is wisdom and a discernment to study your culture. This is what every missionary does. If you've ever talked to a missionary, one of the things that they'll do, in fact, Tanner and Kendra Clark, who are missionaries for the IMB, we sent them a couple of years ago.

Their first order of business, guess what they had to do? What did they have to learn? They had to learn one of the hardest languages in the world. The Polish language. Not only are they learning their language, guess what else they're learning? Customs, the culture, the taboos, what's cool, what's not cool. Like when we were in Tanzania, you don't shake with your left hand because you wipe with that hand. Okay, you shake with the other hand. I'm just kidding. Well I'm not kidding, I shouldn't have said that, but you get the idea.

You learn the people, you learn the culture, you learn what's good, what's not good. That's very, very important, and that's exactly what Joseph does. He does it at two different levels. First, he understands the people and the place. And that's the first step as a Christian. That's why I think Christians ought to be wise, but open to engaging with culture at the level of the arts and entertainment, poetry. You know, that's why I have a Netflix subscription, not just so I can watch borderline bad movies, but so I can see where the culture is going.

And again, you have to be wise about it. And you shouldn't expose yourself to things that are sinful. If something goes that far, you turn it off or you skip the scene. Because you're not wanting to expose yourself to evil, but you do want to expose yourself to the way the culture thinks. And the things that artists do, the job of an artist in a culture is to convey the religion of the culture in words that the culture will digest and receive. That's why our art is what it is.

Our art is a reflection of the religion of our culture. And it's pretty clear we're not a Christian culture anymore. We're very post-Christian culture. But you should understand it. You need to understand the way our culture thinks and the convictions that drive the people in our culture and what motivates the politics because politics is downstream of the culture. The culture is what shapes the politics, the arts, the entertainment, everything. So you want to

understand the people, understand the place, but that's not the only thing. You do those two things for the better thing, the most important thing, and that is to exploit or to leverage the best path for progress.

Because as a Christian, your job in your culture is to be a light to the nations. Your job as a missionary is to take the truth of the gospel and present it and package it in such a way that it will be received and persuasive and you've got to know what that looks like. It looks different in every different culture. The way you package the gospel in Abilene, Texas is different than the way you would do it in New York City. You know the way you would do it in New York City is different than the way you do it in Tanzania or Lesotho or on and on we could go. What's the best path to make an inroad in light of where God has placed me?

It takes time, it takes effort, it takes a lot of discernment and wisdom. But if you don't have that, you will not thrive. It requires wisdom. Wisdom is the difference between knowing what to do and knowing how to do it. You can have a great personality, you can be super, I don't know, personable and have all kinds of skills, but those things are absolutely worthless if you don't know how to deploy them where you are and how to exploit those opportunities for the best path of... I speak for a living, goodness gracious, for the best path of progress.

Ah, there we go. Alright, so next thing they do, Joseph introduces the brothers to Pharaoh. The big question is going to be asked. Joseph went and he informed Pharaoh, my brothers and my father, with their flocks and herds and all that they own, they've come from the land of Canaan, and they're now in the land of Goshen. In other words, we're not just visiting, we're relocating. He took five of his brothers. I don't know which five or why only five. Maybe he left the hotheads at home, Simeon and Levi and those murderous rampagers.

He presented the five brothers to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh asked his brothers the key question. What is your occupation? And they said to Pharaoh, Your servants, so far so good, both we and our ancestors are shepherds. They do exactly what Joseph asked them to do. And they said to Pharaoh, We've come to stay in the land for a while, because there's no grazing land for your servant's sheep, since the famine in the land of Canaan has been so severe. And they add on this part. Joseph didn't say to do this, but they say, now please let your servants settle in the land of Goshen.

Now put yourself in the shoes of these brothers. They were top dogs in Canaan where they were, in their little home there in the Hebron Valley. They've gone from the top dogs to the very bottom rank. Joseph tells them, if this is going to work, you've got to adopt the language of a servant, and you've got to adopt the station or the occupation of a shepherd. Do you not think that at least a handful of Joseph's brothers thought to themselves, I'm done shepherding. I've been a shepherd my whole life.

Have you ever done any kind of shepherding work? It can be a miserable work. It's not glamorous. And in the Egyptian culture they looked at them as detestable. I'm sure some of those brothers said, I don't want to do this. But Joseph says that's what you got to do if we're going to be successful. And that's really instructive for being a Christian in a godless culture. You've got to not just study the culture, you've got to be willing to serve the culture. Serving is the thing that makes us most like Jesus.

Humble service in Philippians two. Service is the evidence of a humble spirit. Paul said in Philippians 2, if there's any encouragement, anything that you can make me happy if you would just adopt the mindset of Jesus Christ, it would be awesome. And he says, what's that mindset look like? Well Jesus didn't look for his own interest. He looked to the interest of others. He humbled himself. He took the form of a servant. And he became obedient even to the point of death, death on a cross.

So humility and service always go hand in hand. And when Christians take the posture of a servant, they're in a position to thrive without compromise. Now what does that look like? I want to spend a little bit of time on this question because one of the core values in our church is service. The language of the core value is we want to build caring communities that serve like Jesus. We want to build caring communities that serve like Jesus. That's one of the five core values. Two of them you see every morning when you walk in.

We welcome people as they are. Doesn't matter who you are, where you've been, what you believe, you're welcome here. We will love you as you are to help you take you where God wants you to be. And then the fifth one is we want to make Jesus known wherever we go. You see that every time you leave the church and that sign there. But when it comes to our life together, especially in small groups, in the circles, organic as they may be, whether it's official or not official groupings. We want to build communities that serve like Jesus.

So what does a serving mindset look like? Well, in the case of the brothers, the first thing that they do is they accepted their position as a servant. And again, I think at least some of them didn't really want to accept the position. They're probably the ones who got left at home. The other six brothers who were like, I don't want to be a servant. I don't want to be a shepherd. Joseph is second in command in Egypt. We can be whatever we want to be. We can live wherever we want to live.

We have all kinds of access. We're connected to the big dog. I mean we can be whatever we want. And Joseph says, no, I need you to accept your position. I need you to accept the role of a servant. And Pastor David used to say, who, by the way, Pastor David, our pastor emeritus, I think is the champion of a serving mindset. In our church. I think our church has a serving culture because Pastor David pastored our church for 38 years with a serving mindset.

And he shared a story with me. It's always stuck with me about serving. He says, the way you know whether or not you view yourself as a servant is to look at the way you react when people treat you like a servant. And he shared the story about there being a wedding up here one day. And I don't know if you know this, but people who are getting married are not the best versions of themselves. At least the moms and the people running the wedding. Bride and groom are usually okay, but everybody else is stressed about the day of, they can be very mean.

Anyway, it was one of those people came up to Pastor David. He was not in his preacher clothes, as he would say. And something was wrong with the toilet or the AC or something, and she came and she just reamed him because she thought he was a janitor or something. And she just tore into him and he said, I thought to myself, do you have any idea who you're talking to? I could kick you out of this house right now. I'm the pastor of this church. Who are you to talk to me in this way?

Because he's a godly man, he didn't say the things that came through his mind. And he said, yes, ma'am, I'll take care of it. But that's how a servant would respond. Even though he was the authority figure, he was the pastor of the church. He was treated like a servant, and whether or not he truly possessed the spirit of a servant would have been revealed by the way he responded when people treat him like a servant. So how do you respond when people treat you like a servant. You can say, well, I want to serve Jesus, I'm going to be a servant for Jesus all day long.

What you say doesn't matter. What you do is what illustrates what you truly believe. And if you have accepted the position of a servant, you'll display the heart of a servant when treated as one. They also not only accept their position, they bloom where they're planted in verses five and six. The Pharaoh said to Joseph, now that your father and brothers have come to you, the land of Egypt is open before you. Look at the words, settle your father and brothers in the best part of the land. So if you're going to be given a relocation station, that's about as good as it gets.

You're going to be shepherds. Here's the best land for shepherding. They can live in the land of Goshen. And if you know of any capable men among them, put them in charge of my livestock. Now I'm wondering if Joseph asked them to be shepherds because he knew Pharaoh needed shepherds, and he could keep them close to himself in the land of Goshen, or if it was just Goshen was the best part for shepherds, I don't know. But the reality is they didn't get a choice of where they were going to go.

They were assigned a location. And again, if you put yourself in the shoes of the brothers, they used to be top dogs. They used to go wherever they wanted to go, do whatever they wanted to do. And now they've been put in a very specific place with a very specific job description and for some of them having to even shepherd the livestock of Pharaoh himself.

But what shepherds do, they don't only accept their position, they bloom where they're planted. And I know a lot of people who may think they have the mindset of a servant.

But deep down they would say, I'm happy to serve so long as I make this amount of money, wearing this kind of clothes in this kind of house. associated with these kind of people, this level of authority, they have all of these conditions on their willingness to serve the Lord. Now I'm not pooh-poohing the idea that you should be a good bargainer in your workplace and you should seek to be paid what you're worth. So don't hear what I'm not saying, but I am saying when it comes to the kingdom of God, sometimes the Lord may have you serving in a position you don't necessarily want to serve in, but it is what's most needed.

It's where God has placed you, and so real servants just choose to bloom where they're planted. There's no job too small, there's no task too insignificant for me. Nothing's above my pay grade. I will choose to bloom where I'm planted, I will choose to accept my position, and they do both of those things. Well then his dad comes in, Joseph brings the father in verse 7, and he presents him to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Again, remember Jacob's the patriarch. He used to be king of the whole castle.

He's a man of great authority. I'm sure he was a type A, very driven person. He's in front of another type A, very authoritative figure, and he doesn't, you know, have a measuring contest, he blesses Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Jacob, How many years have you lived? And Jacob said to Pharaoh, my pilgrimage has lasted one hundred and thirty years. Notice the language he's using. He's not just saying I've lived 130 years. No. My life has been that of a pilgrim. I am a sojourner. I am just walking through. I am not an Egyptian.

I am not a Canaanite. I'm on a pilgrimage. And my years have been few and hard, and they have not reached the years of my ancestors during their pilgrimages. Not only am I a sojourner, my dad was a sojourner, and his dad before him was a sojourner. And then again, Jacob blessed Pharaoh and departed from Pharaoh's presence. I think this again is a beautiful illustration of what true servants do when they're in a culture that is not their own. In a godless culture, you want to thrive without compromise, serve by choosing to bless people. It'd be very easy, wouldn't it, to say, well, I'm just a sojourner, this isn't my home, I'm going to isolate myself and the world's going to heck in a handbasket, let them burn, let it be what it's going to be.

But that's not how Christians ought to live in the culture that God has placed us. We ought to seek to bless our culture, bless the people God has put on our path, even if that means we have to bless the Pharaoh who maybe he didn't love all that much, or maybe he disagreed with Pharaoh. He's like, you know, this guy's been treating my son like a slave. I've got a word for you, I've got something that I'd like to say to you, Pharaoh. But he holds back all of those things and he chooses to be a blessing because Christians bless their enemies.

They pray for those who persecute them, and then they finally depend on God's provision. In verse 11, Joseph settled his father and his brothers in the land of Egypt. He gave them property in the best part of the land, the land of Ramses, as Pharaoh had commanded, and Joseph provided. Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's family, with food for their dependents. And so the last thing servants do is they depend on God's provision. You will lose the mindset of a servant if you begin to think to yourself, I am the source of my daily bread.

I am the originator of my wealth and security. Peace and prosperity depend on my effort and my wisdom and ingenuity. That is a dangerous place to live mentally and spiritually. That's what it looks like to live in the flesh. A spirit-filled person is a person dependent on the Lord, surrendered to the Lord, humbly waiting on God's provision and his timing and in his way to his degree. Always content in what the Lord has extended for your provisions. Again, I'm sure those brothers and fathers might have thought to themselves, well I wish there was a little bit more of this or a little bit less of that, but they rest content on God's provision.

The provision comes through Joseph, but Christians are people who depend on God's provision. So they study the culture, they serve the culture, and then finally the camera shifts over to Joseph. This is the real meat of the chapter. Joseph begins to steward his responsibility. So it says in verse 13, there was no food. So notice the contrast between 12. Joseph gave food to father, brother, and all the people, but then some time transpires between verse twelve and thirteen, and now there's no food in the entire region. So I don't know how long they had been doing that, maybe a year, maybe two years.

But basically they're in the very pit of the famine. It is as bad as it had ever been, because it was very severe, and the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan, notice this phrase, were exhausted by the famine. So this is an interesting Hebrew word. The English Standard Version says that the land was languished by the famine. NIV, I think, says wasted away because of the famine. The King James Version says it fainted because of the famine. Everybody has a different take on it, but I like exhausted because the idea behind the word is that you are completely depleted of resources.

Those of you who are gym rats, you know on your last set of your exercise that you're doing. You go to failure, they call it, you go to the point of failure. And you give every single thing that you've got, and sometimes you've got to have your spotter finish it out. You are exhausted, you are depleted, you are languished, you are wasted away. That's this word, okay? That's what the land is. Now, how did the land get to that place? Well, he describes that process in chapter 47, verses 14 to 19.

We're going to not read it for the sake of time, but I'm going to give you a summary. First, they have three different exchanges. First, the people came to Joseph and they said, We'll exchange our silver for grain. And that was what happened for the first half of the famine.

We bring you our money, you give us grain, we survive, you get rich, happy, happy, happy. But eventually they ran out of money. And so they come to Joseph. In verse 18, I believe, or verse 16, they say, hey, we're out of silver, but we're starving.

Do you want us to die or not? And if anybody's asked you, do you want me to die? Your response should be no, I don't want you to die. So we got to come up with a solution because you don't have any money. What could you give me in exchange for the food? How about you give me your livestock. And so the people give all of their livestock to Joseph, who then gives it to Pharaoh. So now Pharaoh has all of the silver, all of the money, and all of the livestock.

But the people are fed and they're surviving. Another year goes by. They run out of all of the food from the livestock. They have no money. They have no livestock. They have nothing left. They go to Joseph one more time. Maybe this is the last year of the famine. I don't know. They say, Joseph, we're not trying to lie to you. You can obviously see we don't have any money. We don't have any livestock. We literally have nothing. But if you don't give us some food, we're going to die. All that we have to give you is our land and ourselves as Pharaoh's slaves.

Would you please purchase our land and give us food? And so Joseph buys their land, he enrolls them as servants to Pharaoh, and he gives them seed in exchange for that. And they go home, they plant the seed, they harvest it and everybody is saved. Now I'm going to read you in a minute verses 20 and following what happens. But just if you look at that from a bird's eye view verses 13 down to verse 19. Joseph displays what every Christian ought to be able to display, whether it's a crisis or not.

If you're put in a godless culture, God has you there for a reason. And your job is to steward faithfully or diligently the assignment that God has put under your authority. And for some of you, that's an assignment to parent your children. For some of you, you're a business owner. Others of you as an employee working under this domain or that domain. All of us have circles of influence, all of us have some degree of authority that God has entrusted to us, and that opportunity is a stewardship. Which means it's temporary and that you're accountable to the person who gave you the trust.

That's what distinguishes a steward from an owner. The owner is the one who gives the trust. The steward is the one who manages the trust. So we are managing something that had been given to us by God. In this case, it was a stewardship for Joseph to save Egypt from starvation and the surrounding regions, but also to bless Pharaoh and seek the welfare of the Egyptian government. And Joseph does it beautifully. Brilliantly, if you ignore the politics of the communism and all that stuff. He does a great job of taking care of business.

And that's what Christians do when they thrive. In a godless culture. They are diligent stewards. Now how did he do that? One thing that he did is that he was proactive in solving

the problem. That is characteristic of a diligent steward. They are not passive. They are active and proactive in solving the problems that come their way. What happens to a lot of people who are not faithful stewards or they're not diligent stewards is that the greater the weight of pressure that they feel, the bigger the problems get, the smaller they become.

They say that crisis doesn't create character. You've heard this before. Crisis doesn't create character, it exposes the character that's already there. And that is certainly what's happening here with Joseph. With each year, the crisis gets bigger and bigger and bigger. But in each case, Joseph gets more creative. More thoughtful, more open to other ideas and maybe does things he never thought he would do, but he was committed to solving the problem whatever it takes. And that's what a good steward does. He doesn't back away, he's not passive. He takes responsibility for his stewardship and he figures out how to solve the problem.

The other thing that Joseph does is display prudence, and this is what you see in verses 20 to 22. It says in this way Joseph acquired all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh, because every Egyptian sold his field since the famine was so severe for them. The land, the whole land became Pharaoh's. And Joseph made the people servants from one end of Egypt to the other. The only land that he did not acquire belonged to the priests for they had an allowance from Pharaoh, and they ate from their allowance that Pharaoh gave them.

Therefore they didn't sell their land. What again, you've got to kind of ignore the centralization of all of the money and all of the livestock and all of the people and all of the resources to a centralized government. As a libertarian conservative, it drives me nuts that Joseph would participate in this kind of madness. But put yourself in Joseph's shoes. He didn't have a lot of other options. He had a responsibility to Pharaoh to bless him and grow his prosperity, and he had a responsibility to the people that they wouldn't die.

Okay, that was his job description. And he saw the best way for me to do that is to centralize these resources. What I think is interesting is that his solutions to every problem don't just meet the immediate need, but they actually set Joseph and Pharaoh up for future success down the road. And what happens for a lot of people when there's immediate pressing need, they will take shortcuts. They will compromise their integrity. They will do things that hurt them long term, but it's going to solve the problem in the immediate term.

So let's just, we're in a crisis, let's just kind of do what we have to do. Joseph doesn't do that. And that's what the Bible calls prudence. So prudence is a word we don't use very often. It's a great word, beautiful word. It's a word that means to act in the present with concern or care for the future. And that's how God's people ought to live. This is why Jesus gave the parable of the talents. There's the two people who were wise with their talents. They put it in the market, they made money on it.

The foolish person went and buried his talent. And when the master came home, after a great deal of time the master comes home and he rebukes the foolish servant. You just buried your talent because of your fear. You can't let fear cripple you from being strategic and wise and building, allowing the crisis of the moment to pay dividends in the future. And that's what a good steward does. And again, it takes great wisdom, it takes discipline, it takes faith to trust that God is going to come through if I will do the right thing here.

Even if it's hard, even if it doesn't feel easy, that God is going to pay dividends down the road, Joseph is prudent under pressure. He is proactive in solving problems. And then finally you see his leadership in verse 23. Joseph said to the people, understand today that I have acquired you and your land for Pharaoh. Here's the seed for you. Sow it in the land, and at harvest you are to give a fifth of the seed to Pharaoh, and four fifths will be yours as seed for the field, and as food for yourselves, your households, and your dependents.

They respond to that 20% tax very affirmingly. You have saved our lives, they said. We have found favor with our lord and will be Pharaoh's slaves. So Joseph made it a law still in effect today in the land of Egypt that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. Only the priest land does not belong to Pharaoh. Now I just called it a tax. Is it really a tax? No, it's not a tax because Pharaoh owns all the land and he owns all of these people. So it was really an act of mercy and generosity for Pharaoh to say, even though I own you and your property, and I don't have to give you anything.

I'm going to give you 80% of the seed and the harvest and the produce of the seed that I give you. That's a very generous act for Joseph and Pharaoh to do. And I think it demonstrates something about stewardship that good stewards are principled in leading people. A principled steward is someone who doesn't let his authority go to his head, that his exercising of leadership becomes a blessing. For the people who are underneath them, not a curse, that he doesn't or she doesn't use people for their ends, but they rather use their leadership to serve the ends of those they serve.

That they are predictable, that they have integrity, that they are not the kind of authorities that we often see in culture from godless people. Where they're in it all for themselves. Joseph does not demonstrate that. He's a principled leader. He is a wise steward. Proactive in solving problems and prudent under pressure. So he saves the world. They're very, very thankful. And then the chapter closes with Joseph's dad. Nearing the end of his life. And so it says that Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the region of Goshen. They acquired property in it, and they became fruitful, and very numerous.

You might underline that phrase. They bought the property, they became fruitful. Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. His whole lifespan was 147 years. And then when the time approached for him to die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, if I found favor with you, put your hand under my thigh. I hope my dad never says that to me. Son, if I've

ever found favor with you, put your hand right here. Put your hand under my thigh and promise me that you will deal with me in kindness and faithfulness.

Do not bury me in Egypt. When I rest with my ancestors, carry me away from Egypt and bury me in their burial place. And Joseph answered, I will do what you've asked. And Jacob said, swear it to me. And so Joseph squeezed his thigh and no he didn't. Joseph swore it to him. And then Israel bowed in thanks at the head of his bed. This phrase, bowed in thanks, the Hebrew literally means he bowed his head and worshiped at the end of his bed. This phrase here, place your hand under my thigh.

I know it's comical, but this word, if you've been paying attention, has showed up often in the book of Genesis. It showed up with Abraham and Abraham's servant. When Abraham was about to die, he called a servant in. He said, hey, I'm about to die. We need to find a wife for Isaac. Swear to me, you won't find a godless wife from the Canaanites. Instead, you will travel 500 miles north, risking life and limb, to find a godly woman from my hometown. And he makes him put his hand under his thigh.

And I said then that he wasn't probably grabbing his thigh, he was probably grabbing something between his thighs, because this word is often translated the reproductive organ. We'll just put it that way. But it doesn't always mean that because when Jacob was wrestling the angel of the Lord, the angel of the Lord struck him in his thigh. Same Hebrew word, and I don't know if it was that or if it's something else. It's any part of your body that's between the bottom of your waist and the top of your knee.

So this region is what that Hebrew word represents. Now here's why that matters. This region in the human body is the source of someone's greatest strength, typically. You will squat or you will deadlift more weight than you can bench press or any other kind of exercise because the biggest, strongest muscles are right here. It's the source of your greatest strength, it's the source of your progeny, it's the source of future life, reproductive organs, all of it is symbolic, right? And so essentially what Jacob is asking Joseph to do and having him put his hand wherever he put it is swear to me on your life.

Swear to me on my life. That you will keep this promise. This is the same thing we do today where I say I'll swear on my mother's grave or I'll swear on my life. This is what's happening. And it's a beautiful picture of Jacob who, let's be honest, was not always a godly man. He was not always a man of faith. He was very fickle and at times not a great picture of obedience and godliness. But at the end of days, he has responded to the invitation for God to say, if you will trust me, I will bless you.

I'll make you a great nation. I will get you to Egypt. You will see your son before you die, and I will bring you home. And this is Jacob's way of saying God always keeps his promises. And I may die here in Egypt, but you're not going to bury me here. God's going to get me back

home. And essentially, what he's saying is, I believe God is faithful to his covenant, and because God is faithful to his covenant, I'm going to be faithful to my obligation of that covenant. Which is to be obedient to the Lord.

And in obedience to the Lord, the promised land is not Egypt. The promised land is Canaan. So get me back to Canaan, because that's where the promised land is. And again, they didn't have a lot of land in Canaan. They just had the one burial plot. So again, it's an act of faith, but he is dying in faith, demonstrating obedience and worship to the very end. And it's a beautiful picture of how Christians thrive in a godless culture without compromise by remaining faithfully separate from the world in which they've been placed.

The world can be a blessing to you. It was a blessing to Jacob. He got rich, he got food, he got everything. You can enjoy the world, you can build in the world, you can have houses, you can have babies, you can have all the things, but don't become so enamored by the world that you forget your ultimate home, your ultimate citizenship is not as an American, it's in the kingdom of heaven. And he does that two specific ways. We don't have time to unpack them, but he aligns his practice with God's purpose.

You see that when it says that they bought property and they were fruitful and they multiplied. This is what God was getting at with Jeremiah when he said, I want you to get into the city of Babylon. I want you to buy houses, I want you to bless people, I want you to marry girls and boys, I want you to have babies, I want you to build lives and seek the welfare of the city. Okay. But in doing so, I want you to be a light to the nations. I want you to display my purposes with your life.

So Christians should be people who align their practice with God's purpose, but they also align their plans according to God's promise, which means the way that we plan our money, the way that we plan our future, the way we plan who and whether we marry, the way we plan how we raise our children or whether or not we have children. All of these things that are future oriented, we do them in such a way that we are not dependent on the here and the now. We're not totally controlled by our immediate circumstances or events, but we're controlled by the promise of a faithful God that one day this world will be swallowed up by a new world, a new heaven and a new earth.

And the kingdom of this world become the kingdom of our God and his king the Lord Jesus Christ. And our ultimate treasure is not here, it's there, it's in heaven, and we live our lives in such a way that we hold loose the things of this world because we're holding tightly on to Jesus. And in those ways, a Christian will thrive in a world without compromise. Be a student, be a servant, be a steward, be separate from the world. And as you think about those four things, it'd be easy for me to say, you know, you stink, do better, let's go home.

But that's not really the purpose of Genesis, is it? Those four things that Joseph beautifully demonstrated are not for us to say, oh, we need to do better. It's to challenge us and then point us to the ultimate Joseph, the ultimate Judah, and that of course is the Lord Jesus Christ. Who more than anyone was a student of his culture. The Bible says he became like us in every respect. The Bible says we don't have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with us, but he's been tempted and tested. And every way that we have been, except he did so without sin.

He understood us, not like a person reading a book understands, but like a person who went through the experience understands. He knows what it's like to be human. He's a student of his culture. He was a servant to his people. He served even at the expense of his own life, even to the point of death. He didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. An atoning sacrifice that bore our sin in his body on the cross so that we could be forgiven and cleansed of sin and that his perfect righteous life could be credited to us.

As a gift. He executed that stewardship perfectly, diligently, never failed, even to the end, when he said, Father, if it's possible for this cup to pass from me. It's not about what I want. It's about what you want. And so I'm going to do what you've called me to do. And to the very end, forgiving those who tortured him. Entrusting himself to the arms of his father, he executed what he was assigned to do. And he did so in a way even though the devil, Matthew 4, tempted him. If you'll just stop, I'll give you glory.

I'll give you power. You can be king of this world. You can rule in ways that no king has ever ruled before. You'll be better than Marco Polo or Alexander the Great or all the other people. Not Marco Polo, Marco somebody. But in every case, I'm ruining my invitation here. In every case, Jesus resisted. He remained separate from this world and he gave us a better picture. He gave us a picture of what the kingdom really looks like. He was in the world, but not of the world. He was sent into the world

to be a light, to seek its good, and to give God glory. And it's because Jesus paid that price and has given us the gift of forgiveness and sent his Holy Spirit to empower and animate our lives as his followers that we can be people who study hard and serve well, serve humbly and steward diligently and faithfully remain separate from this world. And if you find within yourself a sense of apathy or difficulty to adopt these postures and to live in this way, then I would encourage you this morning to let the Holy Spirit of God renew in you a fresh affection and love for Jesus.

That will enable you to surrender to him and then embrace his life as a life you live for yourself. And if you're not a Christian this morning, what a great opportunity for you to say I don't want to be part of this world. I know where this world is headed. I've known for a long time if there's a way for me to exit this world and go to be with Jesus in heaven. That's where

I want to be. And so if the Lord calls you to repent of sin and put your faith in him, I'll be here to receive you.

The altar's open if anybody wants to pray. But let's respond to the Lord as he leads. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time. We thank you for your word. We thank you that Genesis is not just a story with old characters that are loosely relevant, but that they are filled with real life historical figures who had the very same struggles that we have. And through their lives, we can learn how you've designed life to be lived today. We thank you for Joseph and his family. We thank you for Jesus, who is that better picture of what thriving in a godless culture looks like.

And we want to be people as a church family who adopt those postures, who live in that way. Who are used for your glory because of our commitment to do those very things. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.