

LOSING YOUR COAT WITHOUT LOSING YOUR CHARACTER

Welcome to **Week 5** of “**In The Beginning**”! If you have been following along with the **F260 Reading Plan** you are now about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the Book of Genesis and you have a good foundation regarding the fall of man into sin and God’s redemptive plan to provide salvation for ALL mankind to be saved from that sin. So far we have been following the PROMISE God gave to ADAM and EVE in **Genesis 3:15 (NIV)** **And I will put enmity between you (SATAN) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he (The ONE who will come from the woman - JESUS) will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

And how that PROMISE was passed on to Abraham in **Genesis 12:3 (NIV)** **3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”**

And then how that same PROMISE was passed on from Isaac, Abraham’s son, to his son Jacob when God appears to Jacob in a vision. **Genesis 28:13-14 (NIV)** **There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.”**

Today, we are going to see the Nation of Israel begin to emerge and take shape. Up to this point we have been following individuals and their respective families. But after today we are going to begin following the Nation of Israel. But before they can have their own land and become their own sovereign nation as God has promised to Abraham, there is one last stop on God’s agenda to prepare them for this next phase. And that agenda runs through EGYPT.

Everything God does in our current situation or circumstances is preparation for what God has for us NEXT. God wastes nothing in our lives! From our faithful steps where we trust Him by faith to the moments when we lean on our own understanding and get it all wrong. He is preparing us for what He wants to do next in and through our lives IF (and here is the big IF) **we will only trust HIM.** Your perspective on life will greatly change when you begin to see that where you are now is a prepping ground for what God wants to do next! But whatever you do, don’t miss God’s presence in the here and now. He is ALWAYS with His children and He is ALWAYS working in and through our situations to conform us to the image of His Son JESUS!

Romans 8:28-30 (NIV) **28 And we know that in all things (all things Good or all things bad. Whether we walk by Faith or whether we don’t) God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (those who are in a relationship with Him) **29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. (You see, God’s plan from the beginning is that you and I would be conformed into the image of His son thus becoming sons and daughters of God. Ultimately God is working to bring that about. Remember, in the beginning God created MANKIND in the image of God. Sin, over time, has distorted that image****

in us and so now God, through our circumstances wants to restore that image by conforming us into the image of His SON) This is true of us and it was also true of those God used to bring redemption to us! So, as we take a look at how Jacob and his family ended up in Egypt, my prayer is that you would see that **when God is involved there are no accidents** and thus **learn to trust Jesus and His sovereign plan for your life**. Let me **PRAY** for us as we begin.

Now before we read this week's passage (beginning with **GENESIS 37** if you would like to go ahead and find that) let me set the context for us. Last week we were introduced to Jacob and his rivalry with his brother Esau for the birthright and blessing of their father. In the end, we learned that it wasn't their father's to give, but it was God's. When we left him last week. He and his brother had reconciled their differences and had parted ways. As you should have read this week if you are following along with the reading plan, Jacob's wife Rachel dies while giving birth to Jacob's 12th son whom Jacob names Benjamin.

In **Genesis 29-30** we discover how it was that Jacob came to have these twelve sons. Leah gave birth to 6 of those sons along with two others from her maidservant Bilhah for a total of 8. While Rachel (which was the wife Jacob truly loved and had originally intended to marry before being deceived by his father-in-law) had only two sons, Joseph and Benjamin along with two other sons from her maidservant Zilpah for a total of 4. (Btw, you think your family has issues? Jacob's family makes all our families look like the Brady Bunch!) The reason I am taking time to point this out is because Jacob has a special attachment to both Joseph and Benjamin due to his deep love for Rachel. (Btw, just for the record and as a follow-up to last week's point that you don't have to be the son of the promise to serve God faithfully, Joseph's offspring will not be the line from which God will choose for the Savior to come. It will actually be Judah!) This special attachment leads to favoritism that Jacob is going to display toward Joseph which, as you can imagine, is going to create some family division just like we witnessed between Jacob and his brother Esau. Sin (which is in its essence a lack of faith or we could say, a misplaced faith) is a destroyer of all things good! But as we are going to see and as we have already seen so far, it does not keep God from accomplishing His divine plan and utilizing these sinful choices to prepare the Nation of Israel for their next chapter in God's redemptive story. In fact, **God is a redeemer and He wants to redeem what is broken**. Whether that brokenness is the result of our sin or someone else's sin!!

Genesis 37:1-10 (NIV) 1 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. He is dwelling in the land of promise but this land is not yet his fully. **2** This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. **3** Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him.

Remember, Joseph was the first born to Rachel and he is one of the babies of the family along with his brother Benjamin. He has a very special place in Jacob's heart. So to make matters worse. Jacob gives him a special coat to signify to the others that Jacob views him as the leader of the family. **4** When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. **5** Joseph had a dream, and when he told it

to his brothers, they hated him all the more. **6** He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: **7** We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." **8** His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. **9** Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." **10** When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" This was a dream from God revealing what was to come. However, Joseph probably should have read the room regarding the current circumstances and just kept it to himself. But being ignorant and maybe even a little prideful, he told it to his brothers anyway. **Every private message isn't meant for public display.** After being sent out by Jacob once more to check on his brothers the division between them escalates to a point of no return. Btw, **BITTERNESS that is allowed to fester will eventually lead to SIN!** We see that with Cain in chapter 4 and we see it again here. Which means we have to deal with our feelings of bitterness or it will lead us to some dark places.

As they saw Joseph coming in the distance here is what they said. **Genesis 37:19-25 (NIV) 19** "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. **20** "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." **21** When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. **22** "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. **23** So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— **24** and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it. **25** As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. Judah (who has risen to become the respected elder son and by whom God is going to use as the family to bring forth the Savior as we shall see) has the idea that rather than kill Joseph they make it look like he was killed by wild animals so that their father will not go looking for him and then sell him off to some Ishmaelite traders.

Just a little side note here regarding Judah becoming the son of promise. Judah was actually the fourth eldest son born to Jacob. Reuben which was the first born had disgraced himself by lying with Rachel's maidservant which was considered incest (Genesis 35:22). Simeon and Levi who were the second and third born sons became a disgrace to their father when they committed violence against the men of Shechem in (Genesis 34). Because of these circumstances Judah emerged and was looked to as the future leader of the family. This is why he was able to cast influence over this particular situation. Skipping ahead, **Genesis 37:32-35 (NIV) 32** They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe." **33** He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." **34** Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. **35** All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn

until I join my son in the grave.” So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar who is an Egyptian official and captain of the guard. Notice what we have here! On the one hand, we have sinful men plotting and planning out of their selfishness creating circumstances that are creating difficulties for others. On the other hand, you have an innocent teenager caught up in circumstances that were not any of his doing! Sure he might have been a little prideful and a pain in their flesh from all of the attention of his father, but he didn’t deserve to be sold into slavery by his brothers. **How can God use that? None of this seems right or fair! If God is sovereign why doesn’t He stop this? Have you ever asked that question regarding situations in your life?**

With the time we have remaining I want us to see THREE RESPONSES we should have when our situation doesn't seem just or fair and how if we will learn to trust God in those moments He can use us to help bring deliverance to others.

Response #1 - Be Faithful Where You’re Placed

This is contrary to how the world operates. The world would say that we need to be where we want to be and just follow our own heart. However, God's word shows us that God is in control regardless of our situations and we should trust Him in those situations. One of the ways Satan wants to hinder our witness and effectiveness for God is that he wants our current situation to set the conditions for our faithfulness. In other words, if I am not where I want to be then I don’t have to be faithful. If God loves us unconditionally shouldn’t we want to serve Him unconditionally? Look at how Joseph response to his situation.

Genesis 39:1-6 (NIV) Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. **2 The Lord was with Joseph** Even though things were looking pretty bleak for him. (Sold twice into slavery, taken from his family, taken to a pagan land with really no prospect of ever being able to go back home and a with circumstances completely out of his control) It had to feel a little hopeless. But despite all that, God was with Him so he had everything he needed! **2 The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did,** 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. 6 So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph’s care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. We see this same mindset also when Joseph is put in jail on false accusations by Potiphar’s wife. I want you to see the heart attitude of Joseph that allowed him to do this!

1) **Joseph ‘s faithfulness to God was not a religious ritual but it was a WAY OF LIFE!**

It impacted every aspect of his life. His attitude and his work ethic! No matter what his situation he brought excellence. Because of this approach it brought blessing on him personally as well as to his masters. **Is your faith a religious ritual or is it a way of**

life? The people that God uses to change the world are those who have a faith that is more than a religious experience or Sunday morning ritual. It impacts every aspect of their life! Their family life. Their job. The service to the church, Everything!! And btw, their circumstances have no bearing on their faithfulness!

- 2) **Joseph served Potiphar with a spirit of excellence because He was ultimately SERVING GOD!**

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Colossians 3:23-24 (ESV) Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

And that is how we should all live our lives daily! God gave Joseph favor and blessed him personally! God said to Adam in Genesis 3 that working the land would be hard as a result of sin. When man does the planting it will be hard, but when God does the planting, it is easier and always more fruitful. You may not be where you want to be but blossom where you are planted! Let God be glorified through you and may you serve HIM that He may not only make you fruitful but that His blessings may be encountered by others around you. For most of the lost world, the only Bible they will ever read may be that which Jesus writes with the testimony of your life!!! You cannot share a meaningful GOSPEL if it is not first reflected in the way you live your life, especially in adversity!

Response #1 - Be Faithful Where You're Placed! But notice the second response we need to have:

Response #2 - Flee From Temptations

If Satan cannot deter your faith with circumstances or situations that you and I don't like, he will certainly try to bombard us with temptations to get us to deny God and feed our fleshly desires

Genesis 39:6-12 (NIV) So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, 7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" 8 But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. 9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" Even though Joseph had become a master himself he realized he still needed THE MASTER! It is very common in times of blessing for us to forget WHO it is that got us to where we are if we are having any success. And sometimes we can lose sight of that and begin to think more highly of ourselves than we should. Joseph could have used his human reasoning and success to

justify sleeping with Potiphar's wife. Such as, "If it wasn't for me Potiphar wouldn't have what he has." As if that was all of Joseph's doing. Or think to himself that because of all that he was master over he could have begun to feel invincible thus helping himself to Potiphar's wife. But instead, Joseph was sober-minded knowing that all that he has was owed to God at work in his life and how messed up it would be for him to sin against the God who has been faithful to him through all that he has endured thus far.

10 And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. Satan does not stop with the first NO! He keeps coming trying to wear you down 11 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

Temptations are nothing more than counterfeits to what God WANTS you to have! That is why they are temptations and they can be so luring! We need to recognize that there are no shortcuts when it comes to what God wants us to have. Let's not sacrifice the eternal for the temporary. The immediate for the future promise as Esau did with his birthright. True faithfulness is that which can be measured when no one is watching. The real temptation is to take matters into your own hands rather than trust God with your situation. Don't entertain or play around or even flirt with it. Run! Flee quickly! Don't trust your heart or think you have arrived or are above sin's lure. Don't try to manage your sin. Turn from it! But know this! With every temptation God always provides an escape

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (NIV) 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Response #1 - Be Faithful Where You're Placed! **Response #2 - Flee From Temptations**
But notice the third response we need to have:

Response #3 - Be Faultless In Adversity

Genesis 39:13-15 (NIV) 13 When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, 14 she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. 15 When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." After telling her husband her side of the story, notice what he did **Genesis 39:20-21(NIV)** 20 Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, **21 the Lord was with him;** he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

Just like our current situation, we cannot let adversity determine our faithfulness. If we do, we hinder God's ability to work on our behalf. We hinder His glory in our lives and through adversity. We may forfeit our opportunity to be used by Him in that moment. Don't disqualify your witness

or miss the blessing God has for you in that moment but continue to trust God. Sometimes doing the right thing may lead to further challenges but continue to trust God! Remember, God will be with you just like God was with Joseph! (vs. 21)

It is through Joseph's time in prison that God gives Joseph access to Pharaoh. After interpreting two dreams for Pharaoh regarding a coming famine, Joseph is made second in command in all of Egypt in an effort to prepare for the famine. God in essence not only blesses Egypt, but Egypt becomes a safe haven for Joseph's family. Listen to what Joseph says to his brothers upon being reunited with them.

Genesis 45:3-9 (NIV) **3** Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. **4** Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! **5** And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. **6** For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. **7** But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. **8** "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. **9** Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.

God was preparing Joseph the whole time to deliver his family in time of famine! And God still does that today! God is using us to help lost people become found people. He wants to redeem our pain and adversity for His glory! He is placing us in positions and places to be one who will help provide for and help lead people to the God who saves us through Jesus the SON!

Worship Comes Back Up

Invitation

Are you being faithful where God has you in this season? (Family, community, workplace)

What sin do you need to run from today?

What is your breaking point that leads you to being unfaithful?

Do you turn to God or your sin when you are in a rough spot?