



gracefellowship

Joseph: Living Between Dreams and Reality

May 13, 2018

“Our Past, God’s Future”

This is the final message in the series on the life of Joseph.

:: Genesis 43 (Have read by someone)

Recap: Joseph’s brothers have been impacted by the famine and have come to Egypt for food. Joseph is in the process of testing his brothers to see if they can be trusted. He has kept his identity secret- they have no idea who they are dealing with.

- First Test: Joseph imprisoned them to see how they would handle discipline.
- Second Test: He puts the silver they paid for the grain back in their packs and sent them home.
 - o They sold Joseph out of hate and greed of money- how would they deal with this?
- Third Test: He keeps one brother in prison, but commands the others to go home and bring back their youngest brother or receive no more assistance.
 - o Joseph wants to see how they treat the youngest son who is highly esteemed by his father. Benjamin now holds the social standing Joseph once held and was hated for.

Here’s the real test: Will the brothers do what is right, even though it is hard. (Bringing Benjamin to Egypt) It’s a test of integrity.

The brothers return home to Canaan and describe to their father what happened and he immediately tells them that Benjamin is not going to Egypt! He has lost one favored son and is not willing to lose another. Simeon, apparently is an acceptable loss, Benjamin is not!

The famine is severe and the food runs out, so the brothers once again go to their father and tell him they can’t go back to Egypt unless Benjamin goes with them.

Jacob (Israel) is still hesitant to allow Benjamin to go, so Judah speaks up and offers to take responsibility.

:: Genesis 43:8-10

8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die.

9 I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.

10 As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.”

Judah is the one who orchestrated the plan to sell Joseph into slavery. And while God used that act to preserve a nation, Judah had no intentions of that being a kind act. Now, he is the brother who steps up and offers to protect Benjamin. This will play out on a larger stage soon!

Now, remember, when they left Egypt the last time Joseph had their silver put back into their packs, so it looks like they stole from him. To make up for that error Jacob sends them Egypt with some of the best gifts they have to offer plus double the silver.

When they get to Egypt, Joseph has them brought to his house for a meal. They explain to Joseph’s servant about the mix up in the money and the servant assures them that was the blessing of God, he received their silver and there is no issue as far as he is concerned. But Joseph has arranged to share this meal with his brothers as a continuation of his tests.

Check out what Joseph does...

:: Genesis 43:33-34

33 The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment.

34 When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

The brothers are seated at the banquet according to their ages- which freaks them out! This Egyptian seems to have incredible knowledge about them. Then, when he serves them, Benjamin, the youngest, gets a huge serving: 5x as much as anyone else!

- What is Joseph doing? He is seeing if they are jealous of Benjamin like they were of him as a boy. But the Bible says “they feasted and drank freely with him.”
- There was no jealousy in their hearts. Joseph was seeing the changes God had made in them over time.

They weren’t perfect, but they were being changed! God, in His sovereignty, used the circumstances of their past to shape their future.

Life Lesson: We are all works in progress in the hands of the Master Builder.

:: Philippians 1:6 I am confident in this, He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Our lives, as followers of Jesus, are under construction!

The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives once we come into a relationship with Jesus is called sanctification. He is always working in us to change our character and shape us to be like Jesus. And it is a work that will continue until we die or Jesus returns for us! The mistakes you've made in your past and your sinfulness do not eliminate you from service in God's Kingdom. God has a plan for you and is molding you for the future He has written!

Looking back at the story of Joseph we see he has one final test for his brothers: The final test- Joseph puts a silver cup in Benjamin's bag and when they leave to head home Joseph sends his attendants after his brothers and accuses him of stealing it. When the cup is found in Benjamin's bag they return to Joseph.

:: **Genesis 44:14-34**

14 Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him.

15 Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?"

16 "What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup."

17 But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace."

18 Then Judah went up to him and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself.

19 My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?'

20 And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.'

21 "Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.'

22 And we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.'

23 But you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.'

24 When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said.

**25 “Then our father said, ‘Go back and buy a little more food.’
26 But we said, ‘We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’
27 “Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons.
28 One of them went away from me, and I said, “He has surely been torn to pieces.”
And I have not seen him since.
29 If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.’
30 “So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy’s life,
31 sees that the boy isn’t there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow.
32 Your servant guaranteed the boy’s safety to my father. I said, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!’
33 “Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.
34 How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father.”**

Judah steps up in defense of his brother and offers to take his place. He wants the boy to go home and offers to become Joseph’s servant. Looking to the NT, this is a picture of what Jesus would do on our behalf. While Joseph is the savior in this story, the true Savior of humanity is Jesus and when God sent His Son into the world, He sent him through the Tribe of Judah! Judah is foreshadowing in this moment what Jesus would do for the entire world. Judah steps up and offers to take Benjamin’s place so that Benjamin can go free. That’s the heart of the gospel message! Jesus took our place to offer us freedom and salvation. When you and I were deserving of punishment, Jesus came to earth to offer us freedom. He became our payment and stands in our place to offer us peace with God!

When Joseph sees and hears how his brothers respond to this he is done testing them.

:: Genesis 45:1-7

**1 Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers.
2 And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.
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.

Life Lesson: You never know what God is doing behind the scenes in your life to bring Him glory as you walk in faithful obedience to Him.

How could Joseph possibly forgive his brothers for what they did and continue to trust God after all he had been through? He had a rock solid view of God's sovereignty!

Joseph has developed a world view that shows the providence of God and can forgive his brothers because he now understands, it wasn't them who sent him to Egypt, but God, to accomplish the saving of lives.

:: Genesis 45:8

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.

This was God's plan. God know what we don't. He sees the future perfectly when we only see fragments. I tend to get bent out of shape when something negative happens to me, because in that moment it hurts. But God sees how He is going to use that experience to shape me into the person He wants me to become as well as to use that circumstance for His glorious purposes!

Joseph learned to see the bigger picture of God's glory and it changed how he related to his brothers.

God can take the worst intentions of people and turn them into incredible opportunities for us. Through all the trials of Joseph's life God was preparing him to lead a nation and save the masses. Joseph is also reunited with his father and gets to enjoy 17 years more years with him.

When his father, Israel, dies the brothers once again get scared. They believe now that their father is dead Joseph may exact revenge on them- maybe he's only been holding back to honor their Dad. So Joseph has to remind them of the work of God behind the scenes to bring them all to this point.

In Genesis 50:20-21 he tells his brothers...

:: Genesis 50:20

20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

There's something happening in this scene that happens to us all the time. We live close to God while things are going well and we feel that we are honoring Him, but then we sin and all of a sudden we feel like God is against us- He's going to get us for what we did! We begin to fear that God is angry with us and is going to judge us harshly. We forget, just like Joseph's brothers, that the forgiveness of God is final! His love is everlasting! God isn't out to get you for your past or for your sins, he loves you!

Closing Challenge: Look at the events of your life; the things you're bitter over, the things you blame God for, the things people have done to you- how is God using those things, not for your harm, but for your good? How is God using your circumstances to prepare you for future kingdom assignments?

Here's something you can take to the bank: in every situation you face in life, God is good! He is so good! He's working behind the scenes for His glory and your ultimate good. The goodness of God is beyond anything you can imagine!

In fact, it reminds me of a song we used to sing as a kid- maybe you did too. If you didn't it's easy. It goes like this: God you're so good; God you're so good; God you're so good; You're so good to me.
Sing that with me!

He is working today for your good.
He is working behind the scenes where you don't see.
He's making a way for you.
He's working for His glory

Discussion Questions:

Read Genesis 43 as a group

1. What is something (good or bad) happening in your life right now that God may be using to shape and prepare you for your future?
2. What has God taught you through this series about Himself?
3. What is something from this series that has taught you something about yourself?
4. What is something from this series you need to apply to your life now to grow as a disciple of Jesus?