

**JOSEPH**  
**Faithful Until Death**  
**Genesis 50**

**Joseph's story has been GOOD for me. It has reminded me of so many marvelous truths that I need to REMEMBER in my journey with God.** In the message today, I want to REVIEW some of these truths, and then I want to explore a couple of new observations about Joseph's life that we see at the very end of his days.

On his deathbed, Jacob pronounced blessings on his 12 children. While Jacob's prophecies were very POETIC in style, they were also very POINTED in the way that they directly referred to, or at least hinted at, the CHARACTER of his sons and its effect on their descendants. Most of the prophecies that he made were not very encouraging when it comes to how he described his son's moral behaviors. [Reuben was as "unstable as water," and Benjamin was "a ravenous wolf," etc.] The prophecy over Joseph however, is filled with praise for his character and bright hope for his descendants. Here is what Jacob spoke over his son, Joseph. **Genesis 49:22-26 NIV**  
 22 "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. 23 With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. 24 But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, 25 because of your father's God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the skies above, blessings of the deep springs below, blessings of the breast and womb. 26 Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.

**FRESH AND FORMER OBSERVATIONS ABOUT JOSEPH'S LIFE**

**\*Joseph was FRUITFUL because of God's PRESENCE in his life.**

God's presence was not a RANDOM experience in Joseph's life. God was WITH him in every moment! God presence was the CONSTANT that overshadowed him and undergirded him. In Jacob's blessing, we see the PREEMINENCE of God in Joseph's life. **God was the blessing of heaven's dew on his head and the blessing of hidden springs beneath his feet!** [Moses spoke a very similar blessing over the tribe of Joseph in Deuteronomy 33.] **This truth CANNOT be stressed enough for us. The KEY to the story of Joseph is that "The LORD was WITH him."** Stop and consider this in your own life. Is God with you now? How do you KNOW that God is with you?

**"Joseph was a fruitful vine . . . NEAR A SPRING."** This spring was an UNDERGROUND source of continual water. **Joseph was tapped into a spring in the HIDDEN PLACES of his heart!** He had to DRAW from that spring every time it seemed that his HOPE was gone. He had to CRY OUT to God and LEAN ON God and REST IN God when he was facing troubles of all kinds. When the days got long, and

the nights got longer, he had to REASSURE his heart by his relationship with the Lord. Jacob spoke of God being the Mighty One who was the strength of Joseph's arms. God was Joseph's SHEPHERD, who LED him SAFELY through the most treacherous of settings. God was his ROCK, the FOUNDATION on which he stood when the winds blew and the floods rose. God was the ALMIGHTY ONE who BLESSED him beyond all measure! **[Jacob uses the word "BLESSED" 6 times in this beautiful proclamation over Joseph!]**

When I think of the WEALTH of treasure we have today of the glory of God in the Word of God, compared with what seems like only TINY GLIMPSES of God's glory in the stories Joseph heard from his father, I marvel. **We have so much more REVELATION from God about God than Joseph ever had, and yet . . .**

It is also interesting to note that, although God appeared personally to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, **he never appeared in that way to Joseph** (or any of Jacob's other sons.). Even though Joseph was by far the most faithful and obedient of Jacob's sons, this did not somehow ENTITLE him to see God face to face. **Actually, I think that the fact that God did NOT appear to Joseph makes his story one of even GREATER FAITH.** He obeyed God and stayed faithful even under the most difficult of circumstances, trusting that God was with him even when he could not see or feel it. This makes me think of what Jesus said to Thomas when he appeared to him after the resurrection: **John 20:29 NIV**

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Again, I ask you, DO YOU KNOW THAT GOD IS WITH YOU?

There is also a word TUCKED INTO this blessing over Joseph that I think we should notice. It is found in the last words of this blessing, when Jacob says, **"Let all these [blessings] rest on the head of the PRINCE among his brothers."** The word for "prince" is the word "NAZIR." It is the word from which we get the concept of the NAZARITE. It refers to one who is CONSECRATED, or SET APART, for and to God! **This is the first time we see this word used in Scripture, and it refers to the one that God chose to protect the nation of Israel during a very vulnerable period.** In later times, people would demonstrate the sense of being set apart for God by taking the Nazarite vow and not cutting their hair or defiling themselves with wine. God CHOSE Joseph, and God chose to put Joseph through all kinds of TROUBLE in order to use him for his divine purpose. **[I will never forget how RON DUNN spoke of this aspect of being chosen: "God, why don't you pick on someone else!"]**

This leads me to the SECOND observation that has meant so much to me in this series: **Joseph was fruitful because he PROSPERED in times of TROUBLE.**

We see this in **Genesis 39:2 "The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master."** The idea of prosperity here implies FORWARD MOTION. He did not stay STUCK in his troubles. He did not bog down in

BITTERNESS at his brothers and his new circumstances. He did not live at the mercy of misery, but he **ADVANCED** in every way through the presence and power of God. God was the **INITIATOR**, but Joseph was the **RECEIVER**. And receive he did!

-Joseph was willing to stay under the **AUTHORITY** of even an ungodly master!

-Joseph served with **EXCELLENCE**. **[Great work ethic!]**

**-God caused those OVER and AROUND Joseph to prosper.**

**It is so valuable to notice that God worked in the EXTREMES of Joseph's life.** He went from the highest highs to the lowest lows, and still remained faithful to God. God was with him when he was a slave and a prisoner, and God was with him when he was the second most powerful person in the world with probably greater riches than almost any other person in the world! **Trouble did not stop him, and treasure did not spoil him.**

**How many people do you know who walk close to God when they were facing poverty or trouble of some kind, but who drifted (or walked) away from God when times were good? Have you ever been guilty of forgetting God when times are good? It is no wonder why so many of us are "plagued" by troubles and trials in our lives. God knows it is the only thing that will keep us dependent on him!**

This brings me to a couple of **NEW OBSERVATIONS** on Joseph's life. Let's catch up to where we are now in our study of Genesis, and we will gain some new insights into God's work in Joseph's life. **Genesis 49:33 – 50:3 NIV**

**33** When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people. **1 Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him.** **2** Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him, **3** taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

**NOTE: What is the difference between the way PAGANS bury the dead from the BIBLICAL way we bury the dead?**

-We honor the body in death because it was **CREATED** by God.

-We honor the body in death because it will be **RESURRECTED** by God.

\*Embalming in Egypt was done for the afterlife from a pagan viewpoint!

-Joseph had physicians embalm Jacob to avoid pagan rituals.

\*The **PROCESSIONAL** for Jacob was a **SIGNIFICANT** event of **HONOR**.

**Genesis 50:12-21 NIV**

**12** So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them: **13** They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. **14** After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father. **15** **When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?"** **16** So they sent word to Joseph,

saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." **When their message came to him, Joseph wept.** 18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. 19 **But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 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.**

The death and burial of Jacob was followed by a very disturbing scene of fear and mistrust by Joseph's brothers. These men were fearful that Joseph would avenge himself for all of the wrong that they did to him after his father's death. This was not the first time this had been feared in Jacob's family! [JACOB and ESAU] **Genesis 27:41 NIV**

41 Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Esau had every intention of killing Jacob after Isaac died, but God had other plans! Amazingly, it was the blessings that God heaped on Esau that softened his heart and prevented him from killing his brother when they were reunited! **But Joseph's brothers feared that, just as Esau had determined to kill Jacob after Isaac's funeral, Joseph would do the same to them.** They concocted a story about Jacob asking Joseph to forgive them for the wrong they had done to him, but this appeal was not necessary. **Joseph was the same man after the death of his father that he was before Jacob died!**

**THIRD OBSERVATION: Joseph did not "put himself in the place of God."**

Joseph was GRIEVED when he heard the message from his brothers. His response was CONSISTENT and FIERCE! (Vs. 19). Joseph understood the depth of God's sovereignty in ways that we must learn. He fully accepted that God was the One that had put him through all of his trouble in order to save lives. That was enough for Joseph! He would not REJECT God's presence and plan for his own sake!

**We put ourselves in the place of God when we seek our will over his own.**

**We put ourselves in the place of God when we seek our vengeance over his judgment.**

"Joseph didn't minimize their sins, for he said, "You intended to harm me" (Gen. 50:20). He knew that there had been evil in their hearts, but he also knew that God had overruled their evil deeds to accomplish His good purposes. This reminds us of what happened on the cross. Peter said, "Him [Jesus], being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up" (Acts 2:23–24 nkjv). **Out of the greatest sin**

ever committed by humankind, God brought the greatest blessing that ever came to humankind.”

[From Warren Wiersbe sermon]

**Joseph displayed what we would call a Christlike standard by the manner in which he forgave his brothers!** His forgiveness was not TEMPORARY, or SHALLOW, or even CONDITIONAL. It was COMPLETE! He did not harbor secret hatred or bitterness in his heart. He did not resent his brother’s lives and presence. He actually LOVED them and showed consistent TENDERNESS toward them, and he CARED for them and their families.

\*He SPOKE words of forgiveness to his brothers . . . over and over!

\*He PROVIDED for his brothers and their families . . . for a LIFETIME!

Jesus has done the same thing for us. He SUFFERED (and even DIED) on our behalf, and then rose again to offer us peace with God and eternal life. Yet, like Joseph’s brothers, we QUESTION God’s forgiveness and DOUBT God’s loving protection over us. **It saddens me every time I hear someone in the church say that they “hope that they are going to heaven.”** That is not the GOOD KIND of hope. It is a baseless hope. **Are you doubting your standing in God’s family today?** You don’t have to! [My story of how I learned to TRUST GOD’S WORD and God’s HEART for me!].

**Final Observation: Joseph left a legacy of FAITH. Genesis 50:22-26 NIV**

22 Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years 23 and saw the third generation of Ephraim's children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph's knees. 24 **Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."** 25 And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, **"God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."** 26 So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. **And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.**

Joseph was embalmed just as his father had been. But, unlike Jacob, Joseph’s body was not taken immediately to Canaan in order to be buried there with his father. Instead, his coffin was left in Egypt with the sons of Israel as a TESTIMONY OF FAITH to all the generations that would follow until the EXODUS. It was a constant REMINDER to Israel that they were not forgotten by God. **This from the one that knew what it was like to LOOK forgotten, but not to BE forgotten!**

NOTE: The fact that Joseph was embalmed and his body was put in a coffin was a TESTIMONY to the fact that the Israelites were in Egypt as welcome guests and not as slaves! No slave would ever have been embalmed and honored in this way. Imagine the significance of this when Moses carried the body of Joseph out of Egypt with them!

What EVIDENCE of FAITH am I leaving behind that will remind those after me to not get too comfortable here on this earth and to keep the promises of God ever before them? Joseph's coffin was actually a perpetual inspiration of faith! It makes me smile to think of the scene when Moses instructed the people to pick up the coffin of Joseph and carry it with them out of the land. Here is the account of it in **Exodus 13:17-22 NIV**

17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." 18 So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt ready for battle. 19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath. He had said, "**God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.**" 20 After leaving Sukkoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. 21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Can you see his coffin as it is awash in the glow of the FIRE BY NIGHT as God led them through the wilderness back to the Promised Land? What a powerful picture of the legacy of faith. God is faithful! Oh, that we would trust him as Joseph did! I want to leave you with a quote from G. Campbell Morgan:

"Commit your life to God, see vision, do the work that's nearest, the work He appoints, truly and well and faithfully, and die knowing that you have started delicate influences, dynamic forces which will proceed through every succeeding generation until they gather up the harvest of glorious result about the throne of the Eternal. **The man of God has not finished his work in the world when they put him in a coffin.**"

**Let's pray.**

**JOSEPH**  
**Olive Branch Week 10 Facilitation Guide**  
**Faithful Until Death**

**Start talking**

What has been your greatest takeaway from the Joseph series?

**Start thinking.**

What character traits from your own life do you want to see in your children?

**Start sharing.**

[Read Genesis 49:22-26](#). Talk about the ways that the presence of God is presented in Jacob's blessing of Joseph. Talk about a time when you experienced the presence of God in a powerful way. How do you know that God is present with you now?

Why is trouble such an important part of developing a life of faith? How and why does prosperity often interrupt the development of faith?

[Read Genesis 50:12-21](#). What do you think Joseph meant by asking, "Am I in the place of God?" How do we often put ourselves "in the place of God" by our attitudes and actions?

[Read Genesis 50:22-26](#). Why was Joseph's coffin left in Egypt? How was this a part of Joseph's legacy of faith? What are some ways that we can leave a legacy of faith for future generations?

**Start praying.**

Ask God to use Feed the Need this year to bring food and the Gospel to our community.

**Start doing.**

Write down what you want chiseled on your tombstone.