

UNEXPECTED

“Legacy”

May 8, 2016

“I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt. “Now hurry back to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately! You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. I will take care of you there for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.” Genesis 45:4-11 (NLT)

“Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers... get your father and all of your families, and return here to me. I will give you the very best land in Egypt, and you will eat from the best that the land produces... Don’t worry about your personal belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.” Genesis 45:17-20 (NLT)

“They left Egypt and returned to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan. “Joseph is still alive!” they told him. “And he is governor of all the land of Egypt!” Jacob was stunned at the news—he couldn’t believe it. But when they repeated to Jacob everything Joseph had told them, and when he saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, their father’s spirits revived. Then Jacob exclaimed, “It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I must go and see him before I die.” Genesis 45:25-28 (NLT)

When our story ends:

1. Some will hate the way their story ends.

“We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” Romans 8:28 (NLT)

2. Those in God’s family will love the way the story ends.

- If our life is awesome, we still haven’t seen anything yet.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagine what God has prepared for those who love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9 (NLT)

- If our life is terrible, it will all be worth it someday.

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

3. We can’t know what God is up to until the story ends.

Leadership Tip!

You will never have all the answers to questions that come up during life group.

Make sure you are utilizing your resources.

Your encourager, other members of your life group and if you don't already...

find a mentor you can go to for advice and direction.

UNEXPECTED - LEGACY**STARTER QUESTIONS:**

What is having a legacy mean?

Who has a legacy that sticks out to you in your life?

Did they have tough times in building their legacy?

As of today, what do you think your legacy is?

MAIN IDEA:

We are currently in a series titled "Unexpected", looking at the life of Joseph and how we can relate to his story. Last week we heard from Dr. Nabil Costa from Lebanon, ministering as a minority Christian in a majority Muslim country.

This week we are discussing legacy. Joseph had quite a legacy. He was sold into slavery by his own brothers and yet, he made the most out of a terrible situation. Over time he came into favor with the pharaoh of Egypt, resulting in him becoming a very influential and powerful man in that country.

Often we want our legacy built with "all gain and no pain", the reality is that legacies aren't built that way. Some of the best baseball players of all time have around a .330 batting average, which is an awesome achievement. As great an accomplishment as that is, the reality is they made an out 2/3 of the time they were up to bat. Their legacy is remembered for what they did do, not for what they didn't do.

As we look at the story this week, we see that Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to get food because of the famine in their land. Let's look at this week's key scripture...

READ Genesis 45 as a group

What would you have done in this situation?

How is Joseph's legacy revealed here?

As we read through this story, we see that Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. He had an opportunity to enact revenge, but he chose to provide for his brothers. The legacy Joseph had with the Pharaoh led him to give Joseph and his family fertile land to ensure their survival. We see that Joseph's legacy was about what he did do and not what he didn't do. We also see that Joseph gave God the glory.

How do we see God reflected in Joseph's legacy?

Look again at Genesis 45:4-11. Joseph credits God 4 times in this passage for his legacy:

Verse 5: "...because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you"

Verse 7: "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and save your lives by a great deliverance"

Verse 8: "...it was not you who sent me here, but God"

Verse 9: "God has made me lord of all Egypt."

NOTE: Have a discussion about these four verses.

What sticks out to you about these 4 verses?

Joseph's legacy depicts a journey from the depths of being sold into slavery, to becoming one of the most powerful people in Egypt. We see that he gives all the credit to God. Often that is not the case in our Christian walk. We want to take credit for our legacy and forget that God's hand is in everything. We are often completely unaware of what God is doing or how he is bringing about his ultimate purpose into this world and how our individual stories align with God's.

Describe a time that you forgot to give God credit for something you did?

In the message, Pastor Hank mentioned three key Points about legacies:

NOTE: Discuss each step. Have someone read the scripture associated with each step.

1. Some will hate the end of their story. *Romans 8:28 / John 14:15*
2. Those in God's family will love the way the story ends. *2 Corinthians 4:17*
3. We can't know what God is up to until the story ends. *1 Corinthians 2:9*

Which one of these steps can you relate to most??

FINAL THOUGHTS:

What do you want your legacy to be?

God has a legacy planned for all of us. Sometimes it might not line up with our idea of what we want our legacy to be, but we must remain faithful and understand that God knows what he is doing.

As Christians, as we begin to build our legacy, we cannot forget to give God the glory for all that we accomplish. Much like Joseph, any legacy will have tough times. In the end, the legacy God has for us should focus on what God used us to do, not what we did or didn't do.

How can our group pray for you?

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” - 1 Corinthians 11:1

CLOSE IN PRAYER

FAMILY FOCUS:

Want to give deep roots to your kids' faith? In today's culture, it is critical that we build a spiritual heritage into their lives — one that will overcome the lies assaulting them from an early age and give them a lasting passion for God. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 commands us to teach our children to love God with all their hearts by nurturing their spirits continually. Here are five methods we've used with our family over the years that will do just that:

1. Relate things in the natural world to the spiritual world and turn the “every day” into teaching moments.

While driving on a familiar rural road one day, we saw dozens of used blue smiley-faced Wal-Mart bags — ones we had never noticed before — caught in fences, roadside bushes, and blowing across the fields. We decided to have a contest to see who could spot the most. This led to a discussion about how many lies (ones that look fun) Satan scatters around us every day that we don't even notice unless we are looking for them.

Another time we observed a large willow tree that appeared to be dead on the lot we purchased to build a new home. As we began to prune the tree one Saturday morning, we cut away all the dead branches to reveal many living green branches underneath. In fact, when we were done, it looked like a different tree! We used this to talk about how God cuts off the dead branches in our lives, according to John 15:2, getting rid of the ones that don't bear fruit and pruning back the ones that disguise our faith with unbecoming behaviors and character traits. The cutting away may be painful, but the results make us healthy and beautiful.

2. Feed them the Word daily.

Before starting their day, we have our kids read (or read to them) verses that are relevant to their lives, which are found in Mom or Dad's quiet time earlier that morning. We print them out on 5X7 index cards and then have them sign the card to let us know they've read it. Now that our girls are older, we have even emailed verses to them and asked them to respond when they have questions or comments. Verses are kept in a notebook that can be reused and will also remind our kids later how we consistently built the truth into their lives.

3. Journal prayers for them and letters to them regularly.

I don't want to forget my specific prayers for my children and God's specific answers to those prayers, so I use a separate notebook or blank journal for each child. When they become adults, I plan on handing over these journals to them so they will be able to see a tangible record of both my love for them and God's faithful answers on their behalf.

Writing brief letters and thoughts to them (in the same journal) is a great way to record your feelings and observations about them, and will be a reminder to them of significant spiritual events. Someday they will understand "your side of the story" when they read about your love and desire to do what was best for them, especially during difficult times or conflicts. You will feel better too, just getting your heart and motives down on paper.

4. Serve together to build mercy, compassion, and action into the lives of our little ones.

As a family, we've dressed up as clowns to visit people in the hospital (we purchased inexpensive clown suits in flea markets and yard sales), spent Thanksgiving dinner serving the homeless in a local shelter, secretly delivered care packages to people we knew who were down and out, and cleaned homes for people who were injured or sick. One time we planned a surprise getaway dinner for a busy couple we knew. After they left for dinner, we cleaned their house, lit candles, put on romantic music, and brought their kids to our house for the night — an additional surprise when they got home.

5. Shock them with important spiritual lessons.

We really wanted to impress on our kids the seriousness of the battle raging for their hearts and minds in a world full of lies, and how important it is that they feed on God's Word regularly. So we asked God (something we do frequently), the Source of truth and creativity, to give us a graphic object lesson.

When the idea came to us, we sat our kids down and explained to them that we had not fed our family's pet gerbil, "Squeakers," for a couple of days, so he was really hungry. Much to their shock and horror, we then poured a box of "D-Con" mouse killer into the cage. We explained that just like Squeakers was hungry, we too are created with a spiritual hunger for God. If we don't fill it up with a consistent relationship with Him and His Word, our hunger is going to drive us to feed on the lies that Satan (and the world) throws our way. These lies may look like good food, but over time they will kill our faith and the awesome plans that God has for our lives. We reminded them that when it comes to wanting to ruin their lives, Satan has no pity or compassion — he is ruthless.

Afterward, we explained (to our relieved kids) that we had swapped out D-Con for harmless mouse food — Squeakers was going to be just fine. But they will never forget the lesson!

Pass the Baton

As parents, we need to make a habit of building life-saving truth into our children's lives. With just a little creativity and attention to the opportunities around you, daily situations can be turned into powerful and memorable teaching moments. I challenge you to leave a lasting spiritual legacy — take the baton and pass it on to your children. They will thank you forever!

Take this time to talk to the kids about having a legacy and get their input on how they see theirs playing out. Remind your kids to always give the glory to God for their legacy.