

Joseph – Gen 37-50

If you’ve just joined us, we’re starting a new series this week, based on our theme for the year, which is **Simple – Learn the Lessons, Live the Life**
And it comes from 1 Cor 10:11 where it says that the examples and events of those who have gone before us, were *written down for our instruction*
The implication being that we should learn the lessons from their day, in order to live the life in ours – the life God *requires* of us; the life he *desires* for us

So we’re going to go back to the OT this fall, and look at some of the heroes of our faith to do so, starting with **Joseph** in Gen 37 & Acts 7
We’re going to look at several passages in order to identify the lessons of Joseph’s life, but to do so we first need to *review* **HIS LIFE**
And that’s where Act 7:8-16 comes in – it’s a summary from Stephen, of Joseph’s life

I think Joseph’s life is best remembered in 5 stages, starting with his . . .

• **Betrayal**

Joseph was one of the 12 sons Jacob – whose families later became the 12 tribes of Israel
And his brothers hated him; They hated him b/c . . .
Joseph tattled on them (37:2b)
Their dad, Jacob, loved him more than the rest, as shown by his special robe (37:3)
Joseph had some dreams that he recounted to his brothers, which showed them bowing down to him in service and allegiance
They hated him

So much so that they seized him, stripped him of his beloved robe, and threw him in a pit
At first intending to kill him, but then deciding to make some money by selling him to some traders that “happened” to be coming by . . .
Who took him to Egypt and sold him into . . .

• **Slavery**

At which point he was 17 years old when Potiphar bought him
And found that he was so good and so trustworthy, that he put him in charge of his entire household for the next 11 years
Not a great situation, but not the worst it could have been either

Until that is, Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him
Day after day it says (39:10), she tried to get him to lie with her, but he wouldn’t do it
Until one day she got mad about it and accused him of trying to rape her, which landed Joseph in prison – that’s the 3rd stage of his life . . .

• **Imprisonment**

From bad to worse, he spent the next 2 years there, but still served faithfully, and made the most of a bad situation

And it was during that time, that Joseph met two of Pharaoh’s personal servants with whom he was upset – his cupbearer and chief baker
Both of whom had a dream, and both of which Joseph interpreted

The cupbearer, Joseph said, was to be released in 3 days and restored to his position in Pharaoh’s court, while the baker was to be killed

Sure enough, after 3 days, the baker was hung, and the cupbearer restored
But despite Joseph’s plea to remember him, he forgot – he forgot all about him

Until a while later when Pharaoh himself had some dreams, which none of his magicians could interpret, and the cupbearer, “memory refreshed,” suggested he consult Joseph

So he pulled Joseph out of prison, told him his dreams . . .
And Joseph not only related the meaning – that Egypt was to have 7 years of plenty in the land, followed by 7 years of famine . . .
But he also told him what to do about it in order to avert disaster, and not perish
At which point, Pharaoh appointed him as second in command in all of Egypt

A position that led to considerable . . .

• **Influence**

So Joseph ruled, storing up grain during the years of plenty, and then selling it back to the Egyptians and surrounding nations, during the years of blight

And it just so happened that 2 years into the famine, his long lost brothers showed up from Canaan to buy some grain
It had been 22 years since they had last seen one another, and though they didn’t recognize him, he knew them immediately, but didn’t let on

And through a series of agonizing deceptions that Joseph put them through – deceptions that were intended to test their integrity and discern their heart . . .
The family was eventually reconciled and reunited

Which is the last stage of Joseph’s life . . .

• **Reconciliation**

Assured of Joseph’s grace, and support, and protection . . .
Jacob moved the entire family to Egypt, where they begin to multiply in numbers, and flourish as God’s people

And it’s at the end of Jacob’s life, that Joseph utters those famous words to his brothers re their betrayal 39 years before, saying . . .
What you meant as evil against me, God meant for good.
And it wasn’t you who sent me here, but God. (45:8)
Great truths about God’s sovereignty, written down for our instruction, that we would learn the lessons for ourselves (**OUR LESSONS**)

The first of which is . . .

Lesson 1 – Never underestimate the power of God’s presence, in your life

• His presence first of all – *to protect you*
It’s implied over and over again by the account of Joseph’s life in Genesis . . .
But stated explicitly in Acts 7:9-10 – *God was with him* [there’s the presence part], *and rescued him out of all his afflictions* [that’s the protection part]

God didn’t spare him from all hardship, but he did protect his life
And the same is true of you and I, who by faith, live for Jesus Christ
God is present within you, to protect you
Never underestimate his power to do so

Does that mean you'll never suffer harm? Not at all, we've talked about that
But it does mean that you will never perish – that eternal life is yours
It does mean that no one will ever snatch you out of his hand (Jn 10:27-30)
It does mean that though man may kill your body, he can't harm your soul

And sometimes, sometimes (at God's choosing), it means you'll be protected from
physical harm as well
Most of the occasions of which I think we'll never know, until the hindsight of heaven
when we look back with the Lord and see it all so clearly
When we look back and learn of his gracious protection, simply b/c he was *with* us

In the meantime, never underestimate that
Never underestimate the power of God's presence to protect your life

- And never underestimate the power of God's presence – *to win the favor of others*
Like he did with Potiphar in 39:1-4 – it's the first of 3 examples of this in Joseph's life
The Lord was *with* Joseph, and consequently he found favor in the eyes of Potiphar

And the same was true of the jailer, the keeper of the prison 39:19-22
Once again, God's presence enabled Joseph to find favor in the sight of the jailer

And the 3rd example is the favor he found with Pharaoh in 41:37-40
He found favor from the most powerful man on earth at the time, b/c of the presence of
God's Spirit in him
Oh, Pharaoh may not have recognized that presence as Yahweh, but he *did* recognize a
divine presence that led to his favor
The very thing that Stephen stated explicitly in Act 7:10 – *God was with him . . . and
gave him favor . . . with Pharaoh, king of Egypt*

Never underestimate the power of God's presence in your life, to win the favor of others
It happened with Abraham, it happened with Joseph, it happened with Daniel, it
happened with the Israelites as a whole . . .
It happened with Paul, it happened with the early church (Acts 2:47) . . .
And it's still happening today – not in every single situation, we'll see that in a minute
But often enough to take note and realize that God's presence goes a long way in
people's eyes, even though they may not acknowledge him as Lord

Our church is a living testimony of that
The favor that we've received from people outside of our church, and continue to
receive, is astounding
In fact, it's nothing short of miraculous sometimes

- And third, never underestimate the power of God's presence in your life – *to help you
succeed*
Like Joseph succeeded in slavery, on behalf of his master (39:3)
And the same was true in prison (39:23)

And later on in ch47, when Joseph was ruling over the distribution of the grain . . .
He was so successful, that he ended up acquiring *all* the money in Egypt, *all* the
livestock, *all* the land, and the servitude of *all* the people – in return for the grain

And they were happy about it (47:13-26)
Never underestimate the power of God's presence in your life, to help you succeed
It's not a magic formula where everything you touch turns to gold

But when you're facing a difficult task, especially an impossible one, don't
underestimate God's power to help you . . .
To help you succeed, and find favor, and protect you
Learn the lesson and live the life

Lesson 2 – Never underestimate the effect of your witness, on others

- An effect that's often times *positive*, but sometimes *negative*
Sometimes your witness for the Lord has a negative effect on those around you

Like when Joseph *spoke the truth* to his brothers – and they betrayed him (37:18-28)
Sometimes speaking the truth, even in love (which should always be the case), has a
negative effect on those who hear
You shouldn't be surprised about that, or take it lightly

Or how about when Joseph *did what was right* by spurning the advance of Potiphar's
wife?
It had a negative effect didn't it? She falsely accused him, and he went to prison
Never underestimate the effect of your witness in doing what's right

And what about the time *he helped* the cupbearer by interpreting his dream?
Only to be forgotten the moment he was freed (40:13-14, 20-23)

Sometimes your witness in speaking the truth, or doing the right thing, or helping others –
backfires
Sometimes it has a very powerful, but adverse affect
Sometimes it's the aroma of death, instead of the aroma of life (2 Cor 2:14-17)
Not b/c you did the *wrong* thing, but the *right* one

So be prepared to take your lumps
Be prepared for things to get worse before they get better on some occasions
B/c sometimes, a negative effect is unavoidable

- Nor should you underestimate the *positive* effect of your witness on others
It's not all bad; In fact, often times it's very good

Like when Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, giving *God* the credit, and he still
responded favorably (41:15-16,25,28,32)
Even though Joseph was explicit about God being the one who gave the interpretation,
Pharaoh responded positively
Never underestimate the positive effect of your witness – *when you name God's name*

And never underestimate the positive effect of your witness – *when you use your God-
given gifts*
Like when Joseph used his God-given wisdom to counsel Pharaoh as to what to do in
light of the coming famine (41:33-40) . . .

Resulting in Pharaoh elevating him to unthinkable status for someone who was considered an abomination to the Egyptians
I'd say that's a positive response

And never underestimate the positive effect of your witness – *when you treat people well*
Like when Joseph's *compassion grew warm* toward his brothers (43:30), and he . . .
Returned their money, invited them into his home, made provision for their move, and forgave their wrongs
It had a positive effect that resulted in reconciliation, and love among brothers

Never underestimate the impact of your witness – your words, actions, integrity, obedience, humility
It may not be well received, but it will always have an effect

Lesson 3 – Never underestimate the importance of your part, in God's plan

It's one of the implications of Joseph's tear-filled words in Gen 45:7-8 when he finally reveals himself to his brothers
IOW your betrayal was a part of God's plan; He used it to accomplish his purposes

Who would have ever thought that the betrayal of a 17 year old punk, initially left for *dead*, would lead to the preservation and *life* of God's people?

Who would have thought that God could, let alone would, use evil for good?

Who would have thought that God would use the son of a *deceiver* (Jacob), to rule a nation with *integrity*?

Who would have thought that 11 years of slavery and 2 years of prison was the path to *anything* of value, let alone leadership and influence of the highest magnitude?

Who would have thought that 2 of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, both born of an Egyptian woman, the daughter of a pagan priest nonetheless . . .
Would become 2 of the 12 tribes of Israel . . .
And that one, Ephraim, would provide Israel with one of its greatest leaders in Joshua?

Who would have thought that the circumstances of Joseph's life would lead to the establishment of the Israelites in Egypt . . .
Fulfilling what God told Abraham some 600 years earlier in Gen 15 . . .
And setting the stage for their eventual slavery, and then miraculous release 430 years later?

Who would have thought that Joseph's life would be used to preserve Judah's life, from whose lineage Christ *himself* would be born, some 1850 years later?

Who would have thought that God would use Joseph to save a nation, the nation of Israel, so that Christ could save the *world*, 4000 years later?

And who would have thought that Joseph's life would be such a perfect picture of Christ's life, so that when he came, he'd be recognized as the Savior he is, just like Joseph?

Think about it . . .

Both were dearly loved by their fathers
Both were shepherds of their father's "sheep"
Both were sent to those who hated them
Both were subjects of plots to harm them

Both were tempted at difficult times
Both were taken to Egypt
Both were sold for the price of a slave
Both were falsely accused by those with ulterior motives

Both were bound as common criminals
Both were stripped of their robes
Both were joined by 2 other prisoners – one who was saved, and the other who wasn't
Both were exalted after they suffered

Both gave away food – one for bread, the other for life
Both forgave those who wronged them
Both were used to save many
Both were the subject of evil intent that God meant for good

A perfect picture of the Savior to come, so he'd be recognized for who he is
No wonder it was written down for our instruction; Do you see him?

And finally, who would've thought that Jacob's decision to send Joseph to check on his brothers as a teenager . . .
Would lead to the fulfillment of such a grand plan of redemption, that continues to this day?

Like Joseph says in **Gen 50:20** – *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*
Who would've thought that those words would have such prophetic importance for you and I?

- Who would have thought? Nobody; And yet that's exactly what God did
He used Joseph, and the part he played, to literally save the world (**Summary**)

Never underestimate the importance of your part in God's plan
Oh, you might not be Joseph, or Pharaoh, or Jacob, or Judah . . .
And your circle of influence may pale in comparison to theirs . . .
But in God's eyes, the part you play is no less important in the lives you *do* touch
And who would have thought that he'd use *you* to do it?

Learn the lessons, and live the life
B/c you never know the part you're playing in God's grand plan to save the world