

People of Genesis, Part 6: Joseph

- I. We're winding up our series on 6 characters of Genesis today, focusing on Jacob's Son, Isaac's grandson, and Abraham's great-grandson: Joseph. His story is covered in the last 20 chapters of Genesis. Today, we'll be focusing mostly on Genesis 37-42. If you'd like to read the whole story, it is in Genesis 30-50.
 - A. During his time in exile with his Uncle Laban, Jacob's wife Leah, and her handmaid Zilpah, and his favorite wife Rachel's handmaid Bilhah together gave Jacob 10 sons and one daughter...11 kids from 3 women.
 1. This was painful for Rachel, who was Jacob's favorite wife by a large margin, but was also barren, which was a considerable cultural shame in her time. She desperately prayed that God would let her bear a child.
 2. **Genesis 30:22 ESV** Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. **23** She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." **24** And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the Lord add to me another son!"
 - B. The first detail we read about Joseph's life after his birth is that at one point, he brought a bad report to his Father about his stepbrothers who were the children of the handmaidens. This didn't set him off on the right foot with his brothers!
 1. But the next verse gives us more reasons for the tension between Joseph and all of his brothers. **Genesis 37:3a ESV** Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age.
 - a) How long had he waited for his beloved Rachel to bear him a child? Moreover, Rachel had died after giving birth to her second son, Benjamin, so Joseph and his brother were valuable, tangible reminders of her.
 - b) As a token of his great favor, Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful, multicolored robe to set him apart from the rest of his sons, and affirm his position. Unfortunately, the message wasn't lost on any of the other 11 boys.
 2. Additionally, God gave Joseph dreams indicating he was destined for greatness, even that his family would bow before him in homage one day. When he told his brothers these dreams, it sealed their resentment for him.
 - C. All this came to a head when Jacob sent Joseph to look for his brothers who were grazing their flocks in a far country in order to check on their welfare. When the brothers saw him coming, they began to plot to kill him, saying, "We will see what will become of his dreams." However his oldest brother Reuben persuaded them to throw him in a pit in the wilderness and not to kill him.
 1. They stripped the robe that his father had adorned him with off of him and threw him into a waterless pit, and left him to die.
 2. But while they were eating, his greedy brother Judah, suggested that they sell him as a slave and make a profit from their grudge. Passing merchants paid them 20 pieces of silver for their brother and they thought that was that.
 - D. They completed their deception by dipping Joseph's beautiful robe in the blood of a slaughtered goat so that they could convince his father he had been killed be a wild animal. Jacob was devastated, refusing to be comforted by anyone.
- II. The merchants sold Joseph in the slave markets in Egypt. Though he was a descendant of Father Abraham and a resident of the promised land, he would be banished to dwell in Egypt for the rest of his days.

- A. Eventually he was sold as a slave to Potiphar, an officer of the Pharaoh. But while he was a slave, something amazing happened. God was with Joseph, never forsaking him, and therefore he grew in favor and prospered in everything he did. Before long, Potiphar entrusted him with the management of his entire household, not concerning himself with anything but the food that he ate.
1. But there was danger in the house! Potiphar's wife was enflamed with lust for him since **Genesis 39:6b Joseph was handsome in form and appearance**. Everyday she turned up the heat in hopes of sleeping with him.
 2. Though he could have convinced himself that things were going good, and he was only a slave anyway, he steadfastly resisted her on the basis that it would be a horrible sin, bringing dishonor to both his master and his God.
 - a) One day she insisted so strongly that she grabbed his clothes and demanded that he sleep with her. But he tore out of his clothes and out the door, determined to guard his purity and his conscience.
 - b) **2 Timothy 2:22 ESV So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.**
- B. To cover her tracks, she concocted a story that Joseph had tried to rape her and that she had cried out, causing him to flee. Potiphar was furious! He had poor Joseph arrested and thrown in the dungeon with the rest of the kings prisoners to rot there. But again, God was with Joseph and he increased in favor! The warden put him in charge of all the prison and all its administration.
1. On day, after being in prison for several years, Joseph happened upon two prisoners who had once been officials in Pharaoh's court. They both had dreams that troubled them because they did not understand their meaning.
 - a) Joseph told them that all interpretation belongs to God and asked them to tell him what they had dreamed. When the first man told his dream, God revealed the meaning to Joseph, and he shared it with the man - he would be released from prison in 3 short days.
 - b) When the second man heard the interpretation was so positive, he was anxious to relay his dream as well. His story would be different though. He would be executed by Pharaoh in just 3 short days.
 2. Joseph asked the first man to remember him, and plead his case to those on the outside, as he was innocent and had been falsely imprisoned.
- C. But the man was released, just as Joseph had predicted, and the first day past, then a week, a month, a year and before long, two full years, and the man completely forgot about Joseph. But one night, Pharaoh himself had a dream (two dreams actually!). He too was troubled as he tried to understand them.
1. In his dream, he saw 7 healthy looking cows coming up out of the Nile. They were a rancher's dream! They were fat as they fed in the reed grass. But then, 7 of the scrawniest, sorriest looking cows came out of the Nile and devoured the healthy cows, though they looked no better for it.
 2. In his next dream, he saw 7 gorgeous, ripe heads of grain growing on the same stalk. But then the stalk sprouted 7 wind-burned, thin and limp heads of grain. Like in the 1st dream, they swallowed the good grain.

- D. Pharaoh awoke and summoned all of his counselors and magicians to explain his dream, but they were clueless to comprehend the meaning.
1. It was at that exact moment that Pharaoh's cupbearer who had served time with Joseph, realized his error. He told Pharaoh of his time locked up.
 2. **Genesis 41:12 ESV** A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. **13b** And as he interpreted to us, so it came about.
- E. Pharaoh summoned Joseph immediately, so Joseph bathed, shaved, changed clothes and appeared before the King. When he said he heard how Joseph interpreted dreams, Joseph said: **Genesis 41:16 ESV** "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." With that, Pharaoh told Joseph the dream.
1. Joseph explained that both dreams meant the same thing. 7 years of bumper crops were coming - an incredible abundance! But they would be followed by 7 years of devastating famine and lack in Egypt.
 2. Because of this news, Joseph suggested that the king find a wise man, filled with integrity, who could collect 20% of the national harvest for the first seven years so that it could be distributed during the famine, and the nation would be saved.
- F. At this, Pharaoh looks at Joseph and replies: **Genesis 41:38b ESV** "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" **39** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. **40** You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you."
1. The king then exalted Joseph, giving him his own signet ring, royal robes, a gold chain for his neck, and a chariot from his own fleet to ride in, with an escort demanding that people bow before him. He even gave him a wife.
 2. So Joseph became the 2nd most powerful man in the world, and because of his administration, his service, his wisdom and his work, many were saved.
- G. **Genesis 41:56 ESV** So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. **57** Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.
1. In the remainder of the story, we see that even Joseph's own brothers come to Egypt to buy food for their hungry families. And you'll never guess what they did when they showed up, not recognizing their long lost brother! They bowed before him! Just as Joseph had foreseen so long ago.
 2. But instead of gloating, or punishing them for their wickedness, Joseph blesses them thoroughly! After Jacob dies the brothers are in a full-scale panic about might be awaiting them. When they tell him that daddy wanted him to forgive them, listen to his response: **Genesis 50:19b ESV** "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? **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. **21** So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

III. What a great story! But what is **the point** of it? Does it teach not to play favorites with our kids? To run from sexual sin? To be patient when falsely accused? To endure when we're forgotten? Maybe it speaks to some of these things, but I don't think that is the point. As he did so many times in the Old Testament, I think God is painting a picture for his people of what he will do for us ultimately through Christ.

A. You see, just as Joseph was born **improbably** to a barren woman, Christ Jesus was **impossibly** born to a virgin¹. Just as Joseph's brothers despised him, this world hates Jesus. **John 15:18 ESV** "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you." But the Father has highly favored and eternally loves his one and only Son²! He is robed in indescribable, unapproachable glory³.

1. Just like Joseph, Jesus foresaw and declared a coming day of glory. **Matthew 25:31 ESV** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne." Just like Joseph, many of those who heard these claims doubted and resented them⁴.
2. Just like Joseph, Jesus was tempted to compromise, but stood firm and defeated his tempter with faith towards God, and unshakeable integrity⁵.
3. Just like Joseph, Jesus' Father sent him into a far country to search for his brothers⁶. Just like Jesus, when he arrived in the far country, a conspiracy was hatched to put him to death⁷. As Joseph was stripped of his beautiful robe, Christ willingly laid the fullness of his glory aside⁸. As Joseph was sold for silver, Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver by Judas⁹.
4. Just like Joseph, Jesus was falsely accused, falsely arrested, and wrongfully condemned¹⁰. Just like Joseph, Christ was innocent of every accusation hurled at him. **1 Peter 2:22 ESV** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.
5. Just like Joseph, Jesus was abandoned by those he blessed and those he served¹¹. Just like Joseph, Jesus was imprisoned not in a dungeon, but in a tomb, left for dead¹².
 - a) But just like Joseph, Jesus Christ heard the King's voice summoning him to come out¹³. Just like Joseph when he bathed, shaved and changed clothes, Jesus came out of his tomb different than he went in.
 - b) **Luke 24:36 ESV** As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" **37** But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. **38** And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? **39** See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." **40** And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. **41** And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate before them.

- B. And just like Joseph, the King has not only called Jesus out of the tomb that imprisoned him, but he has exalted him! He said before his ascension that all authority had been given to him in Heaven and earth. Paul tells us that God has highly exalted him, giving him a name above every other name, that at his name every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord¹⁴!
- IV. But more than anything, just like happened with Joseph, the exaltation of Christ means that salvation has come to the entire world¹⁵. Just like Joseph, Jesus would be fully justified if he condemned us for our wickedness, but instead, blesses us with grace¹⁶.
- A. Joseph made a provision of food for the people who were starving. They would have died had they not had what Joseph provided to sustain them.
1. **John 6:53b ESV** “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. **55** For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.
 2. Jesus has provided his body and his blood to give life to poor starving souls. Those that are full will find nothing of value in Christ. But to those who are frustrated by sin, confused by suffering, grieved by death, or exhausted by religion, Christ stands before you as a smorgasbord to feast upon.
- B. This is exactly what we celebrate each week at the Lord’s table. Let the hungry come and feast upon the goodness, the mercy, and the grace of the Lord. Jesus has suffered and been exalted to satisfy every longing within you.
1. Maybe you’re still spiritually at home, but all the supplies that you thought would sustain you have run out. There is famine all around you: spiritually, emotionally, physically, socially, financially. I’ve got good news for you!
 2. There is plenty of food for you in the Kingdom of the Lord! Get up, leave what you know, and come receive the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is waiting, and has provided sustenance for you there. It’s yours for the asking.
 3. **Isaiah 55:1 ESV** “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. **2** Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. **3** Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. **4** Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. **5** Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. **6** “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; **7** let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. **8** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. **9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. **10** “For as

the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, **11** so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. **12** “For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. **13** Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

- V. 1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

¹ Luke 1:34-35

² Luke 3:21-22

³ John 17:5

⁴ Matthew 26:65-68

⁵ Matthew 4:1-11

⁶ Matthew 15:24; Luke 19:10; John 3:16

⁷ John 11:47-53

⁸ Philippians 2:5-8

⁹ Matthew 26:15

¹⁰ Mark 14:53-59

¹¹ Mark 14:50; Luke 14:54-62

¹² Mark 15:46

¹³ Romans 10:9

¹⁴ Philippians 2:9-11

¹⁵ 1 John 2:2

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17-19