

The Development of God's Children

Fairview Memorial Missionary Baptist Church

Winter Bible Study 2021 – February 8th

Joseph

Introduction:

The introduction to Joseph that I would propose is we closely examine his end and then back into what made Joseph a man of God. And not just a man of God, but one that young Christians would do well to study and emulate (or pattern) their life after. I strongly contend that if you patterned your life after Joseph, you would have lived a good life.

After looking at the end of Joseph's life, we propose to examine the facts that surround three stages of his life as a youth, as a young adult, and in maturity. In youth we will start with Joseph's beginning, his home life and early development. It is often that the development stages has great impact on who someone grows up to become. Second, we examine the maturing of Joseph as a man of God. What relationship does he have with others and with God? What can we determine from this man's character and what wise traits should we adopt? Third, we will examine the mature man of God. What impact did Joseph have on others and everyone around? What impacts can the mature man of God can have should be far and reaching to effect his immediate family, extended family, the children of God, and other unbelievers?

During this lesson and at each stage we will try and pay close attention to the plans and path that God had mapped out for Joseph's life, the adversities that he faced, and the wisdom that he gained from following God. We will also look to the attributes that helped Joseph from Son to Slave, from trusted servant to jailed criminal and eventually ascending to the 2nd in command of the most powerful nation in the world at the time. Follow along with more for this remarkable story of Joseph.

What was the end of this man's life and why should be study him?

First and one of the most important points we want to make is to look at this man's end. This reminds me of one of Stephen Covey's leadership points, "begin with the end in mind." While not all that Covey teaches on leadership is scripturally sound, his point is extremely scriptural as the Bible is filled with people concerned about their eternity, serving God and their ability to impact the lives of others. Solomon as an example summarized what life should be about in his conclusion which is "Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

ⁱ While Joseph did not have the benefit of Solomon's wisdom written down in a scroll, God was with both these men.

In his great sermon, Stephen before his impending death spoke of Joseph, and stated that as “the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him”ⁱⁱ. Stephen directly quoted from Genesis 39:2, 3, 23 and 23 “... the Lord was with Him” or “the Lord was with Joseph”. While these words are spoken only a handful about other Old Testament patriarchs, none as to the number of times referenced in the scriptures about Joseph. Spurgeon once spoke that “Scripture frequently sums up a man’s life in a single sentence”ⁱⁱⁱ and this is certain a summary of the man Joseph’s life.

What is so important about this summary of Joseph’s life is not that Joseph was with the Lord, but more importantly the Lord was with Joseph. While subtle, this is an important distinction. Joseph’s relationship with the Lord is so close with the Lord is he was not only walking with the Lord, the Lord was walking with Joseph. As Jesus said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits”^{iv}. The relationship is evidenced by the actions that this man of faith demonstrated throughout his life. Additionally, this also provides strong evidence of God’s desire for a deep relationship with His children.

Loved and hated in the home – Joseph’s youth:

Joseph a product of the past:

Joseph’s home life was far from ideal and likely had elements of extreme dysfunction and should encourage us today that despite anyone’s circumstances, God is present and able to assist us. The biblical accounts of Joseph’s family also indicate moments of anger, deceit and greed with is common to all humanity. It is a blessing to see the biblical great’s flaws are open wounds for all see and learn. This provides us a realistic picture of humanity, sin and God’s remarkable love and redemption.

As with children Joseph’s youth is largely a product of the circumstances surrounding his mother and father Jacob and Rachael. Jacob and Rachael’s love story is immediate and lifelong. It truly was love at first sight for the couple.

Jacob was on the run from Esau and his brother after having purchased Esau’s birthright and deceived his father Isaac at death for his blessing. Rebekah, having helped Jacob deceive Isaac knew that Jacob’s life was in danger and sent him away. Knowing that Jacob would be on his own, Rebeckah encouraged Jacob to find a wife from his own family in Padanaram and not from the Canaanite women. While searching for his Uncle’s family, he fell in love with Rachael, Laban’s youngest daughter.

For wages, Jacob agreed to work seven years for Rachel’s hand in marriage.

Gen 29:19-20 “And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.”

Having worked for seven years for his true love, Jacob was deceived by Laban and was given Rachael's oldest sister Leah. Only until after this deception occurred, he was given Rachel. Then jealousy set in when Leah began to provide Jacob children, ultimately with both women giving Jacob their handmaid's to wife. The end result, four jealous wives and 12 children. Not the idea of family. While little is said and more implied, it was not the ideal family picture and very likely lead to considerable unhappiness.

God's plan for the family is found in Genesis.

Gen 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Any deviation from God's plan for the family is sinful and will lead to pain and unhappiness. Fortunately, this family is an example of how God can work through us and our families because we are in an imperfect world filled with imperfect people. God's plan will always remain the perfect pattern for all generations in striving for the family.

Outline of Joseph's life for future study:

Joseph's Youth:

Reflection: A Father's love as a gift is a constant reminder of the brother's envy, the coat of many colors.

Reflection: A naïve Joseph only makes things worse not knowing what his brothers are capable of.

Reflection: The Lord gives promises by dream; which trains Joseph for his future.

- Father and family strangers in the land of Canaan (Gen 37:1)
- Joseph a 17 year old with brothers feeding the flock (Gen 37:2)
- Joseph takes sides and tells on his brothers and father's wives of evil report to his father (Gen 37:2)
- A father's favorite - coat of many colors (Gen 37:3)
- Brother's hated him and could not even speak peaceably with him. (Gen 37:4; 5, 8)
- Dreams a tool for God in communicating with Joseph (Gen 37:7-10)
- A naïve, innocent son tells his brothers his dreams further creating a divide with his brothers (Gen 37:5)
- Make sure brothers, you hear this dream that I've dreamed (Gen 37:6)
- Brother's question little brother's dream indicating he would reign over them one day with hatred increasing (Gen 37:8, 11)
- A father's rebuke and disbelief of the dream, but considered what Joseph had said (Gen 37:10-11)

- A father's trust in family betrayed and a son's eager assistance (Gen 37:13-14).

The Betrayal of their own Flesh and Blood

Reflection: Joseph stripped of everything including his most precious gift.

Reflection: Envy's seed if left to grow results in evil fruits.

Reflection: A royal coat rent and stained with blood, symbolic of Christ's death upon the cross.

Reflection: Reuben wants to solve the problem but is unwilling to take a stand.

- A plot imagined and a trap set for Joseph (Gen 37:18-22)
- A royal robe stripped and cast into a pit (Gen 37:23-24)
- Better plans than killing their brother (Gen 37:25-27)
- Judah's solution is less messy, sell him as slave for twenty pieces of silver since he is your brother (Gen 37:28)
- Reuben was unwilling to side with Joseph in time of crisis, but was willing to quietly save him (Gen 37:29-30)
- The blood that would not cover over the brother's sin (Gen 37:31)
- A father's guilt for sending his son to check on his brothers (Gen 37:34)
- Jacob and a family in pain (Gen 37:34-35)
- Brother's guilt that lasts for years (Gen 42:21-22)

Growing up fast: Son to slave, to head of household, to criminal, to second highest in command of Egypt (age 17-30).

Reflection: What sorrow Joseph must have felt for being almost killed and sold own by his own brothers.

Reflection: Loss of the comfort of home for the first time and the love of mother and father not knowing when and if you would ever see them again.

Reflection: There is comfort in Abraham's prophecy, childhood dreams and a close relationship with God.

- Life proceeds in a new world in Potiphar's house (Gen 39:1-18)
- Learning Egyptian ways (Gen 39:1)
- Working your way up as a slave for up to 11 years in the Potiphar's household
- Lesson on how to treat temptation (Gen 39:12)
- In an Egyptian Prison before age 28 and likely the worse situation (Gen 39:19-40:23)

- More dreams: the baker and the butler. (Gen 40:1-23)
- The butler forgot Joseph for two more years (Gen 40:23)
- Pharaoh immediately delivers (Gen 41)

Joseph becomes second in charge when the society worships the first one in charge as a God.

Reflection: Upon reuniting with his brethren around age 39, Joseph has completely matured for the remaining 71 years of his life.

Reflection: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. “Rom 8:28

- Seven years of plenty – good ears of corn and fat cattle (Gen 41:1-7)
- Seven years of dearth -- bad ears of corn and scrawny cattle devour the good (Gen 41:1-7)
- A plan takes shape, Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams (Gen 41:14-37)
- Joseph promoted to second in charge and is now hard at work for 9 years (Gen 41:38-57)

Homecoming.

- The first trip after two years of famine (Gen 42:1-28)
- Simeon chosen by Jacob to stay behind (was a son of Leah ... Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) (Gen 42:29-38)
 - “And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, (Gen 34:30)
- Return to Egypt (Gen 43:1-34)
- Joseph’s testing the brothers and their reactions (Gen 44:1-34)
- PANIC – Irony that more garments are rent (Gen 44:13)
 - Father will not make it if Benjamin is not with us.
 - Judah willing to substitute self (they have grown up also)
- The guilt of evil deeds remain after 22 years (Gen 42:21-22) *And they said one to another, We [are] verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. 22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.*
- Homecoming – A time of Healing: **Times of Healing:**

Gen 45:1-8, 11-14 *1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. 2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. 3 And Joseph*

*said unto his brethren, I [am] Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. 4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I [am] Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. 5 **Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.** 6 For these two years [hath] the famine [been] in the land: and yet [there are] five years, in the which [there shall] neither [be] earing nor harvest. 7 **And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.** 8 So now [it was] not you [that] sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. ... 11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet [there are] five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. 12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that [it is] my mouth that speaketh unto you. 13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. 14 **And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.***

Life for Jacob and Joseph in Egypt.

- God speaks to Jacob providing him promises “*I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hands upon thine eyes.* (Gen 46:3-4).
- Jacob lived 17 years in Egypt to age 147 (Gen 47:28)
- Joseph is 400 years in Egypt before he comes out (Gen 50:24-25).

Closing Thoughts:

Joseph’s life is remarkable and illustrates many of the traits that are important to us today as Christians. We must believe the promises of God and fine God’s purposes in both good times and bad. We must trust that God is in control of our lives even when we do not understand his greater plan. The guilt of our sins should always be repented of and placed under the blood of the lamb.

Always remember that God wants us to live according to his standards and exercise forgiveness, mercy, grace, wisdom, righteous living. Whether you are a loved child growing up with your family, 17 years old and sold as a slave, another person’s property for 11 years, more than two years classified as a common criminal and left in an Egyptian prison, or second in command of the most powerful country in the world, serve the Lord diligently and he will bless you.

Joseph believed God to the end.

Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

Gen 50:24-25 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence>

ⁱ Eccl 12:13

ⁱⁱ Acts 7:9

ⁱⁱⁱ A miniature Portrait of Joseph; A sermon delivered on the Lord's Day Morning, July 24, 1881, C.H. Spurgeon

^{iv} Matt 3:11