

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Final Week of the 3-Week Series, "Stories of the Bible"

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So there's a lawyer, a doctor, a little and a priest, and they're taking this afternoon flight. And then some trouble happened to the engine. And as much as the pilot tried, things were not going well, and the plane started going down. So the pilot said, "Hey, we've got to get out of here we've got to bail!" And so he grabbed a parachute and he jumped out. But there were only three parachutes left for the four of them.

So first the doctor says, "I am a doctor; I save lives. I must live!" And he grabs a parachute and jumps out.

Then the lawyer says, "I am the smartest man in the world. And it would be a shame to waste all of my intelligence and wisdom. I deserve to live!" And he grabs a parachute and jumps out.

And then the priest looks at the little boy with love and kindness in his eyes. And he says, "Son, I've lived a long and wonderful and blessed life. You take the last parachute and go live in peace. Enjoy your life!"

And then the little boy hands the parachute back to the priest and says, "Don't worry, Father. The smartest man in the world just jumped out with my backpack."

[Congregation laughs] And so ... Okay ... Alright ... It's an oldie but a goodie!"

So how many people here have people in your life who like you; love you; adore you; do so much for you; and you're among their favorite people in the world? How many people have those kind of folks in your life? And how many people have people in your life who don't like you; don't love you; and even can't stand you? And you're definitely not one of their favorites! [Congregation laughs] Anybody have some people like that in your life?

And so how many people know that you are destined for happiness; for greatness; and to live a wonderful life, but you've had some bumps and roadblocks? Some losses and troubled and times? And even moments when you thought, "*Man, one thing after another!*" How many people have had time like that? You know your life's good, but you've got some road bumps along the way?

Well, today we're going to wrap up our three-week Bible stories series. Week #1 we did David and Goliath. And last week we did Samson and Delilah. And today we're going to wrap up with a wonderful message from the story of Joseph and His Brothers. It appears in the book of Genesis Chapter 37 to 50. And I'll just kind of summarize it for you:

Joseph was one of Jacob's 12 sons. And he adored him and liked him the most. He favored him big time and didn't hide it. And gave him the famous coat of many colors, which was a symbol of that favoritism and the jealousy of his brothers.

And so then he would tell them the visions he had -- the dreams. And he would tell his brothers, "*Oh, I see you all bowing down to me and the moon bowing down to me. And the stars! Everything bowing down to me.*" So it not triggered only jealousy, but it triggered some hatred and some desire to sell him; to get rid of him.

So [his brothers] sold him into slavery. Then he became a servant in Potiphar's house, who was one of Pharaoh's ministers. And then he was approached by Potiphar's wife, who came on to him. He rebuked her, and then she said that he enticed her and got him thrown in jail for two years. While he was in jail for the two years, he interpreted dreams of a baker and a cup bearer, predicting -- and was accurate about -- their lives.

And so two years later, the Pharaoh was having some dreams, and he couldn't figure out what they meant. And word got out to Pharaoh that Joseph interpreted dreams. So he interpreted the dreams. The first one meant that there was going to be seven years of feast. And the second one, there was going to be seven years of famine. And Joseph warned Pharaoh that they needed to store up and prepare for the famine.

And so Pharaoh hired Joseph to be the second in command -- like the governor -- of Egypt. And they did all the storing; they saved thousands of lives. They prepared for it.

And while they were selling this grain, Jacob found out that there was grain available in Egypt, and sent his sons to buy from Joseph ... but they didn't know it was Joseph! And Joseph kind of kept that hidden until he kind of tested to see if they were still the way they had been, or if they had kind of repented and were more loving ... which they were. So then he sent for his father and his brothers, and they all moved and relocated in Egypt.

And so, in this story Joseph is the absolute hero. He is the star of it. And because of all that he overcame and all that he was able to rise to ... But also he was kind of like a precursor and a preconfiguration of the Christ.

And so, when we look at these stories, we don't just look at the individual characters. Each character represents something that's going on in us -- some aspect and dynamic of ourselves and some of our behaviors -- so we can learn how to move through the struggles to achieve a level of oneness and a full realization of God within ourselves.

So Joseph represents a consciousness that is willing to increase and expand: increase and expand in faith; in understanding; in character; in vitality; and in abundance, as well. And the increased progression of the soul awakening to the fullness of its nature.

Now, the coat of many colors really kind of represents -- which was a seamless coat -- represents that he was clothed in Truth. He was clothed in God's wisdom and understanding. The only other person we know in the Bible that had a seamless coat was Jesus. And so you can see that similarity that Jesus was absolutely clothed in divine and spiritual wisdom, and clothed in a oneness with God.

Now, the brothers represent that part of us that can be jealous; that can be petty; that can be vindictive. That part of us that is not always happy for other people's success. That part of us that can sometimes just see lack and negativity and limitation.

And then Pharaoh was the ruler of the kingdom. And he's the one that freed Joseph from the prison. He's the one who promoted him to that high position. So he really represents that aspect in us that is the ruler of our own lives. We're the ones who can free ourselves; we're the ones who can choose to elevate ourselves to do greater things.

So what we're going to do is look at three things that Joseph demonstrates, which I think are vital spiritual practices to get through the bumps of life to achieve greater things; to achieve the calling and the purpose for which we have come here.

And so the first thing he did was: **HE DEEPENED AND EXPANDED HIS FAITH**. Joseph was known for his great faith in God and his faithfulness to God. He absolutely, unshakably believed that God had called him to do something great, and he had this absolute belief -- without doubt -- that God would get him through circumstance or any trouble to fulfill God's will and to fulfill his purpose.

And so faith was his absolute rock and foundation of his life and all of his success, and all that he went through and got through.

The Book of Hebrews, Chapter 11, Verse 1 and 3 says:

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible."

And so what he's truly trying to get at is: That's the power of faith! You can't see it, but it's something that you believe is absolutely possible. And if you look at Joseph being able to interpret dreams gave him the ability to have the connection of the seen and the unseen, and to know that there is a relationship. And faith is that relationship. It gave him the ability to see beyond the circumstances to know that he was connected to the cosmic flow, and that he could surrender and connect to his absolute oneness with God and his divine purpose.

And one of the things is: His faith was so strong that he connected with divine timing. That faith is just also trusting that things will be done in the right time. Joseph had to wait 13 years between serving Potiphar and being in prison before he was promoted to the second in command, the governor.

Now, most of us ... We want to have faith that things will happen, but we want it, and we want it now! One of the things Joseph didn't do: He didn't force anything. He didn't rush anything. I'll bet you we all have something in our lives that we want now, and we'd like it a little quicker. We'd like it to move faster. And that's how strong his faith was. He trusted divine timing. He trusted divine order -- that things would happen when they needed to. Because he needed to mature; he needed to grow. Sometimes we think we're ready for that thing we want, but we aren't fully prepared on the consciousness level -- on the mental and emotional level.

I've given this example before. My mom was just the queen of one-line sermons. She taught me so many things. And this is my favorite one, and I've shared it before. And so, I would help her bake cakes. I'd help her butter and flour the pan, and pour it in. And she'd say, "Pre-heat the oven to 400 and in 45 minutes the cake will be ready."

So I'd put the cake in and I'd be eager and be looking in there, looking in there; wanting to open it. A little impatient! I said, "Mom! If we turned it to 500 degrees, we could have the cake in 20 minutes." [Congregation laughs]

And my mom's wise answer was so good. She said, "Yes, we could do that. And it might look cooked on the outside, but it won't be cooked and ready on the inside."

And how often do we need to be reminded of that when we want to rush to get whatever we want, and we want it now? Not realizing at a deeper level we may not be prepared for it.

And that's what Joseph was so good about doing. He stayed present and continued to just do the work he needed to do right where he was that absolutely was able to prepare him.

You know, whenever we hear that thing -- "*You just need faith the size of a mustard seed*" -- it sounds like, aw, you hardly need any faith at all, and everything will be done. No! The story says the mustard seed is one of the smallest of all seeds that grows into one of the largest trees.

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... support more life. Meaning as we grow and expand and deepen our faith, it supports our dreams. It supports greater possibilities. It supports greater awareness and understanding. We have to grow and expand and deepen our faith.

Studies show that people who have faith tend to be more optimistic. People tend to handle stress in greater ways; tend to be a bit happier; tend to live longer even! Faith is a part ... You can't see it, but it's the foundation of everything that makes everything possible.

And I'll tell you: One of the things that Joseph did so amazingly when he deepened and strengthened his faith was he did three things. He listened to God; he trusted God; and he followed God. he always listened to God; trusted God; followed God. And that's how his faith began to expand and deepen.

How much more could we deepen our faith in God by listening, trusting and following over and over again? So that seed and that tree of faith would be able to support even greater things in our lives?

You know, one of the things to do is, on a daily basis, connect with God. Jesus prayed five times a day. Pray to God; connect with God; think about God; delight yourself in God; trust God; praise God; and affirm God.

"God is my source."

Everybody repeat after me: [with congregation] *"God is my source."*

"God made me!"

[Congregation]: *"God made me!"*

"God loves me!"

[Congregation]: *"God loves me!"*

"God wants the best for me!"

[Congregation]: *"God wants the best for me!"*

"God is my source!"

Together: [with congregation] *"God is my source!"*

You know, it's one thing to say, *"Have faith."* But it's a whole different ballgame when we deepen our faith and expand our faith and express our faith. That's what Joseph did so miraculously. He had that consciousness that was willing to expand, especially in faith.

The second thing that he did that's such a vital life and spiritual skill for us is: **HE WAS RESILIENT**. So, his life started out pretty good. He was born; he was absolutely favored by God. He had a vision from God. His dad loved him. He got the coat of many colors. And then he hit jealousy and hatred and betrayal and being sold into slavery. He was falsely accused and imprisoned.

So as good as his life was sounding, it also had some tough stuff. And he had to weather the adversity. To be able to not get discouraged by it or let it stop him, but to find ways to move through it and to rise above it.

I want you to think of a hero or a role model that you have, or someone you think has achieved something really great. And I would bet that they had to overcome some odds. I'll bet you they had to overcome some disadvantage or challenge or problem or lack of money or lack of education. Resilience is a vital thing for living our lives, but especially for rising to greater levels of success.

I was reading an article about successful people and how resilient every single one of them -- from Oprah to Jay-Z, Jeff Bezos, everybody that you could think of that's successful -- resilience was one of the key skills and qualities they had to practice.

Sylvester Stallone was bullied when he was a kid. He was not great in school. He wanted to be a success. And he was so broke and down, he had to sell his dog for \$25 because he couldn't keep feeding his dog. He couldn't afford that. And so he would get down and knocked down. And he'd always say, *"I get back up. I get knocked down; I get back up."*

So he saw a fight with Muhammad Ali and a guy named Chuck Wepner. Ali beat him badly! But he wouldn't go down! And so that's what [Stallone's] inspiration was for the movie, Rocky.

So he tried to sell the script, and he got some people that wanted to buy it for \$300,000. But he said, "One stipulation: I've got to be Rocky." They said, "No! One stipulation: You can't be Rocky!" [Congregation laughs] And so he turned down -- broke! -- \$300,000. Finally he found somebody who'd buy the script and let him act for \$35,000 ... only 10% of the other offer. But it was because he was the actor, and he was resilient ...

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I think there were nine Rocky movies, and the Rocky franchise is like \$1.4 billion. But resilience. Resilience! We all have to go through these things and keep rising; keep getting up, no matter how much we feel knocked down.

The legendary chicken enthusiasm Colonel Sanders ... [Congregation laughs] Chicken enthusiast! [Laughs] At 66, he was trying to sell his secret recipe. A thousand rejections! A thousand times he got turned down! If it wasn't for his resilience, we would not be able to have KFC extra crispy chicken! [Laughs along with congregation]

I will tell you; every single person alive needs to have resilience if they want a happy and successful life. Every one of us needs to practice resilience if we want to have our dreams fulfilled and if we want to bring out the very best in ourselves.

Here's the three things. Oh, but let me ask you first: How resilient are you? Would you say you could be more resilient? Would you say that would be a vital and important thing for you to move to your next level, spiritually and in whatever level of success you want to have?

Here are the three things that Joseph did to be resilient.

Number one: **He accepted the fact that, in this life, there'll be trials and tribulations.** He accepted that it is a fact -- that to grow; to change; to transform; to learn; to expand; to develop ourselves -- we absolutely just have to accept it. Not hate it; not resist it, but accept it's a part of the journey, part of the deal.

Second thing is that **he had a mindset of resilience.** And his exact words of mindset resilience were, "God means this for good." Here's what it said in Genesis 50, Verse 20:

"You intended ..."

Speaking to his brothers:

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people."

God means this for good. Think of something that's going on in your life that isn't as great as you'd like. God means this for good. God means that for good in your life.

Joseph saw everything in his life -- even the things that looked like detours or going the wrong way -- as just steps toward the progress of him fulfilling the work he came to do.

And so the third thing that he did to be resilient is: **He had a really good attitude.** He had a very positive attitude. He didn't come across like a victim or a complainer or a whiner. He was positive and he was pleasant to all people. You know, when he came in as a servant, he ended up rising to kind of Potiphar's right-hand person. When he went to prison; the warden liked him, and he was able to rise because of the good attitude. With Pharaoh, he was so likable that he was given this place of second-highest person.

Potiphar's wife like him, too ... but maybe a little too much. [Congregation laughs] That's how adorable he was! [Congregation laughs]

He had a great attitude! Who doesn't like being around someone with a great attitude? That helps with our resilience, instead of being negative. You know how positive we need to be? Somebody said you need to be so positive that, even if you're being run out of town, get to the head of the line and act like you're leading the parade! [Congregation laughs] That's how positive! [Laughs] [One congregant applauds] Applause! A single applause! [More congregants applaud] Okay; thank you!

One of the things I love about Joseph: He didn't waste a lot of time focusing on what didn't go well. He stayed very present to do and be his very best in that moment. And that is the thing, over time, that got him to achieve the great things that he did. Resilience!

And the last one is **FORGIVENESS**. How many people have ever had someone mistreat you or mistreat a loved one, and it hurt you so bad that you held a grudge and you had a hard time letting it go? And how many people have ever done something, or said something cruel or hurtful, and you had a hard time forgiving yourself? Anybody ever have a hard time forgiving?

Joseph -- even though he really doesn't get a lot of credit for this aspect of himself -- really demonstrated Ph.D. levels of forgiveness. When you really think about it: Betrayed by your family, the people who are supposed to love you and support you the most! To be betrayed in that way ... not just jealousy and hatred, but to sell him into slavery. I mean, we could all easily imagine the emotional pain and trauma that would create.

And then the second one is to be lied about. Falsely accused and then punished. I mean, could you imagine we, as human beings, the hurt and the upset and the anger and resentment that we could feel from that type of behavior? In the same way we absolutely need to have faith, as human beings, to move through life, and resilience, we absolutely need to have forgiveness. Because we will always say -- and people will always say -- things that hurt our feelings, that cause us blame or bitterness or anger in some way or form.

And you know what the biggest challenge about that is? That really causes pain? Human beings have a tendency to hold on. To hold on to the hurt or the disappointment or the betrayal. Or being mistreated. And we don't just hold on for an hour or two; sometimes we go on for days and weeks and months and even years. If it isn't bad enough that we had to experience that horrible feeling and experience once, we keep reliving it by resenting; by replaying it and going over and over it. Continuing to reinflict ourselves in keeping that hurt and that pain and that toxic emotional energy alive and stuck in us. Therefore, we get stuck in it!

And so, some of the reasons we have a hard time forgiving is because of a sense of justice. "They don't deserve it! Let them off the hook? I'm going to keep hating them!" Thinking that's some way to either keep some distance or protect ourselves, and it's not. It hurts ourselves. The second one is: Sometimes we think we don't know how to forgive. And I'll address that in one second. And then the third one is: We're just not willing. We're not willing! You ever say, "I'll never forgive that so-and-so for what they did!"?

People think we need to know how to forgive. We don't. There's only one thing you need, and I already said it. And that is: Are you willing to forgive? Are you willing?

And here are the areas of willingness we need to do. Are you willing to give it to God? Are you willing to say, "*God, I need to just give this to you and relieve myself of this.*"?

There's a wonderful Psalm -- Psalm 51 -- and it says:

"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord."

You don't need to know how; you just need to be willing. Willing to give it to God.

Second thing is: Are you willing to have compassion for that person? Even as bad as whatever they did was, when we say, *"That is a child of God, and they might be hurt and wounded. I don't know what's going on in them."* And it's not to excuse what they're doing, but to have compassion for them. That they're messed up, or they're dealing from a place of woundedness.

The third one is: Are you willing to reclaim your inner peace? Because to hold on to resentment keeps us stuck in the past and the pain. And are you just willing to let it go?

And then the fourth one is: Are you willing to reclaim your personal power? Because one of the things about resentment or bitterness or blame: We're putting our own happiness and peace into what someone else said or what someone else did. You ever hear people say stuff like, *"Oh, you're letting them live rent-free in your head?"* Well, yeah, in a kind of way! We need to reclaim our own personal power! That somebody else's actions and behaviors do not control my happiness, do not control my own peace of mind.

And sometimes we need to not take it personally and say, *"Hey, that's not mine; that's theirs."* Don't own and take things and keep regurgitating pain from something that really isn't even yours. Reclaim our power! Forgiveness helps us do that.

And the last one is to be willing to choose love instead of bitterness and hatred and pain. Forgiveness is an act of love! It is one of the most loving acts -- selfless acts of love -- that we can do, because you're saying to yourself, "I love myself enough to stop punishing myself by repeating the pain of the past." And then the other aspect of love is: Are you willing to send peace and love to that person? Are you willing to send them blessings of peace of love? Because those are the things that are needed. I will tell you, it will awaken and transform us to greater levels of peace and joy and happiness. But it will also open a path for healing in that relationship, as well.

One of the things that Joseph does is: He shows us that we have the power to heal and mend relationships. We have the power to mend and heal ourselves from our own woundedness and hurt. And we could bring it about to a place of reconciliation and unity and wholeness, first in ourselves, but then possibly in the relationship and our relationships.

Remember I started the first week and said that the overall theme of the entire Old Testament is one thing? Listen to God and things will go well; don't listen to God and things will not go as well. And whether you substitute listen to God; trust God; believe in God; love God; seek God ... When we do that, things go well. And when we don't, they just do not go as well. We're just not as much in the flow.

Life is an amazing gift! We are so blessed to have these wonderful, incredible lives. And in it, there'll be some road bumps. And some people will like you and don't like you. And things that don't really work that well. But that's part of the adventure! That's part of the journey! That's part of the increasing -- that Joseph consciousness of faith and awareness and possibility in us.

And the three ways to do that and help that happen are:

- 1) To deepen and expand your faith. To listen to God; trust God; and follow God.
- 2) To be resilient. Accept that tough stuff is a part of life. God means it for good. And to have a positive attitude.
- 3) And finally, forgive. Just be willing to forgive. Be willing to let it go. And be willing to choose love over bitterness and blame.

And those three things will help us rise to greater things ... which is the lesson from Joseph and his brothers.

God bless you all!

[Congregants applaud]

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