

GENESIS: THE BEGINNING IS NOT THE END

Joseph Goes to School

TEXT: Genesis 37-50; Hebrews 4:15; Psalm 119:11; John 16:33

INTRODUCTION:

What a wonderful day it is to praise and honor the Lord.

- Great VBS! – Thanks to Karen, all leadership, all workers, all participants
- Father's Day! – Dads, we're glad you are here

We have been studying through the Book of Genesis to see the beginning of important concepts and principles in Scripture that began in Genesis but continue through the rest of the Bible.

We are near the end of this great book, learning from the life of Joseph. Remember that Joseph was a child favored by his father above all of his older brothers. This brought as many rewards for Joseph in ancient times as it would bring on a young man in modern times. Joseph's brothers were filled with resentment that grew to hatred and bitterness which exploded in Joseph's life like a time bomb, resulting in his being sold as a slave in Egypt.

Joseph spent the rest of his life there, but in the end was no slave, cruelly treated by his master, but rather the second in command in all of the mighty Empire of Egypt with privileges and responsibilities to match.

When we ask how such a reversal of fortune took place, we might end up in a debate. Some would certainly say, "Well Joseph worked hard to make that happen!" And who could argue? But surely many would say, "It was by the power and hand of God, intervening in human affairs, to cause it to be so." And they would without question be correct.

Because the turn-around in Joseph's life took both of those actions,

- God working in ways that only God can, opening doors of opportunity and stirring hearts to respond in sync with divine desire.
- Joseph cooperating with the purpose of the Almighty and using those tools God makes available to humans to see the change of his life come about.

In other words, **for Joseph to become the man he was** with the opportunities and responsibilities entrusted to him,

- **God had to send Joseph to school.**
- **Joseph had to be a good and willing student.**

And to what institutions of higher learning did God send Joseph?

I. THE ACADEMY OF SERVICE

A. Joseph –

- Slave to Potiphar, the Captain of Pharaoh's guard
- Did not begin as the house manager
- **Probably began with the lowliest of jobs** like digging latrines and slopping the hogs, hauling firewood for cooking, cleaning ashes and food debris from cooking kits
- Long before he supervised others,
 - Joseph had to learn to work hard without complaining
 - To do a job well even if no one praised him or even noticed
 - To be on time and not leave early
 - To carefully and quickly obey instructions
 - To be faithful to serve his fellow slaves as well as those in authority over him
- **Even after being promoted to the House Manager for Potiphar, God kept Joseph in the Academy of Service.**
- Even when he was the head trustee in the prison, he was still in a position of service, not of exaltation.
- As Pharaoh's Prime Minister, Joseph still served not only the Pharaoh, but all the people of Egypt.

B. Jesus –

- Came from the throne room of heaven to a manger in a stable and ended up as the boy in his dad's carpenter shop.
- Probably like most boys, He longed to get to hold the sharp knives and whittle the wood away or the big saw his daddy used and see it cut deep grooves in a hunk of wood. But knives and saws were not the first tools in little Jesus' hands. First came the broom, still far taller than He was.
- We know Jesus learned how to serve as a boy and teen, because He was still serving, even as a man.
- He said, "I came to serve, and not be served."
- At the peak of His earthly ministry, right before going to the cross, Jesus took off His outer robe, took a bowl of water and a towel, and one by one washed His disciples' feet.

C. Dads and others

- **One of the best things we can do as fathers is to serve our wife and our children.**
- Some say, "Well, I'm the head of my home. Let them serve me!"
- You are the head of your home, but Jesus was and is the King of Kings. He served others, and if we would be successful fathers, we will willingly attend God's Academy of Service.
- When you are serving your children, you can enroll them in the Academy of Service around the house as well.
- None of us do life well, if we do not learn the basics in the Academy of Service.

- Do not consider any job beneath you. One of my earliest jobs in the workplace was as a roofers' helper during the summers of high school.
 - It was my job to pick up every shingle ripped off of an old roof, every piece of tar paper, every nail that fell into the yard, it was my job to pick up by hand and put in the trash trailer.
 - It was my job to carry bundles of shingles up the ladder and across the roof and put them down by the skilled roofers.
 - That particular Academy of Service made me appreciate every other job I ever had.
- **If you are in a lowly job of service, and you know you are capable of better things, just do your job well and grow as a humble servant of God.** Remember that you are doing just what Joseph did and just what Jesus did.

II. THE MIDDLE SCHOOL OF SELF-CONTROL

A person who cannot control themselves, cannot really control anything else.

A. **Joseph** had to learn this.

- Self-control is needed in virtually every facet of life.
- **Joseph's training came in the context of self-control in the midst of sexual temptation.**
- If you are willing to be tempted, the devil will always make a temptation available.
- If you are willing to practice self-control, God has promised to always make for you a way of escape.
- Long before **Joseph** dealt with the physical temptation offered by Potiphar's wife when she sought to embrace him, he **practiced self-control**
 - **With his eyes**
 - **With his thoughts**
 - **With his words**
 - **With his imagination**
- **If Joseph had not learned self-control in these ways, he likely would have yielded to the temptation of adultery.**

B. **Even Jesus had to practice self-control.** Although He was 100% God, He was also 100% man. The Bible declares of Jesus that He ...

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus was tempted in all points just as we are

- Tempted to lie
- Tempted to speak an expletive and even take God's name in vain
- Tempted to steal

- Tempted to commit adultery
- Tempted to murder

But He didn't yield. Jesus practiced self-control. One of the powerful tools He used to resist temptation and to control His flesh was the Word of God.

Psalm 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil, what did He do? He quoted the Word of God!

C. Dads and others

Failure in the Middle School of Self-Control has caused many dads to abandon their wives and their children while they seek to please themselves rather than caring for their family.

I say this not in a desire to condemn the guilty or grieve those who have been hurt by this sin, but as a warning to all of us dads and husbands in this place this morning.

If we do not learn the discipline of self-control, but instead always yield to the desires of the moment, wanting things our way, for our good, for our pleasure, we are prime candidates for the devil to strongly tempt us to just be done with the obligations and responsibilities of family as so many men we know have done.

Now, men, while your love for wife and children is strong, learn what Joseph learned. Practice what Jesus practiced. Deny yourself and practice self-control lest down the road it leads you to destruction.

III. THE HIGH SCHOOL OF SUFFERING

Who wants to go to this school? Not me. I've been as have many of you. But I don't want to go back.

But I most certainly will go back unless the Lord brings me home to heaven very, very soon. And so will you!

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Folks, listen. The High School of Suffering is a school everybody attends sometime, and many attend it often and stay a long time.

The trouble is that not everyone who attends learns the lessons that are taught.

A. Joseph did not attend the School of Suffering in vain.

In fact, one of the key verses in the life story of Joseph is when Joseph himself declares what he learned through all the suffering he endured because of the hateful vengeance of his brothers, which God allowed to happen. Joseph declared to his brothers who sold him into slavery,

Genesis 50:20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.

- God allowed Joseph's suffering in order to save Joseph's family of 150 people from certain starvation.
- God allowed Joseph's suffering to transform that family into the mighty nation of 2 ½ million people just like He promised Abraham.
- God allowed Joseph to suffer to bring the Abrahamic Covenant to fulfillment. This covenant brought Christ and His salvation to be offered to every family as a blessing on the face of the earth.

Joseph cried out, "I've suffered, but I've learned. God meant it for good. God was doing good."

- **Joseph did not learn God's purpose until near the end of his suffering.**
- **Joseph trusted God's unknown purpose from the very beginning.**

B. Jesus – Jesus suffered. He suffered

- the scoffing and rejection of many
- the betrayal of one of His twelve disciples
- denial by His closest earthly friend
- the most horrifying death imaginable
- the guilt and shame of the sin of the world
- the separation from the fellowship with His Father

But He suffered knowing the purpose. Isaiah described Jesus' suffering on the cross in Is. 53.

Isaiah 53:11 He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

C. Dads and others

We will have our sufferings. We do not need to seek them or ask for them, and for the most part, **we cannot avoid them.**

Our choice is whether we will learn the key lesson about them:

Trust God in the midst of your suffering. God allows suffering in our lives to accomplish His good purpose. He will walk with us through it, and He will accomplish His good purpose through it.

CONCLUSION: You know, if you go to school K to 12, and pass every grade, it takes 13 years to complete high school. Interestingly, Joseph spent 13 years going through the schools of service, of self-control, and of suffering.

He learned the disciplines God desired to teach and graduated with honors.

Have you?

Are you in the process?

Will you learn and apply?