

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Beginnings: “Joseph – A Kind of Christ”**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - June 5, 2016**

**Things that Transform – for the latent physicist in you**

Heat, Pressure, Ultraviolet rays, Cold, Friction, Gravity  
Truth, Faith, Hope, Repentance, Forgiveness, Love – these all transform as well  
Sadly so does jealousy and rage and injustice and bitterness and holding grudges – these forces threaten to remake us in their image as well.

Suffering transforms – for better or worse, suffering either makes us bitter or it makes us better. We cannot avoid it but we can overcome it. What we need it seems to me are great models whose lives are transformed by these forces of a spiritual nature so that we can learn from these disciplined, victorious lives. We too want to be able to say:

**<sup>8</sup> we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)**

We have great examples in Scripture and the primary model is our Savior. But the Bible is full of heroes of faith - heroes who endure and persevere and face shame and slander and imprisonment and torture for their God. It is good for us to take note of these role models. We find such a person in Joseph. Joseph will be the last character study of our study in Genesis this spring. And we will see transforming forces in his life and we will see him change right before our eyes.

Let's go ahead and just get a story in front of us from the life of Joseph as we look at the forces that begin to transform his character.

Family favoritism is the first force we see. In this story we are going to see that Jacob liked Joseph best of all his 11 children and this blatant favoritism.

**Genesis 37:18-28**

<sup>18</sup> They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. <sup>19</sup> They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer. <sup>20</sup> Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.” <sup>21</sup> But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, “Let us not take his life.” <sup>22</sup> And Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. <sup>23</sup> So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. <sup>24</sup> And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. <sup>25</sup> Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. <sup>26</sup> Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? <sup>27</sup> Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. <sup>28</sup> Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

Joseph has a rough life and a simple reading of his life account makes us think that he is just one of those jinxed guys. But as we will see by the time the story is over, God has a plan and **He is with Joseph through it all.**

**Genesis 39:2a - The LORD was with Joseph,** and he became a successful man

**Genesis 39:20-21** And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. <sup>21</sup> **But the LORD was with Joseph** and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison...

**Acts 7:9** - And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but **God was with him** and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom.

This Joseph fellow is an important Biblical character \* – one worth knowing well. Theologians see his account as a kind of Old Testament precursor of Christ . . .

### **Joseph – a kind of Christ**

His life serves as a foreshadowing for the Messiah Jesus Christ who will come some 3,500 years later to save the world from their broken relationship with God. Joseph's clear calling from God and his obedience to that call remind us of Jesus. His faithfulness and longsuffering seem just like Christ and His life of endurance in the face of being falsely accused eventually result in the salvation of those he loves. Sound familiar? I see three points of injustice in Joseph's life that remind me of Jesus and also gives us a roadmap for living a faithful obedient victorious life.

### **Three Points of Injustice in Joseph's Life**

- **Obedient, but Hated – Faithful**
- **Honorable, but Slandered – Effort**
- **Used of God, but Forgotten – Attitude**

### **Obedient, but Hated – Faithful**

Let's look at this idea a bit. What we don't know by beginning our account where we do in Genesis 37:18, is that Joseph has in some ways been set up for his brothers' hatred because of some curious circumstances. For one thing, his father Jacob's favoritism of Joseph has set the brothers off. Let's take that famous so called 'coat of many colors' into consideration. Back in Gen. 35:22, we are told that Reuben, the first born son, acts with gross immorality toward his father and toward God and that lost him not only his father's favor but all his birthrights as the first born son. Jacob skips his other ten sons and selected Joseph, the youngest at that time. The symbol of the birthright was this special tunic. The Hebrew words in 35:3 used to describe this coat or tunic suggest that it was richly ornamented, but the most important detail the Hebrew gives us is that it was long-sleeved and extended to Joseph's ankles.

You say, "Okay, so what?" Well, the tunics worn by working men in that day were sleeveless and stopped at the knees. A long-sleeved, tailored garment was worn by a manager, someone who had been put in charge, and was therefore exempt from the work himself. So the coat was a symbol of position. When Joseph's brothers saw him in that coat, it was a sign of their father's choice to make Joseph preeminent over them.

As a young 17 year old man, Joseph is not dumb. He knows his brothers don't like him and they don't trust him. They hate him, still he obeys his father. His faith in God and his firm belief in the divine dreams he has had and his commitment to obey his father all empower him. I actually think he knows that he is walking into a very bad situation. But he obeys with faith.

As Christians, we are told by Jesus that we will have the same experience with the world;

### **John 15:18-19**

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Then there is the fact that he is **honorable and upright in behavior** but instead of that serving him well, he is slandered and falsely accused.

## Honorable, but Slandered – Effort

Fast forward now to another point in his life, eleven years later. He is a young adult slave of 28 years, working in the home of a high official named Potiphar in the Egyptian courts. In Genesis 39 we read that Joseph honored the Lord and worked hard at what was assigned to him. He served Potiphar with integrity and industry. Potiphar noticed this and promoted him to the highest position in his household. Isn't that how it's supposed to turn out—if you faithfully serve the Lord, He will bless you, shield you, open doors for you?

But Potiphar's wife made it her goal to make Joseph her latest conquest. The Bible tells us that Joseph was pure, but this woman had him thrown in jail anyway. Genesis doesn't discuss the prison conditions Joseph faced, but we do find a description of how he was treated in Ps. 105:18: His feet were shackled with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron. Joseph did the right thing. He should have been honored for his virtue, and Potiphar's wife shamed for her immoral pursuits. Instead, it is the innocent Joseph who is the one who gets hammered.

Joseph had every reason to be bitter and angry. Maybe he was for a bit; we don't know that. But what we do know is that regardless of these dire circumstances, he applies himself to the circumstances. He gives his best effort. He becomes the jail keeper's right hand man by his integrity and hard work.

Again, as Christians, we have been instructed to have the same disciplined, godly character.

## Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

Finally there is the idea of being forgotten – of being **Used of God, but Forgotten – Attitude**

In Chapter 40 we read the story of the two dreams. Two important officers in Pharaoh's court wind up in prison, assigned to Joseph. The Bible reports that some time later, both of these men had a fitful night of dreams that troubled them the next morning. He interprets their dreams and then he pleaded with them in 40:4-15 – ***“Remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this habitation. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.”***

Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. The intensity of Joseph's losses is magnified by one more element: time. The very next recorded verse, 41:1, opens with “After two whole years...”

Yet he endures. You might say, “Well what choice does he have?” But his righteous attitude carries him through the pain and disappointment. His conviction that God reigns over all the details of his life, from the greatest to the smallest comfort him.

Job put it like this in Job 12:13-16: ***“To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are His. What He tears down cannot be rebuilt; the man He imprisons cannot be released. If He holds back the waters, there is drought; if He lets them loose, they devastate the land. To Him belong strength and victory; both deceived and deceiver are His.”***

Of Christ it was said:

## Philippians 2:5-11

<sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

## Faithful, Effort, Attitude

### Genesis 50:19-20

<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> 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.

## The Table of Ultimate Honor

\* One theory suggests that Joseph is the historical character Amenhotep-Huy, Vizier of Pharaoh Amenhotep III, father of the monotheistic Pharaoh Akhenaten. This theory is supported by Joseph Davidovits, a French scientist also known for his researches on pyramid construction using re-agglomerated blocks. According to his book, the association between Joseph and Amenhotep-Huy can be demonstrated according to a nominative inscription found in the tomb of Amenhotep-Huy, which would be found copied word-for-word, mistakes included, in the Bible chapter, Genesis 41, 40-46. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_%28patriarch%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_%28patriarch%29), footnote 32 and 33]

## Discussion Questions

Let's do a brain dump! From memory, let's try to piece together Joseph's life story. We will call it a test of our 6<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday school teacher's teaching skills!

Joseph is a key figure in Genesis with 13 chapters of 50 dedicated to his story. Why do you think God saw fit to give this story so much “press?”

Why do you suppose that God chose to call a family (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob . . .) with so many domestic/family problems to be his “chosen people?”

Have you seen or experienced the hurt of parental favoritism? Why do you think this particular phenomenon is so consequential?

In Genesis 37 (v18ff) we read that Joseph is sold into slavery . . . by his brothers! Wait?!? What?!? How could this happen?

Earlier in 37 (v1 and ff) we read of Joseph having dreams that foretell of his brothers and parents bowing down to him. He tells them and they get mad, but it was the truth, a message from God. Could the family have responded differently? Should Joseph have handled that differently, (remembering he was 17 at the time)?

Theologians consider the Joseph narrative to be a foreshadowing of Christ's advent some 1,500 years after Joseph's life. Do you see any similarities?

What practical application do you take away from the early life of Joseph?