

Main Idea: In Genesis 47, we see the importance of living for God in everyday life. Specifically we see that God was real to Joseph in four different areas of his life.

I. Joseph and his Boss (1-10)

Key Texts:

Titus 2:9

1 Peter 2:13ff.

II. Joseph and his Family (11-12)

III. Joseph and his Business Life (13-26)

A. They gave money for grain (14).

B. They gave livestock for grain (15-17).

C. They gave land for grain (18-20).

D. They gave people for grain, particularly seed (21-23).

E. They accepted taxation—one-fifth to Pharaoh (24-26).

Application: Our work should be marked by: sincerity (Eph 6:5), discipline (2 Thes 3:11), cooperation (Titus 2:9), honesty (Titus 2:10), integrity (Eph 6:6), efficiency (Eph 5:16), gratitude (Col 3:17), and generosity (Eph 4:28). -- Gary Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God*

IV. Joseph and the Funeral Plans (27-31)

A. Jacob's request was significant.

1. It was an act of faith.

2. Jacob's request was for the benefit of his descendants.

B. What's the point?

1. Worship is not solely a “Sunday affair.”

2. We worship when we use our lives to put the spotlight on God instead of ourselves.

Make It Personal: Do you make it a priority to put Jesus Christ first in your priorities Monday through Saturday?

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

Twenty-five years ago, Chuck Colson wrote an award winning book, *The Body: Being Light in Darkness*. In it he pointed out a staggering problem identified in a survey by George Gallup (p 31). Gallup found that almost HALF of the country attends church services. That's a lot of people (over 130 million?) going to church.

But here was the irony. Gallup compared the behavior of the church and unchurched in a variety of categories. He asked if people ever called in sick when they weren't, if they puffed up their resumes, if they cheated on tax deductions, and guess what? He found “little difference in the ethical views and behavior of the church and the unchurched.”

What did that reveal? Church attendance was up. More people were apparently going to church. But it didn't seem to be making much of an impact on people's lives. There was a breakdown. For many people, what they did on Sunday had little or no bearing on what they did the other six days of the week. Go to church on Sunday. Do your thing the other six days. Sunday is God's day. The other six days are yours.

That was Colson's assessment 25 years ago. What about today?

I'm glad you're here in church today. That's great. But what happens in your life the OTHER six days of the week? What's your life like on Mondays and Thursdays? Does God make a difference on Tuesday in the lunchroom? What about Friday when you're going after that business deal on the phone? Does Jesus make a difference when you're cheering on your child's team on Saturday?

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ This message is adapted from two series at WBC in 1992 and 2002.

Genesis 47 is a great chapter, and here's why. In Genesis 47 we see the difference God made in the everyday life of his people. It's true. As you read the story of Joseph you discover that God is a 24/7 God. He was at work in Joseph's life *every* day of the week.

We return again this morning to the Joseph story in Genesis. In Genesis 47, we're going to see the importance of living for God, not just one day a week, but in everyday life. Genesis 47 makes it clear that God was real to Joseph in four different areas of his life.

But first, before we look at Joseph, I need to offer a word of caution. When we study God's Word we need to be careful not to spiritualize verses. It's easy to pull a verse out of the text, and sort of "sermonize it". That's especially easy to do with OT narrative.

Whenever we study God's Word we must ask ourselves, "What was the Holy Spirit's intent in recording this passage?" We have no right to impose our intent on a text, to make it say what *we* want it to say. There's a danger in using biblical texts to say true things that are not substantiated by that particular text. When the Spirit inspired His Word, He had a purpose. Each text has a primary intent.

Having said that, I also believe that texts may have secondary purposes. We can benefit from these, too, but must always keep in mind the primary intent.

Let me be more specific. The primary reason God gave us the Joseph story was not to highlight Joseph. It was to highlight God.

When studying the Bible we must always ask ourselves, "What message did God intend to communicate in the passage I'm studying?" In this case, why did God record Genesis 47?

To find the main message of Genesis 47, we can look at 47:27, "Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number."

With that statement Moses points to his main intent for recording this story. Genesis 47 is the link between the book of Genesis and Exodus. It shows how God's chosen family became God's chosen nation. Why is that significant? It's the fulfillment of a promise God made to a chosen man, Abraham.

Genesis 12:2-3, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 47 teaches us this great truth. We serve a God who keeps His covenant promises. He turned a childless man into a family. Then He turned that family into a great nation during a 400 year stint in Egypt. And through that nation He sent the Messiah into the world, to save a people for His praise and honor. That's the primary message of Genesis 47. The God of the Bible keeps His covenant promises. You can trust Him for He is trustworthy. Indeed, you must trust Him and in the salvation His Son provided if you want to experience His forgiveness and eternal life.

But besides that primary message, there's more to see. In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul comments on Old Testament accounts like Genesis 47 and says, "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come."

So God wants us to learn from the examples of His past servants. In this case, there's much we can learn from Joseph, and what we see is this, the difference God made in four areas of his life.

I. Joseph and his Boss (1-10)

We left off last time with a great family reunion. The once fragmented family of Jacob is together again for the first time in 22 years. A famine has ravaged the Middle East. Jacob and his 70 descendants have trekked to Egypt. They need a place to live.

So watch what Joseph did. Verses 1-2, "Joseph went and told Pharaoh, 'My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen.'" ² He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh."

Remember, Pharaoh is the most powerful man in Egypt at the time, if not the world. He's also Joseph's boss. His name was likely Sesostri III, who ruled from 1878-1843 B.C.

Notice verses 1-2, "Joseph went and told Pharaoh, 'My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen.'" ² He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh."

Then Pharaoh entered into a dialogue with the brothers that went like this.

Verse 3, "Pharaoh asked the brothers, 'What is your occupation?' 'Your servants are shepherds,' they replied to Pharaoh, 'just as our fathers were.'" ⁴ They also said to him, 'We have come to live here for a while, because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants' flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen.'"

Then in verses 5-6, "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Your father and your brothers have come to you,' ⁶ and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock.'"

Now stop there and think about what Pharaoh just did. He told Joseph, "Take the best Egypt has to offer for your family. The keys to the country are yours."

Let that sink in. Watch the way Joseph interacts with his boss. Watch his courtesy. Why was Pharaoh so gracious with Joseph? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? Joseph had won his boss's respect. He'd interpreted Pharaoh's dreams in chapter 41, and he didn't hog the glory either, but gave the credit to God (41:16). That resulted in Pharaoh promoting Joseph to become Prime Minister of Egypt.

And for more than ten years, Joseph had served as Pharaoh's right hand man in a God-honoring, confidence building way.

The Lord was real in the way Joseph related to his boss. Joseph could have said, "Pharaoh owes me! I'm the one who saved Egypt from destruction in this famine!"

But he didn't. He showed respect. He wasn't intimidated. He knew that God was sovereign, that God had placed him in his position. His aim was to honor God in the way he related to the one who signed his paycheck.

Now watch what happened next, in verses 7-10, "Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, ⁸ Pharaoh asked him, 'How old are you?' ⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, 'The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers.'" ¹⁰ Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence."

Think about what just happened. Jacob just met with his son's boss. Remember, Pharaoh is a powerful and prestigious ruler. Jacob has spent most of his time watching sheep. But is Jacob intimidated? Is he awestruck by the grandeur and wealth of Pharaoh's court?

He sure doesn't seem to be. There was a time in his life when aggressive Jacob probably would have been (remember what he did to his father-in-law Laban?). But after 130 years of life, his perspective on life has changed.

What would you do if you were privileged to stand before the most powerful person in this country? Notice again what Jacob did. He "blessed Pharaoh." In fact, he blessed him twice, once when he came in, and once when he left. His blessing was a verbal reminder that even Pharaoh needed the Living God in his life.

I see an application here. What kind of reputation do you have on the job? Does your supervisor have your respect? Are you dependable? Does your relationship with the Lord Jesus show up in the way you treat your employer?

God's Word says it should. Consider a couple of New Testament texts: Titus 2:9 "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them..." 1 Peter 2:13ff (esp. verses 18-20) "Servants, be subject to your masters..(even bad ones!)"

People ought to be able to tell we are Christians by looking at how we function on the job, by our attitude as well as our performance. God was real to Joseph in his relationship with his boss.

Don't misunderstand. Our good work ethic doesn't merit anything with God. He saves us by His grace alone through faith alone in Christ's merit alone. But saving faith, if it's real, is never alone. It shows up in everyday life.

Let's take a brief look at a second area of Joseph's Monday to Saturday life.

II. Joseph and his Family (11-12)

Watch how Joseph treated his family members in verses 11-12. Pay special attention to the verbs. They are action verbs (what Joseph *did*).

Verses 11-12, "So Joseph *settled* his father and his brothers in Egypt and *gave* them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. ¹² Joseph also *provided* his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children."

Let's remember who we're talking about. These are the same brothers who threw Joseph in a pit out of hatred, who sold him to a band of Midianites, who robbed him of more than a decade out of the prime of his life.

But did he harbor bitterness towards them? Did he retaliate? No. Why not? He had forgiven them. He had learned to look at what happened to him from God's perspective.

How refreshing to watch Joseph in action! He didn't just talk about love. He showed love. He met the practical needs of his family.

And why? He knew that's what God wanted. Remember his earlier words to his brothers? Genesis 45:5, "Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." And in 45:7, "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

What's Joseph saying? God blessed me, so I could bless you.

Do you view your possessions that way? Paul said this in 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Can people see that the Lord is real in the way you treat the members of your family? You say, "My family has problems." Yes, every family does. But if we know Christ we have the resurrection power of Christ to help us deal with those problems in a God-glorifying way. His power enables us to have hard conversations, to take hard steps, to ask for forgiveness, and grant it, to demonstrate unconditional love, to give the onlooking world a picture of the grace of Christ in action.

We serve the same God Joseph did, who makes a difference 24/7. We've seen the difference He made with Joseph and his boss, and with Joseph and his family. Yet there's more, a third area...

III. Joseph and his Business Life (13-26)

Notice Moses' commentary in the narrative in verse 13, "There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine."

The seven years of plenty are long gone. How many of the seven years of famine have passed, we don't know for sure. But the situation is severe.

Joseph used the wisdom God had given him to develop quite an economic policy in Egypt. With all the rhetoric we hear these days about economic policies, it's intriguing to see the one Joseph instituted in Egypt.

Do you remember what Joseph did during the seven years of plenty? He bought a huge surplus of grain from the Egyptians and stored it in vast bins. Genesis 41:49 indicates that the stockpiles were so huge, they stopped keeping records.

Then the famine hit. It hit the people hard. They came to Joseph for help. Here's what happened—five steps.

A. They gave money for grain (14). "Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace."

There's an interesting detail. What did Joseph do with the money? Verse 14 says he "brought it to Pharaoh's palace." How much? "All" of it. He didn't line his pockets. He didn't slip a few shekels in his money belt. He delivered it all to his boss, for he was a man of integrity.

B. They gave livestock for grain (15-17). "When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, 'Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is used up.'¹⁶ 'Then bring your livestock,' said Joseph. 'I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone.'¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock."

So disaster was diverted for another year. But when it returned...

C. They gave land for grain (18-20). "When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, 'We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land.'¹⁹ Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage

to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate.’²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh’s.”

So money, livestock, and now land. The Egyptians gave it to Joseph who in turn provided them with grain for food and seed. But when the crisis returned...

D. They gave people for grain, particularly seed (21-23). “And Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other.²² However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.²³ Joseph said to the people, ‘Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground.’”

Yet the situation continued to deteriorate, and when it did...

E. They accepted taxation—one-fifth to Pharaoh (24-26). “But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children.”²⁵ ‘You have saved our lives,’ they said. ‘May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh.’²⁶ So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt—still in force today—that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh’s.”

You've got to admit, Joseph was quite an administrator. By using the wisdom God gave him, he brought hope to a nation facing an unthinkable economic collapse.

Perhaps you're wondering about his tactics. Was Joseph taking advantage of the people? I don't think so. The people didn't seem to think so. Notice again their response in verse 25, “You have saved our lives.”

I read this week and learned that the effective tax rate for the average American taxpayer is just a hair under 30 percent, which includes the four biggest categories for most taxpayers – federal, state, Social Security and Medicare—but does not include sales tax, property tax, and some other taxes.²

Joseph charged his people one-fifth of their yield, or 20 percent. By Egyptian standards this was fair, and not excessive. There are ancient accounts where rents were as high as 1/3 or 1/2 or even 2/3 or 3/4 of what was produced.

So how did the famine and the economic policy affect the Israelites? Verse 27 says, “Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.” The KJV says they “multiplied exceedingly.”

Though times were hard, they did very well. However, I think verse 12 indicates that Joseph's family did not receive preferential treatment over the Egyptians—since the supply of food was handed out according to the number of children one had.

Interestingly, he did take the land of Pharaoh's priests, but supplied their needs.

Here's the point we're making. You could tell that the Lord was real in Joseph's life by looking at his business life. He took the Lord to work with him and sought to honor Him there.

² A Taxing Story: How Much Does the Average American Pay in Taxes? Posted on March 9, 2017 by Aging Options Republication/Permission Desk; <http://www.agingoptions.com/2017/03/a-taxing-story-how-much-does-the-average-american-pay-in-taxes/>

Again, the Bible has much to say about God's will for us on the job. Gary Friesen's book, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, contains an excellent section about the Christian and his work. In it he shows that our work should be marked by: sincerity (Eph 6:5), discipline (2 Th 3:11), cooperation (Tit 2:9), honesty (Tit 2:10), integrity (Eph 6:6), efficiency (Eph 5:16), gratitude (Col 3:17), and generosity (Eph 4:28).

Titus 2:10 says we can “make the teaching about God our Savior attractive” by our work. That should always be our goal on the job.

We've seen Joseph and his boss, his family, and his business life. He honored God in each area. There's one more. It focuses primarily on Joseph's father.

IV. Joseph and the Funeral Plans (27-31)

Verses 28, “Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven.”

Jacob enjoyed 17 wonderful years with his son, the same number of years he had with him before he was sold by his brothers. But now his time has come and he knows it. So he calls for the executor of his estate, Joseph.

What was Jacob's final request? Verses 29-30, “When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, ‘If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt,³⁰ but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried. ‘I will do as you say,’ he said.”

A strange request? Was Jacob afraid he wouldn't go to heaven if his body lay in Egypt? Certainly not. Jacob's request was significant for a couple of reasons.

A. Jacob's request was significant.

1. *It was an act of faith.* Jacob knew that God promised the promised land to his father Abraham and his descendants. The land of promise was Canaan, not Egypt. Jacob wanted to be identified with that promise.

2. *Jacob's request was for the benefit of his descendants.* Jacob knows he will soon die. But he also knows that his death will give him a tremendous opportunity, to encourage his children and grandchildren to think of God and His great promises. Even in his funeral plans, he shows them that the Lord was real to him.

So many today fail to give serious thought to that opportunity. They don't prepare for death. They don't even want to talk about it.

My non-Christian friend, have you considered how your death is going to affect those closest to you? Some of you have loved ones who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and know they will spend eternity with Him. But they don't know that for you.

Do you know how difficult it will be for them to look into your lifeless face and not have the assurance that you are with the Lord, waiting to see them again? Oh my friend, if you care not for your own soul, will you care for theirs? Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to prepare for the inevitable day of your death by placing your total trust in Jesus Christ who died and conquered death to rescue sinners like you and me.

And my Christian friend, what steps are you taking to prepare for your departure? Do you have a will? What steps are you taking so Christ will be honored in your funeral, and in the use of your finances and possessions? And have you talked with your family about these matters?

Here we see a father and his son talking about it. Verse 31, "'Swear to me,' he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff."

That's an interesting way of putting it. The AV puts it this way, "And Israel bowed himself on the bed's head." What does that mean? Hebrews 11:21 indicates, "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff."

B. What's the point? In part, this whole scene illustrates an important fact.

1. *Worship is not solely a "Sunday affair."* Jacob worshiped on his bed. How'd he do that?! What is worship? Here's a simple definition. Worship is acknowledging God's worth in every area of life. That's what Jacob did. And his son.

2. *We worship when we use our lives to put the spotlight on God instead of ourselves.* Our lips on Sunday, yes. But also our lives, on Monday through Saturday. It's our privileged calling to spread God's fame at the plant where we work, the school where we study, and even from the death bed from which our Savior calls us to our eternal home.

Joseph was not perfect, but he is a great example to us of the importance of living for God, not just one day a week, but everyday. The Lord influenced every area of his life, including his relationship with his boss, his family, his business life, and even his father's funeral plans.

That's God's intent for every person He graciously brings to Christ. He saves sinners by grace through faith, but His salvation produces life change. By His grace He enables them to live differently, to live like His Son lived.

Jesus put it this way, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33)."

Paul explains, "Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31)."

Do you remember Robert Louis Stevenson's fascinating novel, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*? The story revolves the strange case of a kindly scientist, Dr. Jekyll, who by night transformed himself into the wholly evil Mr. Hyde.

It's only science fiction. Or is it? Again, according to the Gallup survey, America is full of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" Christians who attend church, teach SS classes, serve on boards, and sing in choirs. They're beautiful Christians...on *Sunday*.

But on Monday it's a different story.

Make It Personal: Do you make it a priority to put Jesus Christ first in your priorities Monday through Saturday?

Let's bow in silent prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to shine the spotlight of His Word on your life. If you see cracks in your life, confess them to God. Forgiveness is available through Jesus Christ.