

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/3/93
Genesis 47 "What Happens in Your Life the OTHER Six Days?"

Intro:

Chuck Colson, former President Nixon's hatchet man, who was born again through his Watergate prison experience, and who now serves as President of Prison Fellowship ministries, has written a recent book, The Body: Being Light in Darkness. It's available in our church library. He points out a staggering problem identified in a recent 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's the irony. Gallup compared the behavior of the churched 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 churched and the unchurched."

What's that reveal? Church attendance is up. More people are apparently going to church. But it doesn't seem to be making much of an impact on our lives. There's a breakdown. For many people, what they do on Sunday has no bearing on what they do 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.

Q: Is that what the Bible teaches?

Illust:

I'm glad you're here in church today. That's great. But I want to ask...

Q: What happens in your life the OTHER six days of the week?

What's your life like on Monday to Saturday? Does God make a difference in your life on Tuesday in the lunchroom? What about Thursday when you're doing a business deal on the phone? Is Jesus Christ real to you when you're cheering the team on Saturday night?

Genesis 47 is a great chapter. Do you know why? In Genesis 47 we see the difference God made in the everyday life of his people.

Key: God was real to Joseph every day of the week.

Joseph is a great example to us. We want to look at his life again today.

Proposition: In Genesis 47, we can see that God was real to Joseph in 4 different areas of his life.

- I. Joseph and his Boss (1-10)
- II. Joseph and his Family (11-12)
- III. Joseph and his Business Life (13-26)
- IV. Joseph and the Funeral Plans (27-31)

Caution: Before we look at Joseph, I need to offer a word of caution. We need to be careful not to "spiritualize" verses. It's easy to pull a verse out of the text, and

"sermonize." That's especially easy with OT narrative. The primary reason God gave us the Joseph story was not to highlight Joseph. It was to highlight God.

Always ask yourself, "What message did God intend to communicate in the passage I'm studying?" In this case, why did God record Genesis 47?

Main Message of Genesis 47 = see 47:27

47:27 "And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt...and grew, and multiplied..."

Genesis 47 is the link between the book of Genesis and Exodus. It shows how a Family became a Nation. Why is that significant? It's the fulfillment of a Promise.

Gen 12:2-3 God told Abe, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee..."

Genesis 47 teaches us this great truth. We serve a God who keeps His covenant promises. He turned a barren Man into a Family. He turned that Family into a great Nation during a 400 year stunt in Egypt. And through that Nation He sent the Messiah into the world, to form a People for Himself.

That's the message of Genesis 47. The God of the Bible keeps His covenant promises. But besides that main message, I think there is great value in looking at the individual characters, like Joseph.

Let's look at the difference God made in 4 areas of Joseph's 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...

Vv 1-2 "Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh..."

Remember, Pharaoh is the most powerful man in Egypt, if not the world. He's also Joseph's boss. His name was likely Sesostris III, a leader who ruled from 1878-1843 B.C. He entered into dialogue with the brothers...

Pharaoh (3): "What is your occupation?"

Brothers (3b-4): "Thy servants are shepherds..." (= animal husbandry)

Pharaoh to Joseph (5-6): "And Pharaoh said to Joseph...the best of the land..."

Stop there. Think about what Pharaoh just did. He told Joseph, "The keys to the city are yours! Take the best Egypt has to offer for your family."

Let that sink in. Watch the way Joseph interacted with his boss. Watch his courtesy. Why was Pharaoh so gracious with Joseph? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? Joseph had won the respect of his boss. He'd interpreted Pharaoh's dreams in ch 41. And he didn't hog the glory either. He gave the credit to God (41:16). It was then that Pharaoh promoted Joseph to Prime Minister of Egypt. And for more than 10 years, Joseph had served as Pharaoh's right hand man.

God 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. Joseph 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.

Illust:

Watch what happened next...

Vv 7-10 "And Joseph brought in Jacob...And Jacob blessed Pharaoh..."

Did you see that? Now Jacob is with Joseph's boss. Remember, Pharaoh is the most powerful and prestigious man in the country, if not the whole world of that day. Is Jacob intimidated? Is he impressed by the grandeur and wealth of Pharaoh's court? Not particularly. There was a time in his life when aggressive Jacob would have been (remember what he did to his father-in-law Laban). But after 147 years of life, his priorities had changed!

Illust:

Q: What would you do if you were privileged to stand before the #1 man...?

What did Jacob do? 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.

Application: What kind of reputation do you have on the job? Does your supervisor have your respect? Are you dependable? Does your relationship with Jesus Christ make a difference in the way you treat your employer?

God's Word says it should...

Tit 2:9 "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them..."

I Peter 2:13ff (esp vv 18-20) "Servants, be subject to your masters...(even bad ones!)"

Illust:

Tran: God was real to Joseph in his relationship with his boss. Let's take a brief look at a second area of his Monday to Saturday life.

II. Joseph and his Family (11-12)

Pay special attention to the verbs. They're action verbs (what Joe DID):

Vv 11-12 "And Joseph PLACED...GAVE...NOURISHED..."

Please 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 and ill feelings towards them? Did he ever 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.

Why? He knew that's what God wanted.

45:5 "...for God did send me here to preserve life."

45:7 "...God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity..."

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

Q: Do you view your possessions that way?

I Tim 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."

Q: Can people see that God is real in the way you treat your relatives?

Illust:

Tran: We've seen the difference God made in Joseph's everyday life, in his relationship with his boss, in the way he treated family members.

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

Notice the narrative commentary...

V 13 "And there was no bread in all the land..."

The 7 years of plenty are long gone. How many of the 7 years of famine have passed, we don't know for sure. But the situation is severe.

Joseph had used the wisdom God had given him to develop quite an economic policy in Egypt! With all the political rhetoric we've been hearing in the past 6 months about new economic policies, it's intriguing to see the one Joseph instituted in Egypt.

Q: Do you remember what Joseph did during the 7 years of plenty?

A: He bought a huge surplus of grain from the Egyptians. and stored it in vast bins. The text indicates (41:49) 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...5 steps:

1. Money for Grain (14).

Note: What did Joseph do with the money? V 14 says he "brought the money into Pharaoh's house." "ALL" of it. He didn't line his pockets. He didn't slip a few shekels in his pocket. He delivered it to his boss. He was a man of integrity.

2. Livestock for Grain (15-17).

3. Land for Grain (18-20).

4. People for Grain, particularly Seed (21-23).

5. Taxation (24-26)--One-fifth to Pharaoh.

You've got to admit, Joseph was a wise Administrator!

Q: Was Joseph taking advantage of the people?

A: Notice the people's response in v 25...

V 25 "Thou hast saved our lives..."

Joseph charged the people 1/5 of their yield. 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 2/3 or 3/4 of what was produced.

Q: How did the famine and the economic policy affect the Israelites?

A: V 27 "multiplied exceedingly"

However, I think v 12 indicates that Joseph's family did not receive preferential treatment over the Egyptians (the supply of food was handed out according to the number of children one had).

Here's the point. You could tell that God was real in Joseph's life by looking at his Business life.

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...

1. Our work should be marked by: Sincerity (Eph 6:5), discipline (II 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).

Key Verse: Titus 2:10 says we can "adorn the doctrine of God" by our work.

Q: Do you?

Illust:

Tran: We've seen Joseph and his Boss, His Family, and His Business Life. Joseph honored God in each area. There's one more. It focuses primarily on Jacob.

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

V 28 "And Jacob lived...147 years."

V 29 "And the time drew near that Israel must die..."

Jacob called for the Executor of his estate, Joseph!

Q: What was Jacob's final request?

A: Vv 29-30 "...bury me not in Egypt...but with my forefathers..."

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 2 reasons:

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.

Illust: Tony Campollo asked a group of people over the age of 95, "If you had it to live over again, what would you do differently?" 3 primary responses: Reflect more. Risk more. Do more things that would live on after I'm gone."

That's what Jacob did. He would soon die. But even in his funeral plans, his God was real to him. His final request would cause his children and grandchildren to think of God and His great promises.

What are you doing that will matter for eternity and live on after you're gone?

Illust:

V 31 "And Israel bowed himself on his bed's head."

What does that mean? The NIV uses the word "worshiped."
Heb 11:21 "By faith Jacob...worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

Q: What's the point?

Observation: Worship is not solely a "Sunday affair."
Jacob worshiped on his bed. How'd he do that?!

Definition: Worship is acknowledging God's Worth in every area of life.
Jn 4:23-24 "The day is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such to worship Him."

We worship when we use our lives to point the spotlight on God, instead of ourselves. Our worship involves our lips, but also our lives. God deserves our worship on Sunday, but just as much on Monday through Saturday. It's our privilege to worship God in a church building. But it's also God's design for us to acknowledge His worth at the Plant, at the School, and at the Office.

Challenge: Joseph was not perfect. But he is a great example for us. God was real in his life. Not just one day a week, but everyday. Joseph didn't live one way Sunday and another way Thursday. His relationship with God impacted every area of his life: His relationship with his Boss, his Family, his Business Life, even Funeral Plans.

That's God's design for every follower of Christ. The NT puts it this way:
Paul: "Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory..."
Jesus: "But seek first the kingdom..." (Mt 6:33)

Illust: Do you remember Robert Louis Stevenson's fascinating novel titled 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? According to the Gallup survey, America is full of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" Christians. They attend church, teach S.S. classes, serve on boards, sing in choirs. They're beautiful Christians...on Sunday. But on Monday, they're totally different people.

Q: Am I describing you?

Conclusion:

I finished a book recently that stunned me. It's the true autobiography of Howard Rutledge, In the Presence of Mine Enemies. Earlier in his life, Howard had been too busy for church. But when he was forced to spend 7 years in a North Vietnamese prison camp, 5 of those in solitary, God got a hold of his life...

Quote:

Q: Is God real in your life?

Not just on Sunday. 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.