

MAKING LEMONADE

"STAYING COOL IN CERTAIN UNCERTAINTIES"

GENESIS 47:13-31

This Week's Core Competency

Faithfulness – I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships. Proverbs 3:3-4,

*3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

*4 Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.*

Perhaps Joseph is not the character that comes to mind when you think of the virtue of faithfulness, but given this week's creed, let me encourage you to think again. Faithfulness, loyalty, integrity, these are hallmark traits of Jacob's favorite son. As a young man he is faithful to his father, willing to bring him a "bad" but true report about his brothers, knowing that doing so would not—and did not—put him in their good graces (Ge 37:2). Later, when Jacob wants to know what shenanigans his sometimes scandalous sons might be up to, he sends Joseph to check up on them in Shechem, knowing that he could be trusted to return with a fair and balanced report. But he doesn't return this time, because his brothers sell him to Midianite merchants, who take him to Egypt.

In Egypt, Joseph's continues to be the face of faithfulness. He is loyal to his master, Potiphar, proving himself trustworthy. "Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned . . . with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate" (39:4, 6). And as far as Potiphar's

wandering-eyed wife is concerned, rather than accept her invitation, Joseph refuses to go to bed with her. Instead, he guards Potiphar's trust, saying, "No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing?" (v. 9).

After hearing his wife's trumped up tale of woe, Potiphar puts Joseph in prison, where he again demonstrates his integrity. Before long, the warden puts him in charge of all of the king's prisoners and makes him responsible for everything that goes on there. In the same way that Potiphar did not concern himself with anything that went on in his household, the warden "paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care" (v. 23). Years later, after accurately interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and suggesting a plan of action to address the coming famine, which entails finding a wise man to put in charge of famine relief, Pharaoh, himself, recognizes that Joseph is the man. He looks Joseph squarely in the eye and says, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you . . . I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt" (vv. 40-41).

Once he is commissioned to execute his famine plan, he does so faithfully and flawlessly as Pharaoh's loyal vizier. During the seven years of abundance, he stores up huge quantities of grain (41:49) and then during the seven years of famine, he sells grain to starving Egyptians as well as famished foreigners, who come to Egypt to buy it. As Egypt and Canaan waste away after two lean years, Joseph continues to work his plan to the benefit of both Egypt's citizens and its ruler. The text documents the sequence of events resulting in Egyptian lives being saved (47:25) and

There is no one so discerning and wise as you.

– Pharaoh to Joseph (Ge 41:39)

cont. pg. 2

their land being acquired by Pharaoh (v. 20). First, the Egyptians spend all their money buying food (vv. 14-15), then they trade away their livestock (vv. 16-17), and finally, they give up their land to work as tenant farmers (vv. 18-20). On the measures taken by Joseph, one commentator writes: "Joseph's wise rule over the land of Egypt not only ensured the peace and prosperity of his family but also saved the people of Egypt from starvation and prospered Pharaoh abundantly. In selling food to the people, Joseph accepted first money and livestock as payment, and then finally their lands as well. Once the land belonged to Pharaoh, Joseph instructed the people to plant seed, his only requirement being that Pharaoh was to receive one-fifth of the produce. In short, the people survived, but they were in bondage to Pharaoh. Only the priests were exempt—probably due to the sanctity of the priesthood and the temple holdings over which Pharaoh had little control. This entire situation informs the meaning of Exodus 1:8-11, which states that a new king came to power who did not know Joseph. Consequently—and ironically—that king began to enslave the Israelites to work in his projects. Had he remembered Joseph, he would have realized how loyal and faithful Israel could be in their sojourn in the land. Because this Pharaoh treated Israel well, they flourished, and he became powerful and wealthy; but because that new king treated Israel harshly, he would have none of the blessing of God, nor would he be able to hinder the prosperity of the people of God. From the beginning to the end of the Egyptian sojourn, prosperity and growth came from God's blessing. Those who acknowledged it shared in it" (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 686-87).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Read Genesis 47:13-31

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. 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. 15 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.

18 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, 21 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. 24 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.

27 Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.

28 Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. 29 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.

31 "Swear to me," he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "grain" in v. 14.
- * Underline "why should we die/perish" in vv. 15, 19
- * Box "so" indicating *result* in vv. 7, 20, 26.
- * Circle "in exchange" in v. 17.
- * Circle "bodies" in v. 18.
- * Underline "in bondage" in vv. 19, 25.
- * Circle "seed" in v. 19
- * Bracket "reduced the people to servitude" in v. 21.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 24.
- * Highlight v. 27.
- * Bracket "under my thigh" in v. 29.
- * Bracket "leaned on the top of his staff" in v. 31.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Verse 13 confirms Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams (see 41:25-32). How so?
2. What does verse 14 say about Joseph's integrity?
3. The situation in Egypt goes progressively from bad to worse. Describe stage one in the Egyptians' plight.
4. Verse 7 contains a summary statement describing stage two. Elaborate on the statement.
5. The crisis peaks in stage three. What do the Egyptians obtain in exchange for their land?
6. Instead of "Joseph reduced the people to servitude" (NIV), some translations have "Joseph moved the people to the cities" (HCSB; cf., NASB, NKJV). Which do you prefer and why?
7. Verse 25 indicates the Egyptians were remarkably grateful to Joseph. Too grateful?
8. *Contrast* the welfare of the Israelites with the plight of the Egyptians.
9. Instead of "Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff" (NIV), some translations have "Israel bowed down at the head of his bed" (NET; cf., NASB, NKJV). Which translation do you prefer and why?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about why Israel does not want to be buried in Egypt.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

In Genesis 39-41, the story of Joseph documents the young dreamer's providential rise to power in Egypt. Chapters 42-46 focus on the transformation of his brothers, especially Judah, and their eventual reconciliation to the brother they sold into slavery. Joseph's siblings are no longer the center of attention in chapter 47; the narrator sets them aside to return to the story line and focus on Joseph. One commentator puts the purpose of Genesis 47:13-26 this way: "The primary purpose of this account of Joseph's measures is to show the severity of the famine and the desperate plight of the Egyptians that he alleviated . . . at the end of the famine all Egyptians, save the priests, were serfs, that is, tenants of royal lands paying one-fifth of their produce to the crown (vv 25-25), a situation that still prevailed in the author's day" (Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, *Genesis 16-50*, 447). And while that may not sound like a good thing to contemporary ears, the Egyptians praise Joseph for his efforts. "'You have saved our lives,' they said. 'May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh'" (v. 25). Wise Joseph does the impossible; he executes a plan in the best interests of the people as well as the Pharaoh, a plan that saves Egyptian's lives and enriches their ruler. Then to assuage any false notion the reader might draw from the fact that the Israelites "acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number" (v. 27) the narrator indicates they will one day return to Canaan. Jacob makes his son promise to bury him in the Promised Land. He tells Joseph: "Do not bury me in Egypt, but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried" (vv. 29b-30).

Verses 13-26 describe the execution of Joseph's plan (cf., 41:33-36) as things go from bad to worse in Egypt and Canaan. Initially, people exchange their money for grain (vv. 13-14), but when their money runs out, they sell or mortgage their herds for grain. A year later, that food is gone, their money is gone, their livestock is gone; all they have left are their "bodies" and their "land" (v. 18). So they say to Joseph, "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" (v. 19), which Joseph does. On how this is a good thing, the

same commentator writes: "Modern readers find it difficult to regard Joseph's measures as benevolent. They look to us like exploitation of the destitute, who are forced to sell or mortgage animals, land, and their own freedom in order to stay alive. Joseph, the cunning agent, makes the most of their plight to enrich the crown. But this is to misread the account's intentions. The OT law itself does not envisage the destitute simply being bailed out by the more well-to-do. Rather, if possible, members of the family should help their destitute relatives, just as Joseph did, by buying their land and employing them as slaves (cf. Lev 25:13-55). This was viewed as a great act of charity . . . It is within this context that Joseph's actions must be judged. In Israel, those who became destitute and sold their land or themselves to a more prosperous relative or friend were given their land or freedom back in the year of Jubilee, which occurred every fifty years. Apparently, the Pharaoh was not so generous; he retained the land and people as his serfs in perpetuity. But Joseph cannot be blamed for that. He saved the Egyptians from famine and so carried out the scheme he had proposed after interpreting Pharaoh's dream and demonstrated his God-given wisdom (42:36)" (452). First with his brothers and then with the Egyptians, Joseph's wisdom is seen as the source of life for everyone in the land.

Verses 27-31 describe the promise Joseph makes to his father. On the significance of the land, another commentator writes: "As he approached death (47:29), Jacob did not want to be buried among the Egyptians but to be buried with his fathers (v. 30) in his own land. The same theme is taken up in chapter 50, when Joseph makes his sons swear that they will carry his bones back to the Promised Land, a request carried out by the Israelites in Joshua 24:32. What lies behind such requests? Do they give expression to any central themes in the book? The answer is yes. A central element of the promise to Abraham was the promise of the land. The request of the patriarchs to be buried in the land 'with their fathers' brings to the fore their trust in the faithfulness of God to his word. Henceforth a key symbol of Israel's faith in the promises of God is the bones of the faithful seed that are buried in the Promised Land" (John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 228).

The *upper story* of this narrative is about how God preserved Jacob's family and saved many lives by a

great deliverance (45:7) wrought by Joseph. The *lower story* is about how Joseph wisely executed his plan for famine relief in the spite of the increasing

demand for food coupled with a decreasing supply of resources as the famine raged on. In the end, his plan served the needs of the people and the Pharaoh.

The Message of the Passage

Knowing God's revealed purposes, a wise person makes sagacious decisions according to the will of God with his eye on accomplishing those purposes.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 14 **grain** "This is threshed grain, corn, or cereal used for food (see 43:2), not seed (zera'), as in 47:23" (Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis*, 590).

v. 15 **why . . . die** "At the beginning of the story, Jacob had told his sons to go down to Egypt to buy grain 'that we may live and not die' (42:2). Then Judah, 'in the second year' (45:6), told his father to let them return to Egypt 'that we may live and not die' (43:8). Finally, when he revealed himself to them, Joseph told his brothers that God had sent him to Egypt 'to save life' (45:5). In keeping with that emphasis, the present narrative opens with the statement of the Egyptians to Joseph as they seek to buy grain from him: 'Why should we die before you?' (47:16); then it continues with the account of their return to Joseph 'the second year' (v. 18), when they again say 'Why should we die?' and 'that we might live and not die' (47:19). Such repetitions in the surface structure of the narrative suggest a thematic strategy at work. First with his brothers and then with the Egyptians, *Joseph's wisdom is seen as the source of life for everyone in the land*" (Sailhamer, 227, italics added).

v. 17 **in exchange** "Joseph agrees to exchange their livestock for grain. Animals were an important capital asset in agricultural societies. Whether they were actually exchanged for grain or mortgaged is not clear. As Jacob observes, mortgaging them would be more practical. Note that this is the first mention in the Bible of the horse, the most important beast of burden. The horse arrived in the Middle East at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. and in Egypt by the seventeenth century. Egypt was an important source of horses in Solomon's day (1 Kgs 10:28-29; cf. EM 5:105-7)" (Wenham, 448).

v. 18 **bodies** "The term often means 'corpse.' It characterizes a person in weakness, oppression, or trouble" (Waltke, 590).

v. 19 **in bondage** Cf., "Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we, with our land, will become Pharaoh's slaves" (NET). "The idea of slavery is not attractive to the modern mind, but in the ancient world it was the primary way of dealing with the poor and destitute. If the people became slaves of Pharaoh, it was Pharaoh's responsibility to feed them and care for them. It was the best way for them to survive the famine" (The NET Bible, 30sn on v. 19). "It was axiomatic in the ancient world that one paid one's way so long as one had anything to part with—including, in the last resort, one's liberty" (Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC, 222).

v. 21 **reduced . . . servitude** "The MT [Massoretic Text] reads 'and the people he removed to the cities,' which does not make a lot of sense in this context. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX read 'he enslaved them as slaves'" (The NET Bible, 36tc on v. 21; cf., NIV margin). "If the MT is original, the Egyptians moved temporarily to the cities in a massive population transfer until planting seed could be distributed (see 47:23). However, the former better suits the context" (Waltke, 590).

v. 25 **in bondage** "He reduces them to tenant farmers on state land. Nevertheless, the narrator represents them grateful to keep 80 percent of the crop" (591). "Memories of the African slave trade color our view of slavery, so that we cannot understand this expression of gratitude. But in ancient society slavery was the accepted way of bailing out the destitute, and under a benevolent master could be quite a comfortable status (cf. Joseph with Potiphar). Indeed, the law envisages some temporary slaves electing to become permanent slaves rather than take the freedom to which they were entitled after six years of service. Ancient slavery at its best was like tenured employment, whereas the free man was more like someone who is self-employed. The latter may be freer, but he faces more risks (cf. Exod 21:5-6; Deut 15:12-17)" (Wenham, 449).

v. 29 **under my thigh** "This is a euphemism for genitalia (Gen. 46:26; Ex. 1:5; Judg. 8:30). When facing death, the patriarchs secure their last will by an oath at the source of life (see Gen. 47:29). The reason for this gesture is uncertain, but perhaps it is chosen because the oath involves the certainty of the posterity God promises" (Waltke, 327). "Placing the hand under the 'thigh' was a ritual connected with making a solemn promise (cf. 24:2-3)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Genesis," 2016 ed., 300-301, www.soniclight.com)

v. 31 **leaned . . . staff** Cf., "Then Israel bowed down at the head of his bed" (NET). "The MT reads (mittah, 'bed, couch'). The LXX reads the word as (matteh, 'staff, rod') and interprets this to mean that Jacob bowed down in worship while leaning on the top of his staff. The LXX reading was used in turn by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 11:21)" (The NET Bible, 56tc on v. 31; cf. NIV margin). "The MT says, 'as he bowed down at the head of his bed' (mi??). This was a symbolic gesture of prostration. He is too feeble to bow to the ground (cf. 1 Kings 1:47)" (Waltke, 592). "David bows on his bed when news is brought that his kingdom has been securely passed to Solomon . . . We can conclude, then, that Jacob's bowing at the head of his bed is an acknowledgement of divine care that has allowed him to pass clan leadership successfully to his son Joseph" (John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, 710).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Certainly, uncertain times will come for our kids. It may not be when they are children, but they will walk through difficult seasons. Are they prepared to face those seasons and rise above them? A college baseball coach offered the following observation. "It is possible to send a kid to the plate without a bat. It is even possible for that kid to get on base without a bat. The pitcher could be wild and walk him or hit him and he would make it to first base. It is even possible for him to score without going to the plate without a bat. If the guys behind him do well, he can score a run for his team without ever touching a bat. However, you have placed the boy's destiny in the hands of those who oppose him." Equipping our kids for the curves and fastballs that will come their way puts a bat in their hands. Instead of being enslaved to the enemy who opposes them, they will be prepared to rise to the occasion and score. How do we do that? We pray for them. We connect them to a community of believers. We live out our faith authentically in front of them. We lead them to Jesus and then disciple them consistently. Let's raise champs for Him together! Go team!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Ge 47:13-31

1. What was Joseph's solution for the people when their money was gone?
2. What were the people required to give Pharaoh when their crops came in?
3. What promise did Joseph make to Jacob?

What Do You Think

1. What do you think it would be like to live during a famine?
2. How do you think the Egyptians and Israelites felt?
3. What are some ways we can help people now who are hungry?

What R U Going To Do

We are almost to the end of our This Changes Everything campaign. Part of the money we raise will go to help people in hard circumstances. What can you do this week to make some money to give to our 1,000,000 Pennies Challenge?

Core Comp

Faithfulness - I am loyal to God and others, so they know they can count on me.

Memory Verse

Ro 8:38-39 – *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed Scrolls _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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