

PRISON to Palace

- Reading: Genesis 37
- I love the story of Joseph
- When you read about Joseph's family in Genesis you really feel like maybe your family has a chance
- What we learn about from Joseph is that God doesn't reserve his blessings just for the perfect families
- God works with the dysfunctional families as well
- The story of Joseph speaks about real life
- It speaks of how unstable life can be, of imprisonment and privilege
- It speaks of the morality of life, of passion and purity
- It speaks of the humanity of life, of guilt and grace
- It speaks of family life, of wrangling and reconciliation
- Joseph is the Great-Grandson of Abraham
- He is the final leading character in Genesis
- More space is devoted to Joseph than to any one else
- One really important lesson to learn in life is that life is full of ups and downs
- Don't get too stressed out when things are down, because they won't last that way very long as things always turn around
- And don't get too cocky when things are good, because this too will change, and God will bring another challenge your way

- The lesson I think that we get from the story of Joseph is that God is with you during the good times and the hard times
- Joseph showed faith in God when things were tough, and remembered to give God the glory when things turned around
- Consider the ups and downs in Joseph's life
- Let's look at the Genesis 37:
- Genesis 37:3

3) Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him.

- Things sound pretty good for Joseph, no?
- Genesis 37:4

4) When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

- Things were bad, and Joseph doesn't keep his mouth shut, he just makes it worse
- Genesis 37:5

5) Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

- Sometimes you have to speak the truth with your family and those that you love... Even if you know that it might damage your relationship
- Joseph isn't afraid to share with his loved ones the things that God has shared with him
- Even though he knows it won't go over well, and they won't want to hear what he has to say
- For this God eventually blesses him, even though the immediate effect is the worsening of his relationships with his Brethren
- But, at least he still has that close relationship with his father, right?

- At least he still has Jacob who loved Joseph more than any of his other Brethren...

- Genesis 37:10

10) When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?”

- Oops...

- Even with your closest, most intimate relationships, things can turn sour and feelings can be hurt

- Sure, they worked their way through their hard times and had a long lasting relationship in the end, but even Jacob had moments when he was upset with Joseph

- Joseph had to rely solely on God during those times

- And things continue to get worse – Verse 25

- Genesis 37:28

28) So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

- Joseph must have thought that this was the end

- Consider the position he was in

- His own brothers wanted to kill him

- They stuck him in a pit, and sat around having Dinner debating what to do with him

- He could hear their discussion

- And they could here his cries for help

- He must have assumed that this was rock-bottom

- But, he is sold as slave in Egypt and develops a good relationship with his new master

- Genesis 39:2

2) The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.

- Joseph probably thought that he was on top of the world

- Things were good, and they just kept getting better...

- Genesis 39:3-6

3) When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did,

4) 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.

5) From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.

6) So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

- Potiphar would have been an important, wealthy, and politically connected man in the largest, wealthiest, more advanced civilization in the world, and Joseph was on the top of the heap at Potiphar's house

- But, things always change...

- Genesis 39:20

20) Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

- Oh man... Things turn bad again...

- Falsely accused for something he didn't do, Joseph is put in prison

- Again!

- The “something” that he didn’t do was because he chose to do what was right, and what God wanted of him, instead of what would have been enjoyable, and what would have pleased his Master’s wife

- So, for his convictions, his beliefs, and his actions, he again finds himself in an unsanitary, uncomfortable, unfriendly place

- But, not for long!

- Genesis 39:21

21) But while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

- Again, his character and his Godly actions cause others to notice and he prospers

- Genesis 39:22

22) So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.

23) The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

- Sound familiar?

- This is like the basis of Joseph’s Resumé!

- He does such a wonderful, thorough, conscientious and thoughtful job at his employment that he is continually getting moved to the very top and given unlimited control

- And now, due to his connections and the relationships that he has built, Joseph eventually gets an opportunity to get out of prison

- Genesis 40:12-14

12) “This is what it means,” Joseph said to him. “The three branches are three days.

13) Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer.

14) But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison.

- But... That really didn't work out the way that Joseph had hoped...

- Genesis 40:23

23) The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

- Again, Joseph faces disappointment

- He thought that he has worked something out, but God wants him to learn patience a while longer

- Two years longer...

- Genesis 41:1

1) When **two full years had passed**, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile...

- Joseph now gets his big chance

- But, he doesn't play it to his own glory, but to God's

- Genesis 41:16

16) "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

- Finally, after all this time, Joseph is dragged out of prison, showered up, shaved, given a clean robe and put in front of Pharaoh

- This is his one chance, and he says, "I cannot do it". Really? That's his opening?

- He didn't want there to be any question that it would be God who would give Pharaoh the answer he desires

- And he is blessed for this faithful response!

- Blessed beyond what he could have ever imagined

- Genesis 41:40

40) 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.

- Again, that familiar phrase...

- Genesis 41:41-43

41) So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."

42) Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

43) He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

- From Favored Son - to Hated Brother

- From Hated Brother - to Imprisoned Slave

- From Imprisoned Slave - to Head of a Large House

- From Head of a Large House - to Prisoner

- From Prisoner - to Second-in-Command of EGYPT!

- Talk about life having it's ups and downs!

- No matter whether it was UP or DOWN, Joseph stayed close to his Heavenly Father, and trusted in God to be with him through whatever he had to face

- That is the beauty of the lesson of Joseph

- Today we are going to remember our Lord Jesus, who also understood that same lesson

- Jesus had many high times in his life...

- As he saw the light go on in people's faces as they realized the love of God
- As he gave Mother's back their sons, raised from the dead
- As he fed the hungry and healed the sick...
- He also would have had plenty of low times as well, the ultimate of which was the time upon the cross
- Like Joseph, Jesus remembered to ascribe the glory to his Father during the ups, and to trust in his Father's deliverance during the downs
- Paul gives us some great advice in Hebrews 12
- Hebrews 12:1-3

1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3) Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

- Don't grow weary and lose heart
- Always remember that if you are experiencing some challenging hard times in your life that "this too will pass"
- Remember that God loves you and is trying to teach you a valuable and important lesson through this experience
- And when things turn around, and they WILL turn around, and you find yourself on top of the world, with the perfect job, the perfect house, and a happy family...
- Remember to include God in that equation as well, and be thankful for his blessings, remembering that no matter how hard you worked, it is a blessing from God, and not your own strength that gets you to where you are