



JOSEPH ENCOUNTERS HIS BROTHERS

Part 40 of Genesis

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Genesis 41:41 - 43:34 | August 07, 2005

And tonight we're gonna launch right in. I'm gonna teach you about a guy named Joseph. I won't put all the verses on the screen because there's so much. It would take us too long to scroll through. So, if you've got a Bible, you can follow along. If not, I'll read it so you'll be up to speed. You're gonna get to know a guy a little better tonight named Joseph. You're gonna look at seven or eight years of his life – seven or eight very important years of his life where some important things happened.

And the story of Joseph is significant because the Bible makes him significant. It only dedicates two chapters in Genesis to creation. It gives 12 chapters to Joseph. You guys remember the story of Joseph. He's part of this crazy, hillbilly, redneck family. Abraham; next generation, Isaac; next generation, Jacob, also known as Israel; next generation is Joseph's generation – fourth generation of faith that becomes the nation of Israel; that becomes the place through which the Lord Jesus Christ comes as the blessing to the nations of the Earth.

Joseph grew up in a peculiar family. How many wives does his dad have? Four. That's three too many. His daddy had four wives. He had 13 kids with 4 different women, 12 sons, 1 daughter. Joseph was kind of the baby in the family, and daddy favored him, and God blessed him. Because of that, his brothers got really, really jealous. One day they faked his murder and convinced his father that he had been killed. And then they sold him into slavery. He was taken down to the nation of Egypt as a slave.

He was put in that position at about 16 or 17 years of age. He was a young man. When he got there, he worked for a rich man named Potiphar. He grew to this great stature in Potiphar's home as a responsible, good employee, as a good slave. Potiphar's wife was attracted to him because he was a good looking guy. He deflected her advances because he loved the Lord and was a godly man. She came up with a false rape charge, had him thrown in prison.

He spent much of his 20's in prison. Eventually, the King, Pharaoh, who ruled over Egypt and thought he was God, had a dream that he couldn't interpret because the dream was from God. And so he needed one of God's men in whom God's spirit dwelled to interpret the dream. The dream was that there was seven fat cows and seven skinny, gaunt, supermodel looking cows. And he didn't know what it meant to have these seven fat and seven skinny cows. And Joseph interpreted it by God's spirit that the seven fat cows were seven fat years of plenty like the dot com boom where everybody's making a mint. And the seven years of lean are like where the bottom falls out of the market, and everybody goes upside down on their credit. And that there would be much and little financially and as far as food goes in the nation of Egypt.

And so then he gets put into this position as a trustworthy associate to Pharaoh. You're gonna see today that his life takes a turn for the better. God's good to him, but there's a whole portion of his life that is unresolved, conflict with his family, okay. And so for you and I to identify with Joseph tonight, we've gotta think through who is the person or who are the people that we were close to, and now the relationship is really strained, fractured, complicated, awkward. It's like a rock in our shoe. We just don't know what to do about it.

This could be a family member. Oftentimes it is. Sometimes those are the most painful. It can be a friend, somebody you don't talk to much anymore, somebody you don't see much anymore, somebody that you want to be on good terms with perhaps, but it's just so messed up. The relationship is so fractured because you sinned or they sinned, and there's unforgiveness. And somebody hasn't changed. And there's misunderstandings. And you've tried to talk about it. It only makes matters worse, so you've just decided not to talk much or see each other much if at all. The question is then what do we do with those kinds of relationships? Because sin comes into our relationships. It separates people. And it creates problems.

At the beginning of the story, you will see that Joseph hasn't spoken to his brothers or his father; hasn't seen them in 13 years. There is then the seven years of famine. And before he sees his brothers, it will have been 20 years since he ever saw his own brothers. It will be more than 20 years before he saw his own father. And so we pick up the story – Genesis 41:41. We'll learn a lot of practical stuff here from Joseph – 41:41.

“So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.’” So, he is in a position of great authority. “Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger.” That is the equivalent of an Egyptian credit card, right? This is a platinum card. This would be like if George Bush gave you a card that said, “George Bush.” You could get stuff with that. That's a big deal. You walk in, say, “I work for the Pharaoh. Here's my ring. It's my stamp – signature. I get whatever I want.” Pharaoh's worshipped as God. I'm gonna get myself some nice things with this Egyptian credit card.

“Then Pharaoh dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.” Joseph is doing well. He is gone full blown hip hop. He's got a big fat ring on his finger. He's got a gold chain. He's got a big mink coat. He's got a hat with a feather in it. He's J-Diddy. He's got a clothing line. He

has made it. He has made it. He's gone from a poor shepherd boy to a guy in jail to J-Diddy. He has hit the big time. And you'll see, he's even got an Escalade and a posse. You'll see. Here's his Escalade – verse 43. “He had him ride in a chariot,” – that is an Egyptian Escalade with rims, DVD, the whole thing, right? Chrome, gold, tinted windows, subs, back massager, heated seat you could make muffins on. Nice chariot – really nice chariot. And also he had a posse. You can't be a hip hop guy without a posse.

So, he had, “Men who shouted before him, ‘Make way!’” So, the posse would go before him. That's what the posse's for. The posse is always to go before the star. Hey, ho – you know, they go before them. “And J-Diddy's coming, baby. J-Diddy's coming.” So, that's what happens. He's got a full blown posse running around, making some noise, getting some attention. He rolls in in his chariot with the rims with the subs in the back. He's got his fat mink coat. He's got his hat with the nice feather in it, the big bling ring, nice gold chain. Nice, huh? Much better than being in jail. He has made it. And that's every good hip hop story – from jail to bling. That's pretty good, huh? So, he does it, baby. He's E True Hollywood Story now. He's made the big time.

“Then Pharaoh said,” – Oh, “Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” Then verse 44. “Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I am Pharaoh,’” – nice. We saw it on your name tag. We know. “‘But without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.’ Pharaoh gave Joseph,” – oh, so here's the deal. He says, “Joseph, you get to rule the country, but I get to take the credit. That's our deal.” That's a boss, right? That's your boss. It's godless and Biblical. That's what it is. He says, “Joseph, you make me look good, and I'll take credit. That's our deal.”

“Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah,” – so that's an Egyptian name, right? And some commentators say, “Oh, he shouldn't have accepted the Egyptian name.” What is his job? Slave. Do slaves have negotiating power? No, no, no. He's a possession of Pharaoh. Pharaoh says, “You're an Egyptian now. I gotta give you a good Egyptian name, right.” You're like, we hire a guy at the church. His name is Muhammad. Say, “You're Hank now You're Hank. That's just not gonna work around here. People – how's Pastor Hank? That's what we're gonna go with.” So, he changes his name, gives him a nice Egyptian name. But he doesn't adopt the Egyptian gods or theology or religion. He still loves God. It's like Daniel and Babylon where they change his name too.

The story goes on. “I gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.” He gets – he went from prison, broke, tough life, Escalade, posse, bling, ring, great job, second most powerful man in the country next to the Pharaoh. He gets a wife. Oh, it's great. His life is going really, really good. God has blessed him, and his life is going great.

Some of you will struggle because Joseph works for the government and he's rich. You're going, “That sounds Republican. I don't know if I believe in that.” Let me just say this. It's okay to be rich and work for the government as long as you spend your money graciously. You're gonna see that he is really kind and generous with his wealth. And government is an opportunity to serve many people. And so you and I should not automatically say, “Power is bad. Money is bad. Government is bad.” From the story of Joseph, we realize, you know what? If you love God and you love people, and your whole goal is to be a blessing to people on behalf of God, you could use power and money and even the government to help and serve people.

And let me argue this. I'm gonna talk about two kinds of Christians – downstream and upstream. This may not make any sense until I explain it, but here's the deal. Most Christians don't understand how to change culture. Most Christians struggle because we get frustrated. We say, “I don't like the world. I wish it was different. What should we do?” So, here's what most Christians do. They say, “You know what? We believe there's good guys and bad guys. And the Christians are the good guys, and the non-Christians are the bad guys. We get white hats. They get black hats. And then we're gonna declare a cultural war, and we're gonna pull our guns, and we're gonna fire away, and we're gonna get all the bad guys.”

Mars Hill does not believe that. We don't. Here's what we believe. We're all bad guys. Some people say, “Don't you believe in equality?” We're all evil. That's equal right there, okay. That's what we believe, and Jesus is the good guy – one white hat in the whole book. That's it, right? Joseph's a pretty good guy. His hat's a little great, but Jesus still gets a white hat. Everybody else gets a black hat. We're all bad guys. So, it's not the good guys pulling guns on the bad guys. And so, you know, Christians that get into that mindset, they want to fight, fight, fight, fight over everything, and sometimes you gotta fight.

Ecclesiastes says, “A time for war.” Joseph isn't compromising, but he is serving the common good. He shows up to Egypt. He looks around. He can pick out a lot of things he's unhappy about. And rather than declaring war, he faithfully serves people and blesses them – loves them. Because of that, he gets into this very prominent position of influence.

Okay, let me show you what it means. When Christians want to change culture, usually what we do is we have a march or a big event, okay. So, we have the March for Jesus. Everybody's naked and perverted. Well, we're gonna walk. That'll change it. Oh, they still don't have any pants on. We're gonna walk some more – march, march. Am I against the March for Jesus? No, I'm cool with that. Go to your car after church. March, march, march for Jesus. I'm cool with that. March all you want. It's not a problem. But non-Christians don't look at that and say, “We better change. Look at that. They're walking. Quick, _____. We need to start over.”

So, the other thing Christians do is Christians like to get in big rooms and have events, okay. And we all, “We love Jesus. Yes, we do.” And here's the ball and we – you know, and here's the whole thing. I'm not against the big events. You look at what I do for a living. I'm fine with big events, right? This is what I do. But if you really want to change culture, it's not getting lots of people together in a stadium or on a march. What it is is getting a hand select few people upstream, okay.

Let me explain this to you. See, downstream, you and I – we turn on the radio, but we don't decide what bands get signed to the label. We turn on the TV, but we don't decide what programs get sent through the network filter. We go to the bookstore. We buy the book. We don't decide which books get

accepted by the publisher. You and I are judged by the law. We don't make the laws. You and I pay our taxes, but we don't decide how much we will get taxed, and we don't decide how that money will be distributed. Those decisions are made upstream.

Upstream there are cultural gatekeepers. They make the laws that we have to live by. They determine the television we will watch, and the books we will read, and the education that we will receive, and the curriculum that will be taught in the schools. And the key is not that we declare war, but that we graciously work upstream, okay. Like there's certain laws that Christians are unhappy about. As a Christian, I'm unhappy about many laws as well. But a bunch of people getting together and yelling about the law doesn't change the law. What changes the law is if the law professors at the University of Washington love Jesus. They trained attorneys who become judges who love Jesus. Now the laws that are flowing down to you and me who live downstream are affected by a handful of gatekeepers upstream.

My point is this. If we declare war downstream, we don't get to move upstream. If we love, bless, serve – not compromise – but if we're wise and shrewd, eventually God has the opportunity to move some of us upstream. Joseph now is upstream. He decides law. He decides food. He decides property rights. He decides taxation. He decides education. From that position, he affects the lives of millions of people.

How many Christians are in Egypt at this point? One. Joseph was wise. When he showed up, a place like Seattle, not a lot of people love Jesus. He didn't start with a list of his declarations of war. He did his job. And he loved and blessed. And though he went to Potiphar's house, he showed up saying, "How can I bless Potiphar?" He got thrown in jail; went to jail; said, "How can I bless the jail?" They put him in charge of the jail. Pharaoh comes to him. "I have a dream." "How can I bless Pharaoh?" Famine is coming. He says, "How can I bless Egypt?" He keeps operating under this assumption. If I love and bless, eventually I will have the opportunity to help many people, and that's his goal.

You're gonna see today from his position upstream, he feeds millions of people. Had he shown up in Egypt and declared war saying, "I don't like the tax base," he wouldn't have never made it upstream. Had he picked a lesser issue – he kept the issue that I will love God and serve God, and I will humbly see if God doesn't move me upstream. Some of you – some of you are going upstream. Some of you already are. Some of you are gonna be judges, lawyers, professors, teachers, school board members. Some of you are gonna be landowners, business owners, bankers. You're gonna run media companies.

It's weird. Different people are coming to Mars Hill than used to. We used to be totally a downstream church. Now there's people upstream, quietly working for television networks, quietly working for media conglomerates, quietly working to affect change in law and politics. You and I need to pray for those people. And those opportunities that we get to move upstream, we need to take them. And here's how we get upstream – loving, humble, faithful, Christlike service. That's how Joseph did it. He served humbly and faithfully. And he wasn't working for the money cause he didn't get paid. He was a slave. He was working for the Lord.

Paul says the same thing. "I'm a servant of Christ." Jesus says the same thing, "I'm a servant." Joseph demonstrates this – a servant. You and I need to be the church that when people think of us, they say, "Those guys love Jesus and the city. They're not here to declare war. They're here to effect change, but they do so in a loving, gracious, positive way." And it's not that we compromise. It's that we effect change through kindness and grace and love and mercy, as God has been good to us.

Joseph is a wonderful example of what an effective missionary life looks like in a lost Pagan culture. Do you think because of Joseph there will be good impressions of his God throughout Egypt? Certainly. If there's only one Christian in Egypt, and it's Joseph – see, Joseph's reputation will be inextricably tied to the Living God's reputation, so Joseph is a guy who is loving, gracious, kind, and helpful. They think, "Wow, maybe his God is worth checking out. His God seems to take good care of him, and he seems to take care of us." And you and I – our reputations are inextricably tied to the reputation of Jesus, Mars Hill. And so we need to work hard; work smart; work wise; work well. If we get power, if we get opportunity, if we get money, we need to ask how we can bless and care for the common good so that they have a good idea of who God is.

Joseph gets this. Now his life is good. He's rich, powerful, famous. He's married. His life has made a turn for the better. The story continues. Verse 46, "Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt." He's going to visit everybody and get an idea. You know what? Joseph loves all the Egyptians, so he wants to go out and see everybody. How are they doing? Where do they live? What's their state of living? What's their diet? How is everybody? If he's gonna be upstream, he's gotta make decisions that affect people downstream because he loves them. He's gonna go check it out.

You know, this might be the first time that somebody that important came through town. "Hi, how are you doing? How can we help you? How can we serve you? What do you need? What would make your life better?" This is a loving, gracious man. That's why he has so much opportunity.

"During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully." Things boomed just like it did here in the early 90's, right? Things were great – everybody making a mint – racking up credit card debt, overextended, thinking it's gonna roll forever. During that time, "Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure."

Wouldn't that be great? Somebody says, "Hey, do you balance your checkbook?" "I just – there's so much money. I just don't even have time to do all the counting. I just gave up, and I write checks, and there's plenty of money. I don't even worry about it." Oh, thank you, Jesus. That would be so nice.

"Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph," – he got two boys – great. Yeah, I got two boys. I got a third on the way. Boys are a blessing and a full-time job. Their names were, "Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, 'It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.' The second son he named Ephraim and said, 'It is because God has

made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.” It seems like a weird name for two kids – forgetful and fruitful. But I’ll explain it to you cause these are important names.

When you have a lot of pressure, responsibility – Joseph’s got a lot of pressure, responsibility. His life’s going good in Egypt, but like a rock in his shoe, he still is unreconciled to his brothers; doesn’t know if his dad is dead or alive – a big mess back in the blood family – been some almost 20 years now. What he says is, “You know what? My son helps me forget that part of my life.”

Have you not found that kids are a legitimate diversion? That whatever you’re thinking about, they’re gonna make you think about something else. That’s what they do. You’re thinking about real estate. They’re thinking about Barney. You know, it’s just they’re driving in a different lane. Have you noticed that?

I’ll give you an example. Last night I’m sitting there working on my computer, doing a bunch of stuff. My son, Calvin, comes down. And when he gets an idea, he just gets all crazy redneck looking. He’s got these bowed legs. He’s got no shirt on, shorts on – not even blinking. I’m working on my computer. I look over, and he gets this bucktooth grin. I look over again. He’s like, “I have an idea, dad.” I said, “What’s that?” He said, “We need to get donuts and go swimming right now.”

And I said, “Well, Calvin, dad’s working right now. I’ve got a lot of work. I’m really, really busy.” Here’s his counter-argument. He said, “They have ones with sprinkles.” That’s his counter-argument. I’m like, “That’s a brilliant argument.” So, I said, “Okay, buddy, I gotta finish my work though, but I’d love to go.” And he says, “Is it important?” That’s what he asked me. “No, get your shorts on. Get your brother.” So, go get donuts, go swimming, you know, cause kids, they make you forget, you know.

And some of you didn’t know this. Your mom, your dad, they had a long day; get home; burned out, frustrated, tired. Job stinks. Commute stinks. Everything stinks. Walk in the door. “Hi.” They just yell, scream, run at you. You think, “You know what? Forget it. You’ve just taken my mind off all the mess. Thank you.” And kids are that great legitimate diversion. Sometimes you can’t be stressed out when they’re picking their nose and running around with no underwear on. It just chills you out.

You know, I was on the phone the other day working on this real estate deal, pacing the floor, thinking through the details, running the – “Oh, and what is this? And what is this? And how much will this be? And what is this?” And I’m not even paying attention. My sons had climbed up on the couch and he waited for me to walk by. And he jumped on my back, threw an arm around my neck, and started beating me in the head. And I just about dropped him. I just about fell on my head. And he’s like, “I’m gonna kill you now. You’re mine.” I’m on the phone trying to do business, and they’re like, “Are you okay? Is everything okay?” “Yeah, I just got assaulted, that’s all, by the five year old. I gotta call you back though,” cause you know what? He’s gonna make me forget. Okay, so I just put all the real estate aside and wrestle with buddy, Zach. That’s what we do.

Kids – sometimes their gift is just diversion, you know. You’re sitting there thinking, “Oh, my gosh. I am thousands of dollars in debt. I am stressed out. I’m putting on weight. I’m losing my hair. I’m freaking out.” And they come and they say, “Do you want an Oreo? I licked the stuff out of the middle, but you could have the cookie?” You’re like – something else to think about. So, that’s what he names his kids, forgetful and fruitful, cause God also was good to him and made him fruitful financially, family – the whole deal.

Verse 53, “The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end,” – so now it’s the dot bust. Everything falls apart. “And the seven years of famine began,” – now the hard times come – “just as Joseph had said,” – because God told him. “There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food.” Why was there food? Cause Joseph stored up food. Why did Joseph store up food? Because God told him. Joseph trusted God by faith for seven years, and because he was a decent guy, Pharaoh trusted Joseph. So, vicariously Pharaoh, though he’s not a believer, is trusting in the Word of God.

See, one Christian can make a difference. Joseph is one Christian. He makes a difference. He lives by faith. He trusts the Word of God. “When all Egypt,” – verse 55 – “began to feel the famine,” – right? At first you’re thinking, “Hey, this is kind of nice. I’m losing weight.” Then you’re like, “That’s a little much. Now I’m hungry. I’m starting to kind of feel it.” “The people cried to Pharaoh for food.” Who does Pharaoh think he is? God. Here’s Pharaoh’s answer. “Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.’” Just write this down. If you call God and he forwards you to someone who can help, your God’s a receptionist. That’s not a big God. You need another God, right? “Hello, God, I’m hungry.” “That’s not my department. Let me get you somebody in management.” “What the?” I need a new God. This God just forwards calls. He’s no good.

“When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.” Genesis 12:15. “God’s people are supposed to be a blessing to the nations of the Earth.” Joseph now is a blessing to the nations of the Earth. He’s feeding people. Some of you say, “I don’t want to be rich. I don’t want power. I don’t want to be in government. I don’t want to be over people. I don’t want to be a manager.” Sure, you do, so you can love them.

See, Joseph’s rich, but instead of getting richer, he’s feeding people. Instead of exploiting an economic opportunity, he turns it into a ministry opportunity. Some of you are gonna make a ton of money. Some of you are gonna have a lot of power. Praise God. Love Jesus. Do what’s right. Somebody’s gotta have money. Somebody’s gotta have power. It may as well be people who love Jesus and come in with the attitude of, “I’m here to bless. I’m here to serve. I’m your slave. I’m here to make your life better.” Praise God. Praise God it’s in the hands of Joseph – not in the hands of Pharaoh.

Forty-two, “When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt,” – that’s his daddy. So, the scene shifts from Egypt back to Canaan, to Joseph’s

hometown. "He said to his sons," – he's got ten sons still at home – "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" I think this is funny. You kind of get the impression like they're all just sitting around like, "I'm hungry. Are you hungry?" "Yeah, I'm totally hungry." "Yeah, I could eat. I could use a cheeseburger." "I'd like a chalupa. I'm starving. Are you starving?" "Yeah, I'm starving." Dad comes in. "Well, why don't you go get some food and stop having a redneck meeting around the campfire talking about barbeque? Go get something."

"He continued, 'I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us,' – hey, they have food. Why don't you go there while you've still got strength to walk, right? It's amazing. Sometimes people don't pursue opportunity even when there's obvious need. They sit around and have meetings. Then – I won't go there.

"Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also." So, here's the deal. He sends the ten boys. He keeps one back. Why? He likes that one. He's still playing kind of favorites. This is a family problem. "Well, you kids could die. Hey, Benjamin, why don't you stay?" That's a bummer right there.

See, what had happened, he thought Joseph was dead. And he had four wives, 12 sons. He had two sons with one wife that he really loved. The other three, he wasn't too hot on. And that was Benjamin and Joseph. They're 100 percent blood brothers. And Joseph had already died. That left Benjamin as the baby and the favorite, so he's gonna keep Benjamin; send the other ten off to Egypt. They're disposable apparently. Bummer for them.

"Now Joseph," – verse 6 – "was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground." Why did he get in trouble in the first place? He had a dream where his brothers bowed down, and here they bowed down. Moral of the story – God will get you. You can – they tried to mess up God's plan. Oh, we'll sell him into slavery, that dreamer. We'll never bow down to him. Twenty years later, they bow down. Wouldn't that be great if your brothers did that? Oh, that'd be a good day.

"As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them." They didn't recognize him. He recognized them, okay. Part of it is you change a lot from 17 to 37. Have you noticed that? Have you looked at your high school photo? I had a moment. I was skinny, wearing pastels – did not have the spirit of God, and it was obvious. I love to see guys before – like on their wedding photo, and then like 20 years later after she's been cooking. You're like, "Dud, that doesn't even look like you. What happened?" "She's a good cook." "I guess. She doesn't want you running off on her. She's gonna make sure you're so unattractive that no one would take you." I think it's a tactic.

But, you know, cause over 20 years, you change. You look different. You do. You look different. You've been to your 20 year reunion, any of you? You're like, "Hi, I'm – what?" You kind of get that Kramer from Seinfeld snapback. Really? Wow, I'm sorry. What happened? You know, people look different over 20 years. And now he's Egyptian, right? He's got the haircut. He's wearing the clothes. He's just a different looking guy is what he is. So, they don't recognize their brother. They think he's dead. The story goes on.

"He remembered his dreams about them," – verse 9 – "And said, 'You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.'" So, here's what he's gonna do. He's gonna mess with them. It's Biblical. He's gonna mess with them. And what he's gonna do, he's gonna test them, okay. Now here's the moral of the story. If there is someone who is dangerous and who has done evil to you, you better make sure that they've actually changed before you get close to them again. There's a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness is I forgive you. Reconciliation is and now I trust you again. We can be close.

Let's say your dad molested you. Then he says, "I'm sorry." Well, you better make sure he's changed before you let him babysit your kids. Husband smacks around his wife. Says, "I'm sorry." Well, before she moves home, she better make sure that he's changed. Okay, the moral of the story is, right, wife's running around cheating on her husband, gets caught. Before he says, "Oh, we're fine now," he better make sure she's changed.

See, we can forgive people, but trusting them, they've gotta earn that back. They've gotta demonstrate that they're not dangerous like they were; that God's got a hold of them and they're different. So, he's gonna mess with them a little bit, and he's gonna set up some scenarios where he can test them. Many of the hard things in our life are tests from God or people to show our actual character – be it good or evil. So, he says, "You guys are spies," cause Canaan was in the north. Egypt is in the south. That was the weakest border to be exploited. For us, it would be like, "You're a Canadian." Yeah. Coming down here with your tea and French.

"No, my lord,' they said," – we're not Canadians. Verse 10, "Your servants have come to buy food." "We're looking for the Taco Bell. We're not terrorists." "We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies." "No!" he said. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected." "They replied, 'Your servants were twelve brothers,' – they talk a lot. "The sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more." That is Joseph. "We're missing one guy. We can't find him anywhere."

"Joseph said to them, 'It is just as I told you: You are spies.'" You're all terrorists. "And this is how you will be tested." He tells them, "It's a test." "As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here." Go get that little brother. That's his biological brother that he wants to see. "Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison," – oh, I was thinking about it. Wouldn't it be cool to have your own prison? You wouldn't need therapy, medication.

You could just say, "I have my own jail. You've annoyed me. You're going to jail. You cut me off in traffic. You go to jail. I went to the bank and I stood in the line, and they didn't count the money right. You're going to jail, right. You sing country music. You're going to jail." You'd just clean so much up. You know, you don't have to worry about lawyers and fees and countersuits – jail. Things would be so tidy. Joseph's got his own jail. You know you've arrived when you've got your own jail. Boy, that simplifies so much. So he says, "You know what? You're all going to jail – my jail.

Good day.”

“He put them all in custody for three days.” Not that big of a deal. He was in jail for a couple of years. He’s just messing with them. “On the third day, Joseph said to them, ‘Do this and you will live, for I fear God.’” “I’m a Christian boy, and I won’t whack you if you do what I tell you. ““If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go back to take grain back for your starving households. But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die.”” That will get you right there. “This they proceeded to do.”

Duh, when you’re in jail, and the guy’s threatening to whack you, you do what he says. “They said to one another, ‘Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was,’” – Joseph – ““when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come upon us.”” They’re confessing their sin. “You know what? It’s cause we sinned against Joseph 20 years ago. You know, we kind of thought we got off scot free. We reap what we’ve sown. God’s gonna come and get us.” You’re starting to see the boys operate with a conscious – acknowledgement of sin. We did wrong to our brother. That was a horrifying day. We should have never did that. Now it’s coming back to get us.”

“Reuben replied,” – and he comes off kind of moral and pious, but he’s the guy who slept with his dad’s wife. He was the mandrake boy for his mom back in the old days. You know, I’ll get him Viagra. The kid has some issues. Verse 22, “Reuben replied, ‘Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy?’” You always have a kid like that in the family. “I told you so. I told you not to do it. I’m always right. You’re always wrong. You should have listened to me.” And it sounds good – you’ll see. But it’s really not that good. Reuben sounds like a good guy, but he’s still got some issues. ““But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.’ They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.”

This is brilliant. They think he’s an Egyptian. They don’t think he can speak Hebrew. He hasn’t spoken Hebrew in quite a few years most likely, but he’s bilingual. This is why education is so helpful. You can trick people. And Joseph – they’re speaking Hebrew and he’s listening in, and he is hearing an acknowledgement that they sinned against him though they know not he’s there. See, this is where he is testing them, and before he can trust them again, he needs to make sure that they’ve had changed hearts with God.

So then, “He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.” So, his heart’s broken. He’s actually crying. Hey, it’s okay to cry sometimes – not cause you’re watching Steel Magnolias, but – or reading a greeting card. If you’re a guy, and you’re gonna cry, make it count. Your wife gives birth to a baby, you can shed a tear. That’s good. If you’re watching Steel Magnolias and you cry, we’re gonna discipline you in this church. That’s what we’re gonna do.

There’s not a lot of guys that cry in the Bible. Jesus wept at the death of his friend, Lazarus. He wept over the rejection of him by the city of Jerusalem. Here, Joseph – you know, and wouldn’t it be nice if those people that have sinned against you most grievously, if you overheard them talking, and they weren’t doing it for show? They said, “You know, I did an evil thing. And it was terrible. And it was wrong. And it is the thing I regret most in my whole life.” Wouldn’t that just break your heart and go, “Thank you. Thank you for at least acknowledging that you did ill toward me. That makes me feel better. That helps me to heal and to forgive you.”

So, now we’re getting the test, and he’s starting to see their heart. He’s gonna continue to test them, however. “Joseph gave orders,” – verse 25 – “to fill their bags with grain, to put each man’s silver back in his sack,” – so they paid for it and he’s gonna put the money back in the sack – “and to give them provisions for their journey.” So this is – he’s taking good care of them. “After this was done for them,” – verse 26 – “they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left. At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. ‘My silver has been returned,’ he said to his brothers. ‘Here it is in my sack.’ Oh, no. We told him we’re good, honest men. He said he might kill us. We paid him for the food. We left. And we opened up the bags and the money’s there. He’s gonna think we stole.

How many of you went to the store, got something, went home, and realized, “I didn’t pay for it. Uh-oh. Do I go back? Do I not? What do I do now?” That’s where they’re at. They did pay for it. He blessed them; gave them their money back. He’s being gracious and kind. Food for their journey, food for their family, and their money back. Wouldn’t that be nice? You go to buy a car. You pay for it. You drive home, open the trunk, and all your money was there. I’d go back and get another car. That’s a good deal right there.

Verse 28, “Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, ‘What is this that God has done to us?’” The boys are starting to realize that their life belongs to God. “You know what? We sinned against Joseph. We also sinned against God. Now God is dealing with us because of the sin we committed against Joseph.” They’re starting to ask the question that all Christians should ask, and that is, “God, what are you trying to teach me? God, what are you trying to do? God, what’s the point here? I know you’re in this. Where are you? Where are we going?”

The story continues. “When they came to their father,” – verse 29 – “Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them.” Now I’ll read it quick because we have a lot to cover, and they’re basically reiterating the story. ““The man who is lord,” – that’s Joseph – ““over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.’ Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, ‘This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go. But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.’”

“As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man’s sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened. Their father Jacob said to them, ‘You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin.’” I actually like him. ““Everything is against me!’ Then Reuben said to his father,” – okay. Reuben before said, “I’m the moral one. You

should have done what I told you.” Well, here’s how his character is. ““You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you.””

Now, can you imagine that? Your grandpa is there. Your dad is there. You’re a little boy – two boys with your dad, and looking at your grandpa. And your dad says, “Well, if I don’t do the job, you can kill them.” The little boys are like, “Hey, why don’t you whack dad?” Reuben sounds like a – he’s not a moral guy. When push comes to shove, you know, bullets are flying, he grabs his sons and puts them out front. “Oh, good, I didn’t get shot. Oh, sorry, boys.” He’s not a good man, right. Any guy who is willing to murder his own sons instead of taking his own life – not a very good guy.

Fortunately, grandpa doesn’t take him on that deal. “Oh, okay. I’ll whack my grandsons.” ““Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.” But Jacob said, ‘My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead,’” – Joseph – ““and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.”” “Boys, we can’t risk it. I’ve got one son in jail. I’ve got another son dead. You want to take the other son. No.”

Now back to Egypt. The scene shifts. Verse 1, chapter 43, “The famine was still severe in the land. So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt,” – made all the food. Famine was still going. “Their father said to them, ‘Go back and buy us a little more food.’” We gotta go back to Egypt. “But Judah said to him,” – okay, now. Judah, up to this point, good guy or bad guy? Bad guy, bad guy.

He’s the one who sold Joseph into slavery. He’s the one who lied to his father and pretended it was a murder. He’s the one who led the brothers to deceive their father over the enslavement of their brother for more than 20 years. He raised two godless, evil, awful, terrible boys. He was a failure as a son – bad son. He was a failure as a husband. He was a failure as a father. His two boys were so bad that what did God do to them? He killed them. And then, because his wife died and he was feeling lonely, he was on a journey. He picked up a prostitute, so he thought, by the side of the road. Who was that? Tamar – his daughter-in-law. He impregnated his daughter-in-law. Now he’s raising a kid with his son’s wife. I mean this is not a great guy. Judah steps up to speak. What do you think Judah will say?

Verse 3, “Judah said to him, ‘The man warned us solemnly, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’” If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’” Israel asked, ‘Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?’” Right? “Oh, we told him we had a brother, and now he wants him.” “Why’d you tell him you have a brother?” I’d say the cop pulls you over. “Anything wrong?” “No, I was just smoking weed in the car and I lost sight of the road. Doh.” You know, like what’d you tell him that for? Not a bright cat.

“They replied, ‘The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. ‘Is your father still living?’ he asked us. ‘Do you have another brother?’ We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here?’ Then Judah said to Israel his father,” – here’s Judah – bad guy. Here he speaks. ““Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die.”” He’s not thinking about himself. ““I myself,”” – important line – ““will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.””

This is the change in the life of Judah. Men, I want you to make careful note of this change. It is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – three generations. Judah is now the head of the family for the fourth generation. At this point, he is not a great godly guy. He’s a loser. He’s a loser is what he is. Up until this point, he has just been a thug, a failed husband, a failed father, a failed brother. You know, his sons are dead. He’s a pervert, and he changes right here. This is the change in the life of Judah. And the change is this. Judah takes responsibility. This, gentlemen, is the essence of masculinity. A boy does not responsibility. A man welcomes it gladly. That is the difference between men and boys.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says, “When I was a child, I thought and acted like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. I started acting like a man.” The problem is we have a lot of people running around in male, masculine, manly bodies, but with tender, boyish minds and attitudes. And there are boys running around in men’s bodies committing atrocities that are done by men who think and act like boys. The key, gentlemen, is that you must not operate according to the precepts of culture that does not know God.

In our culture, men are encouraged to be boys and not take responsibility. Don’t want to get a job? That’s a lot of responsibility. Don’t want to take a wife? That’s a lot of responsibility. Don’t want to buy a house? That’s a lot of responsibility. Don’t want to have any kids? That’s a lot of responsibility. Don’t want to lead a ministry? That’s a lot of responsibility. We have this boomerang effect of guys who go to college. Mom and dad pay for it. And then come back home in their 20’s because they don’t want to work; because they don’t want to pay their bills; because life is hard.

Duh, the world needs more men. Judah gets that. It dawns on him. Nothing will get fixed unless a masculine man stands up and takes responsibility to fix something that is broken. That’s what men do. That’s redemption. That’s what we do. We take women, children, businesses, ministries, and we cultivate them. We love them. We serve them. We build them. We take responsibility for them.

Boys blame other people. “Oh, I got fired cause I slept through my alarm.” What the – what the – what the? You should be a grease spot in the road if you cannot get yourself out of bed; if you can’t get to work; if you can’t keep a job; if you can’t love a woman; if you can’t raise a kid. Then you’re not a man. You say, “I shave.” Monkeys are furry, and they’re not men. You know, and some guys just despise responsibility. Gentlemen, if you are to be men of God, if anything is to change in our world, it starts with men having days like Judah, saying, “You know what? I’m a pervert and a loser and a failure. But today I’ll take responsibility. You can blame me; put it on me. I’ll deliver results. I’ll fix it.”

And guys, this is not like the great cheerleader one day event. This is a lifestyle. He is saying, “You know what? I’m gonna do what’s best for the

women. I'm gonna do what's best for the children. I'm gonna do what's best for the family. I'm gonna do what's best for our people. I'm gonna do what's best for my father. I'm not gonna do what's best for me. I've already done what's best for me. I was drinking instead of raising my kids. God struck them dead. I got my daughter-in-law pregnant. I sold my brother into slavery. Maybe I start living for God and other people."

Judah gets it. This is his day of transformation. Some of you guys have made this turn. Some of you guys need to make that turn today from boy to man. The essence of manhood is responsibility. This is my life. This is my body. This is my finances. This is my car and my house, my wife, my kids, my Gospel, my church, my city. You can blame me. Put it on my back. I can carry some weight." That's a man. That's a man. Judah becomes a man. He looks his daddy in the eye and he says, "Dad, you can trust me. I'll deliver. And if not, I'll take responsibility."

This had to be a great day for his dad. This may be the first day his dad has seen him like this. This kid is an abject failure. He's an underachiever. He's like some of you guys – just a screwball. Just getting high, chasing girls, driving fast, being dumb. And all of a sudden, he looks real serious, and he tells his dad, "Things will change today. You can trust me. I'll fix it. I'll make you proud."

That was a great day for his dad. And he will not just make promises, but deliver results. This is the change in the story. Now Judah becomes fit for the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. He becomes a man. He takes responsibility. He becomes a patriarch in this moment. God's been working on Judah. Judah's been working with God. His life and his heart are transitioning. I beg that for all of our men. I beg that for all of our men. I pray that their reputation is that they go into Mars Hill as boys, and they come out as men. That's one of the reasons we're here. The world needs more men. We've got plenty of boys.

I want all you men to look at Judah. If you made the turn, praise God. If you haven't, make it tonight. Give your life to Jesus. Stop being a meathead. Make the turn, and grow up. You know, grow up. Stand up. Step up. Man up. Things are gonna change in a whole history of redemption right here with Judah because he is going to take responsibility as a man. It's amazing how much changes in the world when the men take responsibility. We see the story pick up. It gets exciting now. Verse 11 – you guys are dull. I'll trade you in for Pentecostals. Man, you're like, all right, whatever. Does that mean I can't play video games anymore? I can't snowboard? Yes, that's what it means. You gotta go to work. And you gotta mow your lawn. And you gotta stop eating Cheetos. You gotta come on.

Verse 11, "Then their father Israel said to them, 'If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags,'" – give him a present. Take them down as a gift. This guy's gonna be mad. We need food. Give him a little chapstick, honey, some spices, myrrh, pistachio nuts, almonds, honey roasted peanuts. Guys love snacks. That will help. "Take double the amount of silver with you," – return it. "I think we forgot to pay, so we're gonna pay and pay twice cause we're really, really sorry – "that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am depressed, bereaved," – listening to Indie rock, wearing all black, sitting around, being sad, so be it. That's the way it's gotta go until we get this figured out.

"So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also," – the favored kid brother. "They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, 'Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner; they are to eat with me at noon.'" When they first came to Egypt, where did they go? Jail. Second trip to Egypt, they go to Joseph's house. That's a little scary, right? Let's say a state trooper pulls you over, whacks you, roughs you up, maces you, cuffs you, throws you in jail. Then you drive through that part of town again a year later, he pulls you over. You're thinking, "Oh, boy." He looks at you and he says, "Hey, I remember you. You're coming to my house." "Oh, no. Oh, no. I have cable TV. I've seen this. They're never gonna find my body. This is not good."

"The man did as," – where was I? Was I verse 17? Yes. "The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph's house. Now the men were frightened," – oh, man, we're going to his house. We just wanted a chalupa. What's he going to do? "When they were taken to his house. They thought, 'We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time.'" He wants to attack us. He's gonna jump us. He's gonna beat us. He's gonna overpower us, seize us as slaves. And he's gonna take our donkey. There's gonna be a donkey jacking. Again, it's a hip hop story, right? I mean carjacking, police beatings, bling, rims, the whole thing.

"So they went up to Joseph's steward," – the guy who runs the affairs of the house, and they're trying to suck up to him. If he's gonna kill us, maybe we could tell this guy that we're really, really, really sorry – "and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. 'Please, sir,' they said, 'we came down here the first time to buy food. And the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver – the exact weight – in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back.'" We're really, really sorry. We forgot to pay you. We didn't mean to steal. Please don't whack us, all right.

"We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food." We got money. We'll pay you. We also have nuts. You like nuts? We like you. "We don't know who put our silver in our sacks.' 'It's all right,' he said. 'Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.'" You've already paid. "Then he brought Simeon out." Oh, it's forgiven. It's a miracle. You guys get the food and the money. It's just a big party. So, they all sit down for lunch – a big, fat lunch. Skinny homeless guys happy to have something to eat.

"The steward took the men into Joseph's house," – nice house, MTV Cribs house. Oh, nice, very nice. "Gave them water to wash their feet," – because they were funky from a long journey – "and provided fodder for their donkeys." The donkeys even get taken care of. "They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there." Oh, you're gonna get lunch. Really? Get out the presents.

"When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts," – sucking up – "they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. He asked them how they were, and then he said, 'How is your aged father,'" – that's his daddy – "you told me about? Is he still living?" It's

been maybe 21 years at this point. He has not seen his dad. He doesn't even know if his daddy is alive, but he's testing them to see.

"They replied, 'Your servant our father is still alive and well.' And they bowed low to pay him honor. As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, 'Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?'" This is his biological blood brother. He hadn't seen him in 21 years. Didn't get to grow up with this kid. Some of you relate to this. Your family's broken, fractured. It's a mess. You've got half siblings or siblings in a split family. You didn't grow up together. You don't see each other. You have relatives, cousins you don't even really know. This is his brother. He didn't get to play with him growing up. He didn't get to wrestle with him and play ball and go swimming and be brothers. He missed 21 years of life with this kid. And there he is in his house.

Joseph sees him, "'And he said, 'God be gracious to you, my son.' Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep.'" He's kind of a cryer. "He went into his private room and wept there." So, you know, it's okay to cry if it's a legit issue. My wife miscarried; I cried. You know, I mean I heard this boy in our church got cancer, and I cried. You know, it's okay to cry. Just kind of cry for a good reason. He cries for a good reason. Sees his brother, and he's just so heartbroken and moved and glad cause it looks like things are coming together.

"After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, 'Serve the food.'" That's a total dude move right there. Okay, I gotta wash my face. Nobody can see me cry. You walk out. "What's up?" That's just a total dude move right there. Nobody can see you cry. He controlled himself, got his breathing all back. "They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews," – kind of racism – "for that is detestable to Egyptians."

Here's the close. "The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment." They're all sitting there at this fat dinner – lunch buffet. Oh, look at that. That's a lot of food. This is better than jail. "When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him."

Now this is kind of weird, you know. They're all sitting there and they're like steak, steak, steak, steak, five steaks. And a slice of chocolate cake, slice of chocolate cake, slice of chocolate cake, two chocolate cakes. Benjamin's got this, you know, glass of wine, glass of wine, glass of wine, case of wine. Benjamin, the kid brother, is sitting at the table. You could just see it on his face like – he's looking around. You know, like just got this heaping mound of food. You go, "What is Joseph doing? Is he putting his brother on the Atkins diet? Does he want to kill him with cholesterol? What's he doing?" People are going, "What is that? Why does this kid get the big fat stack of food, right?" He's like, "I'm fat. I just can't eat another bit. I had five steaks. And I had a case of wine. And I ate two chocolate cakes. And thank you, Jesus. We were skinny – not anymore."

Why does he do that? Here's the point. Previously Joseph was the kid brother who was favored. How did the brothers respond? Jealousy – sold him into slavery. Now Benjamin is the kid brother. He is going to favor Benjamin to see how they react. This is the final test. If they get jealous; if they start talking in Hebrew, "Oh, we should whack that one too." Well, then they probably haven't met Jesus and had a change of heart, and they're probably not different guys. But if they go with it and they say, "Hey, Benjamin, congratulations, five steaks. Praise the Lord." You know, if they're nice to their brother, and they don't get jealous – cause are any of them suffering now? They're all getting blessed. One is getting really, really, really, really blessed, and he's starting – he wanted to see is there competition? Is there jealousy here? And he's observing them, listening to them speak in Hebrew; eat their meal.

The moral of the story is it's okay to test people before you trust him. Paul says about leaders in the church, "Don't be hasty in the laying on of hands." Get to know somebody before you trust them, especially somebody who has hurt you and sinned greatly. Before you just embrace them and trust them and make yourself vulnerable to them, you can forgive them, but before you reconcile, you should give them a little time and make sure they've actually changed.

Now some of you – we're gonna stop right there. Some of you will be frustrated saying, "But where's the end? I wanted the end. I want him to make clothes out of drapes and sing The Sound of Music theme, and run to each other and embrace in a field of lilies. I wanted Joseph to get carried off on their shoulders like he won the Super Bowl. Come on, man. I was gonna tithe." Okay, here's the point. The point is we'll get there. The story ends in the next couple of weeks, but the point is this. Sometimes working through relationships, particularly with family members, takes a lot of time. And it's not like a TV sitcom – 22 minutes when you take out the 8 minutes of commercials. It doesn't just wrap itself up like a Dr. Phil show nice and tidy.

Sometimes people take time to trust them, to get to know them, to build trust, to observe them, to have them prove themselves to you. This story takes time because relationships take time because sin separates people. God brings them together, but it takes time to work through the details. Three people that remain in the story. If you have been sinned against greatly, you learn from Joseph. Forgive, love, serve, bless, stick with God, and move on. He didn't lie there in a heap in Egypt, just an emotional basket case, saying, "My family's separated. I don't know my dad. I've been wronged." He did his job; got married; raised his kids; mowed his lawn; did his job; worked upstream.

He's saying, "You know what, God? If it's gonna work out, if we're gonna be together again, you'll work it out some day." Some of you have been too paralyzed by the sin that's been committed against you. You've gotta stop blaming people. You've gotta just pick it up, and you've gotta forget what lies behind like Paul says, and you've gotta move on. You say, "But I was sinned against. My dad abandoned me. My uncle molested me. My mom hated me. My brother lied about me, blah, blah, blah." Well, all true, but it may be 21 years before they get straightened out. And that's a good chunk of your life, so you don't want to blow it. You still belong to God. He can still bless you. He can still give you a good life. And the rest could be picked up later, so you gotta get moving.

For those of you that have sinned greatly like the brothers, you've done evil. You've hurt people. You've ruined relationships. You have said and done

deplorable things. A lesson from the brothers is this. Repentance is the only solution. They realized we've sinned against God. We've sinned against Joseph. And they have been reconciled to God. They know that God is dealing with their sin. And they know that they belong to God. They've been reconciled to God. They're not yet reconciled to Joseph, but because they confessed their sin; because they own their sin; because they name their sin openly, that means that they have become honest men.

You and I, when we sin, we need to be honest. We need to just say it. "That was wrong. I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't have done that. That was just wrong. I did wrong. And let me prove to you that I'm changed so you can trust me again." That's what's going on. And over both of these relationships is God, who rules the providence in the life of Joseph – brings everything together just like he wants. Our God is a God of reconciliation. The problem is sin. The answer is God. Our God is Jesus. Joseph's God is Jesus. Our God is a God of reconciliation. He knows what to do with sin. He's the only one who knows what to do with sin.

Jesus – like Joseph – comes into the earth, is sinned against. He's despised, rejected by his brothers. He is put to death. He forgives sinners by rising from death though he, himself, committed no sin, and died as a substitute in their place. Jesus then takes away sin so that people can be reconciled to God. He's our mediator between man and God. And he takes away sin that separates us from people, so we don't need to kill each other and declare war. We could forgive each other as God in Christ has forgiven us.

The result then is that grace and love and mercy and blessing is the hallmark of the Christian life, and that sin doesn't need to separate us from God and people; that Jesus is going to take away sin, forgive us, reconcile us first to God so that God could change us. The brothers have been changed. Joseph has been changed. He's no longer that impetuous, arrogant young kid that he was. And the brothers are no longer the thieves and the liars and the crooks that they were. God's been working on everybody, and because everybody knows God, and God is working on everybody, as they draw closer to God, they're drawing closer together. And ultimately, they're gonna be loving again. That's what we want for you.

It may be 21 years for the relationships to get worked out, but the relationship with God can get dealt with tonight. You confess your sins to Jesus; ask him to forgive you; be a Christian. Allow God to start to change your heart and your life. You may be like Judah or Joseph. You may need him because things are going great and you're arrogant. You may need him because things are going poor and you're desperate. It doesn't matter. Confess your sins to Jesus. You give your hurts and your longings for the times you've been sinned against to Jesus. You ask him to work out all things for good, to bring good out of evil, to make everything restored like he wants it to be.

We invite you to Jesus tonight. We're gonna go ahead and pray. We're gonna take communion. And we're gonna bring Jesus' body and bloodshed for our sin. If you're a Christian who's repented of their sins, you're welcome to partake. If you're not a Christian, don't take communion, and don't give any of your money. We love you. Tithes and offerings are for believers. We'll make sure we reconcile to God tonight. We'll leave here to go live our life.

Some of us are gonna move upstream, and we're gonna change the world. Some of us are gonna live downstream, and love all those that we get an opportunity to. And by God's good grace, we'll see our relationships restored and reconciled when it's time, but it might be some years. So, in the meantime, we give ourselves to the Lord and to his work here on the Earth. And then we'll sing and we'll celebrate because there's hope because it's not just us and people and sin and friction. It's Jesus Christ who has a way of working on all of us and working everything out.

God, thanks for a chance to study your Word together tonight as your church. And God, I thank you for the story of Joseph. It's a great story. And God, I pray we would learn from Joseph. Those of us who have been sinned against, I pray we would respond like Joseph. We would love you, serve you, and we would be a blessing wherever we go. And that in our hearts, we would always be open to reconciliation, and we would long for it, but we wouldn't force it. We'd let it take its course and its time – your time.

God, for those who are like the brothers, and they've done and said terrible things. And their relationships are strained, and they feel guilty. They wake up in the morning brushing their teeth, looking in the mirror, just asking themselves, "Why did I do that? I wish I could take that back." God, thank you, that with the brothers, people who repent and come to you have your power and work in their life to straighten things out. And God, thank you, Lord Jesus, that you sit on a throne today; that you rule and reign; that you're in charge; that you're working everything out for your glory and our good.