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Daily Devotional - Sunday, July 28, 2024 - Our Family Story

JULY 28TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Sunday, July 28, 2024 - Our Family Story

My daughter often asks me to tell her stories at night when I put her to bed. She wants to know about things that happened when I was a child and the history of our family. These stories are deeply formative. They give her a sense of place and belonging.

Joseph's wife was an Egyptian from a high-ranking priestly family (Gen. 41:45). Joseph himself was one of the highest ranked government officials in Egypt. He could have raised his children as Egyptians and provided them with all the benefits of an elite Egyptian upbringing. Yet, he gave them Hebrew names. In Genesis 48, he has them adopted as sons of Jacob.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

ROMANS 6:5

As Jacob was nearing death, Joseph brought his two sons to be blessed by Jacob. Jacob told these boys a story about their family. Jacob recounted the story of when God appeared to him and promised, "I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give you this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you" (v. 4). There was no more formative story for Jacob's family than the promise that God had given to him and to his fathers Isaac and Abraham before him. Joseph's sons became a part of this story as the blessing was passed on to them. Jacob prayed that they would be called "by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac" (v. 16).

As followers of Jesus, we too have a family story. We have been rescued from our slavery to sin and forgiven by God (Rom. 6:1–14). We have been adopted into God's family as His sons and daughters (Rom. 8:14–17). We have a new citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20). And one day, we will be raised with Christ and reign with Him (1 Cor. 15:20–28)!

Go Deeper

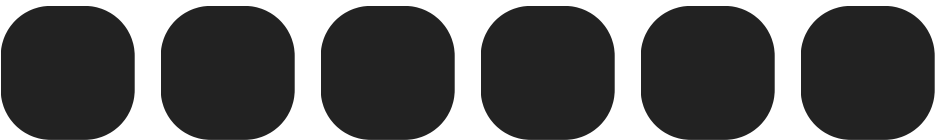
What is your family story? How has it shaped your faith? Remember, that your most important identity is found in Christ!

Pray with Us: As we study the family stories in Genesis, we lift up our own families in prayer. Lord Jesus, You see the many needs we face. Give us faith, wisdom, and perseverance so we can be a blessing to all generations.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, July 26, 2024 - Down to Egypt

JULY 26TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, July 26, 2024 - Down to Egypt

Most of us would agree that a promise is only as good as the person who made it. But what if the One making the promise is God? Genesis 46 records the final time God appeared to Jacob. Here God reaffirmed many of the promises He had made over the years.

As Jacob set out for Egypt, he paused at Beersheba at the southern border of Canaan and offered sacrifices to the Lord (v. 1). During an earlier famine, God had forbidden Isaac from traveling to Egypt for relief (Gen. 26:2).

Perhaps Jacob wondered if going to Egypt was the right decision. Should he leave the land God had promised Abraham?

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20

That night, God appeared to Jacob to provide affirmation (v. 2). Not only was it acceptable for Jacob to travel to Egypt, but God would be with him (v. 4). God was not bound by geography. God also revealed something else. Egypt would be the place where Jacob's family would grow to become a great nation (v. 3). God had promised to Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation (Gen. 12:1–3). Up to this point, they were just one family living among many other nations. But in Egypt, Jacob's family would grow and thrive.

Egyptian culture was quite a bit different than Canaan. In Canaan, shepherding was one of the primary occupations, and it was respected. In Egypt, shepherds were despised (v. 34). This allowed Jacob and his family to live separately and maintain their distinct identity even through generations of living in Egypt.

As he had done in the past, Jacob believed God's promises and moved forward in faith (v. 5). God has made promises to believers today as well: We are filled with His Spirit, Jesus is with us even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20), and He is coming again.

Go Deeper

Why can we place absolute trust in God's promises? What would it look like for you to move forward in faith, based on all that God has promised?

Pray with Us: Almighty God, Your promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are true even today. As we thank You for their legacy, we pray that our own stories will leave a legacy of faith to the next generation.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, July 25, 2024 - The Unveiling

JULY 25TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, July 25, 2024 - The Unveiling

Why is there so much evil and suffering in the world? There are no easy answers. But one truth the Bible consistently affirms is that God can redeem and use evil to accomplish His own purposes. This belief not only enabled Joseph to sustain years of hardship, but it also made it possible for him to reconcile with his brothers.

In Genesis 45, Joseph finally revealed his identity. In this emotional scene, Joseph's first message to his brothers is to offer his own interpretation of what has happened to him.

Instead of blaming his brothers,

Joseph pointed to God's sovereignty. Four times he declared that God is the One who brought him to Egypt. Joseph affirmed, "It was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (v. 5). Joseph's brothers had acted in envy, greed, and violence. But God was able to

It was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

GENESIS 45:5

use this evil act to accomplish His purpose. This did not absolve the brothers of the great evil they had done. Instead, it demonstrated how God could use even the most dysfunctional and difficult situation for His purpose.

From a broader perspective, God made promises to Abraham and his descendants. One of those promises was that Abraham’s offspring would be a blessing to the nations (Gen. 12:1–3). In the Joseph story, we see that promise being partially fulfilled. Joseph was able to save not just his own family from the famine but also the lives of people in Egypt, Canaan, and much of the ancient world (Gen. 41:57). Despite the faithlessness of Joseph’s brothers, God was faithful to this promise. On this side of eternity, we do not always get to see the larger picture of what God is doing. But Joseph’s story provides hope that God is sovereign. Just as He was with Joseph, He is with His children today.

Go Deeper

What is Joseph’s reaction to his brothers? What is the bigger truth in Joseph’s story? How does Joseph’s story help us gain perspective when we walk through times of suffering or witness great evil?

Pray with Us: Lord, it’s sometimes hard for us to believe that You can redeem evil, that evil can be turned to good. Thank You that the story of Joseph reveals it’s possible. Give us faith to trust You and eyes to see the bigger picture.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, July 23, 2024

JULY 23RD 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, July 23, 2024

Can people change? This question has been debated for generations. There is a lot at stake in the question for most people. Can I trust this person again? Should I give up hope? Yet Scripture is clear that God can transform even the most hardened heart.

Joseph's plan to test his brothers to see if they had changed ran into a roadblock. He promised not to provide any more food for the family unless they brought Benjamin to Egypt, but Jacob refused to allow Benjamin to go. As their food supply dwindled, Judah stepped in. He reasoned with his father that if he did not

send Benjamin, he would die anyway of starvation. He promised, "I myself will guarantee his safety" (v. 9). He pledged that he would bear the blame if Benjamin did not return safely (v. 10). Judah's previous persuasive speech to his family was to convince his brothers to sell Joseph into slavery (Gen. 37:26–27). His priorities had certainly changed. Jacob agreed to send the boy to Egypt (v. 14).

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

EPHESIANS 2:13

When God transforms a life, it is possible for deep and real change to take place. The apostle Paul reminds us that "because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:4–5).

We have hope for real change not because we can manufacture it in someone else or even ourselves, but because we worship a God who is able to do the impossible. The chapter ends with Judah and his brothers back in Egypt. Joseph hosted a meal for them, showing favoritism to Benjamin (v. 34). He would have his own way of discerning whether his brothers had truly changed.

Go Deeper

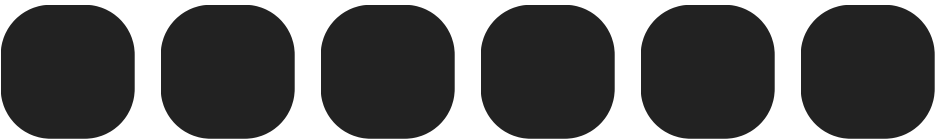
Why are we naturally skeptical of change that happens in people’s lives? Why can we trust God to produce authentic change?

Pray with Us: Loving Father, today we thank You for Your precious Word that You preserved for us through the ages. What a joy it is to dive into its wisdom, to marvel at its riches, and praise You for Your love and mercy!

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Daily Devotional - Monday, July 22, 2024 - Guilty Conscience

JULY 22ND 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, July 22, 2024 - Guilty Conscience

As a seminary teacher, over the years I have had a handful of students confess to me that they cheated in a course. By the time they come to me, I can tell that they had been living with the guilt

and it ate away at them. There is almost nothing worse than a guilty conscience.

After the famine, predicted by Pharaoh's dream, hit the land of Canaan, Jacob sent his sons down to Egypt to purchase food for the family (v. 2). We get a glimpse into the family life of Joseph's brothers. Jacob was protective of Joseph's full-brother, Benjamin, and did not send him on the journey (v. 4). Their father was still playing favorites.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

PSALM 32:5

In Egypt, Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him (v. 7). We can only imagine the thoughts and emotions that ran through Joseph's mind and heart. After questioning his brothers closely, he discovered that Benjamin was not sent with the rest. Joseph decided to put his brothers to the test. Would they betray Benjamin like they had betrayed him (v. 15)?

After three days in custody, the brothers confessed to each other what was on their minds: "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us" (v. 21). All these years, they had been living with guilt over what they had done to Joseph.

David vividly described the experience of living with guilt in Psalm 32: "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer" (Ps. 32:3–4).

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