



[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Monday, July 29, 2024 - A Certain Future

JULY 29TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, July 29, 2024 - A Certain Future

A few years ago, I was at a conference where the speaker was introduced as a “futurist.” I had never heard of that as a job title before. A futurist is someone who analyzes data and trends to forecast what might happen in different areas of life such as technology, government, or medicine. Humans have always desired a glimpse into what the future holds.

In Genesis 49, Jacob gathered his sons to share one final message (v. 1). He introduced his speech by declaring that he would “tell you what will happen to you in the days to come” (v. 1). His speech described the future tribes of Israel and some of their qualities. The sons are grouped by their mutual mothers and then listed in their birth order.

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

GENESIS 49:10

The first three sons are told why they will not be considered as the firstborn. Reuben engaged in sexual sin (v. 3). Simeon and Levi violently overreacted to the crime committed against their sister by killing many (Gen. 34:25–31). But while Judah had his own issues, he had demonstrated repentance and a changed life. Jacob prophesied that Judah will be a leader among the tribes of Israel. He declared, “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his” (v. 10). Jacob here tells of a Messianic king who will rule over the nations. The New Testament writers

affirm that this prophecy finds its fulfillment in Jesus (Rev. 5:5).

Just as God has been faithful to keep His promises to Abraham, we can be confident that He will keep His promises to us regarding the Lord Jesus' Second Coming when He will rule over the nations! Jesus said, "Yes, I am coming soon" (Rev. 22:20). To which we can respond, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

Go Deeper

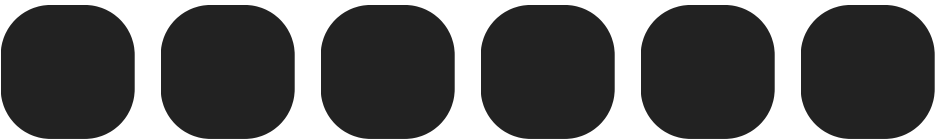
Do you worry about the future? How does knowing we can depend on God's promise about Jesus' return change the way we live today?

Pray with Us: Jesus, we eagerly await Your return! Teach us how to live in the light of Your Second Coming. May we grow in faith as Christians and citizens of Your eternal kingdom. "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

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TOP

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

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).

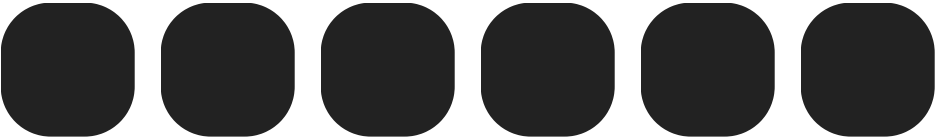
As followers of Jesus, we too have a family story. We have been rescued from our slavery to sin and forgiven by God (Rom. 6:1–14). We have been adopted into God's family as His sons and daughters (Rom. 8:14–17). We have a new citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20). And one day, we will be raised with Christ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

[Go to post](#)



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TOP

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

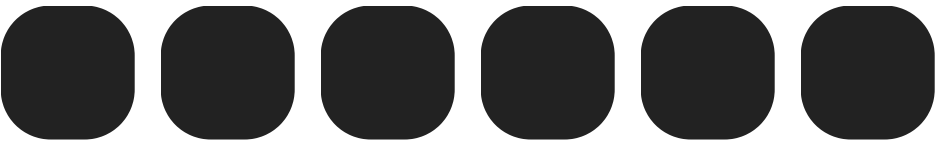
Why can we place absolute trust in God’s promises? What would it look like for you to move forward in faith, based on all that God has promised?

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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[TOP](#)

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.

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

GENESIS 45:5

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 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

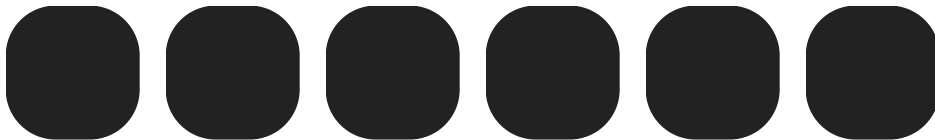
What is Joseph's reaction to his brothers? What is the bigger truth in Joseph's story? How does Joseph's story help us gain perspective when we walk through times of suffering or witness great evil?

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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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

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

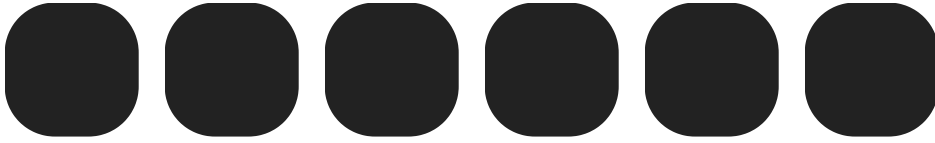
Why are we naturally skeptical of change that happens in people's lives? Why can we trust God to produce authentic change?

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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