

She said she could feel tingles and a warm sensation go over her body as she reached out her hand and grabbed the man's hand in front of her. He had been sitting in the back listening through it all, and at the end, he walked up to her and asked, "Do you remember me?" We know there is a backstory here!

Streams of images flooded her mind. As the memories poured in, so did the anger and the hate for this man. Yes, she remembered him. She remembered his harsh, unrelenting cruelty. She remembered the suffering of her dying sister through this man.

Can you imagine standing face to face with the man responsible for the humiliation, degradation, and death of your sister...and so many others you knew? Her entire family was gone. All dying in the concentration camps that they were sent to for hiding and helping Jews escape the horrors of the Nazi's. They were able to save over 800 people before being arrested. She alone of her family survived. After her sister died, she was released because of a clerical error. Two weeks after, her entire ward of women were sent to a gas chamber. After it all, she lived out her sisters dream of turning a concentration camp from place of death, to a place of hope and healing. She had been touring around Germany, sharing her testimony and the power of God to forgive. And this night, he was there.

"I want you to know that I have become a Christian! I have received the forgiveness of Jesus. I have been praying for God to allow me to meet one of my victims, and ask for their forgiveness. Fraulien Tem Boom, will you forgive me?" And he reached out his hand...

What would you do? Coming face-to-face with someone who has caused you so much pain, how would you act? What would you decide in that moment? And maybe the more important question to discover, as we dig down a little deeper...is WHY?

There is a similar, real life story, found in the last chapter of the first book of your Bible...in Genesis 50. In the powerful story of the life and example of Joseph. I'd love for you to turn there in your Bibles. Genesis 50. While you are turning there, let me say "GOODMORNING!" to you! It is so great to see each of you here this morning. And it is so great to know that all of you are joining us through Facebook or Mstar.live. I'd love for you to encourage those engaging with you, let them know you are here, and share where you are engaging from. And you here something that God speaks to you, or resonates with your heart—share it in the comments and encourage those who are engaging around our city, our state, and sometimes...even around the world.

Genesis 50:14

¹⁴ After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. ¹⁵ But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said.

¹⁶ So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us ¹⁷ to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our

sin.” When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. ¹⁸ Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. “Look, we are your slaves!” they said.

If this story is new to you...or if you were to flip open your Bible to this section and start reading, you can see...there is a bit of a back story here! Chapter 50 marks the end of the book of Genesis...and the end of Joseph’s story—but it sets up one of the most important stories in all of Scripture to come. God spends 13 chapters on Joseph’s story.

God spends ONE chapter to explain the creation of the universe. God, who repeatedly introduces Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—spends 13 chapters on Abraham, One to 1 ½ chapters on Isaac, and about 10 chapters on Jacob—who in chapter 32 would be named Israel after wrestling with God—which would be the namesake of the nation that flows out of his 12 sons—making up the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. God spends 13 chapters, giving us this story of Joseph...one of the 12 sons of Israel!

We are introduced to Joseph in chapter 37:2

² This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father’s flocks. He worked for his half brothers, the sons of his father’s wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

³ Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. ⁴ But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn’t say a kind word to him.

The story of Joseph starts seeped in family dysfunction. His father has set him apart and favored him above all the rest.

- Joseph was set apart--apparently Joseph is the good kid at home. The text connotes that his brothers were doing evil while they were away...and he let’s his dad know.
- Joseph was loved above the rest—being the first born to Isaac when he was 91! But it was not just about age. Joseph was the first born son of Rachel—the woman that Jacob loved!
- He was set apart above the rest—with Jacob giving him the fine robe—which distinguished Joseph from the others. It was not just a nice coat, it was the marker of the birthright. The first-born son was the one who got double portion of the inheritance. Joseph—one of the youngest was getting the treatment of the first-born.
- But we also see that Joseph is set apart by GOD—as he is given two dreams. Dreams were seen as revelations by God. Not only is God choosing to speak to Joseph—but God is revealing that He has CHOSEN Joseph—and his family recognizes it and his brothers resent it—as Joseph naively shares his dreams with them---that they will all one day bow down to him!

- Throughout Joseph's story we see this pattern of two's, confirming the witness of God.

All of this led his brothers to HATE Joseph! So much that when Jacob sends Joseph out to his brothers while they are working...they conspire to kill him. But Reuben convinces the brothers to not kill him but rather throw him into cistern—which is a big hole in the ground that collected water. Reuben thought he could rescue Joseph later. So they did. But when they did they saw a caravan coming—and they thought—why kill our brother when we could make money off of him—so they human trafficked him—and sold their brother into slavery—taking that tunic that marked him, tearing it up and pouring blood all over it—so that their father, Jacob would believe he's dead.

- Chapter 39, Joseph's story progresses. He is sold into slavery by a guy named Potiphar. Joseph is falsely accused of attempted rape by his master's wife and is instantly thrown in prison for a second time.
- Chapter 40, in prison, Joseph is made a slave to two other prisoners—a cup bearer and baker—each having dreams. Joseph listens and interprets the TWO dreams—both coming to fruition in 3 days.
- TWO years from that date, the king of Egypt has two-dreams that no one can interpret. And the cupbearer remembers Joseph—where Joseph goes before the Pharaoh and shares it's meaning.

1) Sold into slavery by his own brothers, who decided to profit off of him, rather than kill him.
 2) Thrown into prison, after being falsely accused of attempted rape because he refused to sleep with his master's wife.
 3) For two years, alone and forgotten in prison by the man he witnessed to. I don't know about you, but that sounds like a rough life. For anyone, this would give them ample reasons to turn to anything but God—to give themselves over to bitterness and anger—to turn inward—to turn to self-pity—or have a legitimate cry for JUSTICE and VENGEANCE! ALL THAT TIME IN PRISON TO STEW OVER THE WRONGS THAT HAD BEEN DONE!

- FOUR times in chapter 39 (2, 3, 21, 23)—when he is sold into Potiphar's house—it is written the LORD (Yahweh—the Covenant God) is WITH Joseph.
- When Potiphar's wife pursue him—he knows God is the one blessing who is blessing him—so he says to her: “How can I do such a great evil and sin against God?!?”
- When he is in prison listening to the dreams of men he is serving, he recognized that interpretations belong to God!
- When the Pharaoh brought Joseph out of prison to interpret his dream—Joseph said clearly—the power is NOT his to interpret dreams—it is Gods! And it is God that reveals there will be TWO SEASONS-- 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine. So the Pharaoh puts Joseph in charge of the entire operation—to collect food during the time of plenty—to distribute during the time of famine.

And it is the famine, and the collection of food that draws Joseph's brothers to Egypt. And for the first time in about 20 years, Joseph sees face-to-face the brothers that were going to kill him, but rather sold him to be a slave!

Can you imagine what he must have felt in that moment? What would you have done? React?

What does Joseph do? He cries out: FINALLY MY TIME FOR JUSTICE AND VENGEANCE! I HAVE BEEN THINKING AND WAITING FOR YEARS FOR THIS!!! GOD HAS GIVEN YOU INTO MY HANDS! DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE DONE YOU HAVE DONE TO ME? SLAVERY—FALSE ACCUSATIONS—PRISON! BECAUSE OF YOU....

Actually he cries...he cries a lot. And he tests his brothers and he BLESSES them. And he cries some more. And in chapter 45 Joseph reveals himself to his brothers...

³ "I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. ⁴ "Please, come closer," he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. ⁵ But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. ⁶ This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷ God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. ⁸ So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

Church I want you to hear this. This is where faith go beyond mental ascent, or a cultural or academic exercise. This where core beliefs are so foundational that they change who we are—how we think, how we act, how we react. God has taken Joseph through the fire...and it is Joseph's knowing, believing, experiencing that God is absolutely sovereign—that allows him to have this perspective. Joseph sees the all the WORLD and all of his CIRCUMSTANCES through the lens of the TRUTH of GOD. He does NOT interpret God...or himself...through the lens of his circumstances!

GOD is REAL. GOD is POWERFUL. GOD is GOOD. AND GOD is in complete CONTROL!

This is true and real—when times are good—and this is real and true—when your brothers are trying to murder you, sell you, you are falsely accused and thrown in prison, and it is just as true when the world is being decimated by famine. This is not just something that Joseph says, or has memorized, or give nod to—this is TRUTH that has shaped Joseph's mind and heart to its very core!

This does NOT mean that his or our circumstances are EASY! But it does mean that all our circumstances can and MUST have a God-centered perspective. That is the only way Joseph could stand before his brothers—not filled with rage, bitterness, unforgiveness, and cries for vengeance...but rather reach out a hand of forgiveness and blessing.

Joseph finds out his father is alive! So Jacob comes to live out the last 17 of his life years getting to see the son that he thought had died. When he died, all 12 sons brought his body from Egypt and buried it in the land of his fathers...in the land that now bears his name...Israel.

And we arrive where we started...

14 After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. 15 But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said. 16 So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us 17 to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin."

Most scholars agree that even now, the brothers were scheming—filled with self-preservation—making up this story of their dead father to motivate Joseph.

I want you to see this. ***This kind of love...this kind of forgiveness...this kind of blessing did not make sense to them.*** They could not understand it. They could not accept it as real. Much like for so many—the struggle to accept the complete grace and forgiveness through Jesus. Surely he can't forgive all of it! Surely he won't! Surely he can't! Not after what I did. But he does. And he has.

17b When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. (for them?) 18 Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. "Look, we are your slaves!" they said. (And here are the most important verses of the 13 chapters of Joseph) 19 But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. 21 No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

1. At Joseph's core—he knows and believes that God is SOVEREIGN and has all Authority!

Vengeance is God's to take...not Joseph's.

Jesus says, **"I say to you, love your enemies and do good to those who hate you."** (Luke 6:27)
Paul writes, **"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all."** (Rom 12:17)

Sometimes we treat these verse like fairy tales. Fanciful suggestions that aren't real. We show that not by what we say, but by the grudges we keep, the bitterness we harbor, the anger we spew, and the words that we lash out against those we feel are against us.

We cannot live like Joseph...until we know and trust AT OUR CORE that God is SOVEREIGN and has ALL AUTHORITY!

2. At Joseph's core—he knows and believes that God is GOOD and he REDEEMS!

Joseph did not dismiss the evil that his brothers did. The Hebrew text literally says: “you devised against me evil...but God devised it for good... Joseph’s entire story is about the clear providence of God—or His guidance and control over times, season, and people. There might be no clearer story of God’s providence in all of Scripture. What the brother’s did was evil! But God redeemed it by bringing Joseph to Egypt. What Potiphar’s wife did was EVIL—but God used it to connect Joseph to the Cup Bearer and Baker. Even when the Cup Bearer forgot Joseph in jail—God used him to present Joseph to Pharaoh. Even in the horrors of a 7 year famine—God used it to bring a desperate family down to Egypt and be saved by the brother and son they thought was lost and gone.

Joseph can see, he knows and believes, what Paul would write thousands of years later:

Romans 8:28 ²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Joseph believes that God has saved a budding nation, because he believes in the Covenant that God made with Abraham, and then to Isaac, and then to his father Jacob—through this family—through these 12 brothers and their children would be a great nation that is numbered like the stars.

BUT Joseph cannot know is the extent of the saving that has taken place. Because through Joseph, his brother, Judah was saved. And through Judah and his line would come the one who would be the Lord and Savior of all...Jesus, our King.

Like Joseph, Corrie Ten Boom came face to face with the man who was the cause of so much pain...and he stood there, hand reached out, asking for her forgiveness. She said that moment was like an eternity inside her. She did not have the power to forgive. All the anger, the bitterness, the fear that came like a tidal wave within her. And then verses poured into her mind. Verses of God’s power. Verses of forgiveness. And with a rush she grabbed his hand and said, “I forgive you.”

Only by the power of Jesus. Let’s pray...

Benediction:

I know many of you are tired. I know many of you are discouraged. Some of you are scared of what is happening in our country...with the chaos and turmoil. God is in control. He is sovereign. There is no circumstance...no circumstance...no circumstance that you **HAVE** gone through, that you **ARE** going through, that you **WILL** go through, that God is not redeeming and bringing good from it.