

CAPITOL STUDIES

MAY 3, 2023 • WEEK 17



JOSEPH: THE CIVIL SERVANT FROM EGYPT

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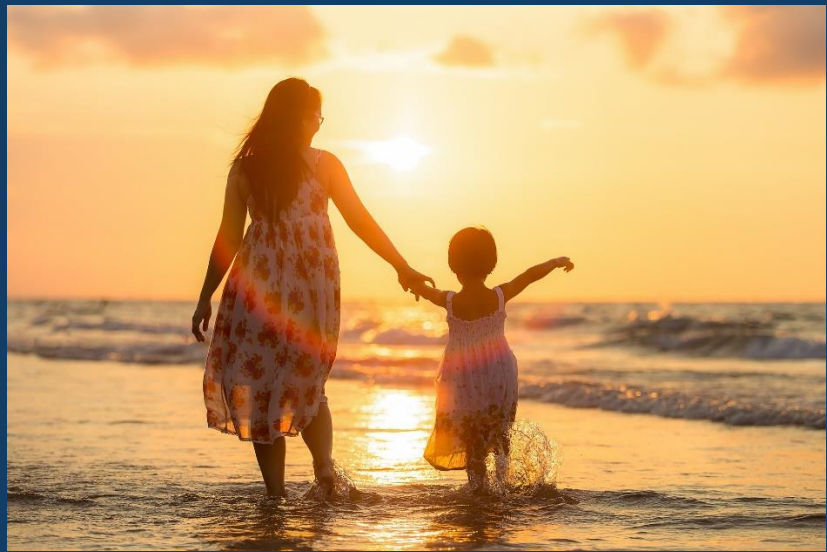


Verse of the Week

Hebrews 11:21

By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on his staff.

Leaving a Godly Heritage



BACK IN THE LATE SIXTIES, Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young came out with a popular song called “Teach Your Children Well.” It was addressed to the freewheeling hippie generation, who had tried to cast off all the restraints and rules of their parents’ generation. While the song may have reflected noble intentions, there was a great deal of irony suggesting that this rebellious generation would somehow succeed in teaching their children where their parents had failed.

It actually seems that generation succeeded in teaching their kids all too well. They taught them that lifelong commitment in marriage was outdated. They taught them to cast off the roles of husband as father and provider and wife as mother and homemaker. They taught them to do whatever felt good whether sex, drugs, drinking, etc. And then they taught them to feel good about themselves when they walked out on their marriages and coped with all their various addictions! We are reaping the consequences of that teaching today, but while that generation largely failed because they cast off God’s standards, the theme of that song is still true: we must teach our children well.

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INTRODUCTION

It is primarily through families that faith in God is handed down from generation to generation. God chose Abraham and promised to give him a family and from that family to make a nation to bless other nations. Abraham believed God, and his family became the beginning of the nation Israel, from which the Messiah, Jesus, came. In Genesis 48, we see Abraham's grandson, Jacob, passing his heritage in God to his son, Joseph, and to his grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim. He adopts Joseph's two sons as his own, blessing Joseph through them. Joseph actually gets a double inheritance through his two sons who were adopted by Jacob.

Out of all the events recorded in Jacob's long life, the author of Hebrews selects this episode as his example of Jacob's faith: "By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff" (Heb. 11:21). Jacob had not yet received the fulfillment of God's promises, but he blessed these two young men, believing that God would keep His word through them. In that act of faith, we see Jacob imparting to his son and grandsons the most important thing he could have given them, namely, faith in the promises of God. What a godly heritage!

How Can We Pass on a Godly Heritage?

I. EMBRACE THE OPPORTUNITY TO INVEST IN THE LIVES OF YOUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

Genesis 48:1-5

Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is sick." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. ²When it was told to Jacob, "Behold, your son Joseph has come to you," Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed. ³Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.' ⁵Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are."

Since God's purpose spans the generations, our goal should be to raise up godly generations, not only through our children but also through their children. Jacob adopts these two grandsons as his own sons and imparts his blessing to them. Keep in mind that the blessing here is more than just a prayer for the well-being of a son (grandson). It is the actual *imparting* of well-being, based on special divine prophetic insight about the spiritual future of that son (grandson). Once given, it is irrevocable. That's why Esau was so upset when Jacob deceived their father into giving him the blessing.



II. RECOGNIZE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PASS ON YOUR FAITH

Genesis 48:6-7

“But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance. ⁷Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).”

Jacob recognizes and assumes his responsibility to pass on a spiritual legacy, but he also entrusts Joseph with the responsibility of future generations.

III. WRAP YOUR INTERACTIONS IN LOVE THAT CAN BE FELT

Genesis 48:8-14

When Israel saw Joseph’s sons, he said, “Who are these?” ⁹Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” So he said, “Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.” ¹⁰Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.” ¹²Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground. ¹³Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right, and brought them close to him. ¹⁴But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.

Here Jacob kisses and embraces his grandsons. Though there is no mention of the look on his face, we can envision the radiance as his dim eyes look with joy on these young men (who are around 20 years old by now). He lays his hands on them to bless them. Through his words, his expression, and his affectionate touch, Jacob makes these grandsons feel loved. They later give up their Egyptian culture and royal upbringing and identify themselves with this despised band of shepherds who are waiting for the promises of God. We all want to feel loved. If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (John 15:17).





IV. SHARE THE FAITHFULNESS AND GOODNESS OF GOD IN YOUR OWN LIFE

Genesis 48:15

He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day..."

Seventeen years earlier, Jacob had complained to Pharaoh, "Few and unpleasant have been the years of my life" (Gen. 47:9). But now, Jacob has mellowed. As he takes a final look backward, he recalls how he fled to Luz (Bethel) after deceiving his father and defrauding his brother. (Remember that Esau was to have received the firstborn blessing which instead came to Jacob.) God could have sidelined Jacob after this, but what did He do? He appeared to Jacob and confirmed His covenant promises (Gen. 48:3-4).

Twenty years later, Jacob wasn't much farther along. He had outswindled his uncle Laban and headed back to Canaan. He had settled outside of the land without seeking God's direction. Then his sons deceived and murdered a whole town because one young man there had raped their sister (Gen. 34). God would have been just in finding someone else to accomplish His purpose, but God appeared a second time to Jacob at Bethel and assured him that His promises were still good.

Even in Jacob's great time of sorrow when Rachel died, God's comfort had been real. The pain of that loss is still with the old man as he reminisces here (Gen. 48:7), but God had been with him. He had been with Jacob when he thought he would never see Joseph again. How did this fit in with the promises of God? But now, at the end of his journey, Jacob can see the reality of God's faithfulness as he holds in his arms not only Joseph but also Joseph's two sons.

V. PROCLAIM GOD'S GREAT SALVATION

Genesis 48:16

"...The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Jacob speaks of "The angel who has redeemed me from all evil" (Gen. 48:16). He was probably thinking of his experience at Mahanaim, when the angels camped around him to protect him from Laban, and then when the angel (of God) wrestled with him at Peniel just prior to his feared reunion with Esau (Gen. 28:12-13). Most Bible scholars believe this reference to the angel of God means the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "redeemed" is a special Hebrew word that was used of a near relative who had the means of helping a poor relative out of bondage. If the poor relative had to sell part of his property or even sell himself into servitude in order to survive, the redeemer could buy back that relative's property or the relative himself, thus restoring his freedom (Lev. 25:25ff., 47ff.).



That is a beautiful picture of what God did for us in Jesus. We were enslaved to sin with no way to free ourselves. The price was more than we could ever afford. But God sent our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and paid the price with His own blood. It's a story that you need to tell your children and grandchildren over and over. They need to know that you once were lost in sin but that Christ has saved you. They need to know that they need Christ as their Redeemer also.

VI. REJOICE IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Genesis 48:17-20

When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head." ¹⁹But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations." ²⁰He blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

In blessing his grandsons, Jacob deliberately crossed his hands so that his right hand rested upon Ephraim, the youngest, instead of upon Manasseh, the oldest, as Joseph had planned. When Joseph tried to correct his father, the old man said, "I know, my son, I know."

Why does Jacob do that? This is because God has revealed to Jacob that Ephraim will take prominence over Manasseh among the tribes of Israel. This, however, doesn't happen for hundreds of years. Even in Moses's day, Manasseh outnumbers Ephraim by more than 20,000 (Numbers 26:34, 37). But in God's time, Ephraim did grow larger and more prominent than Manasseh, fulfilling Jacob's prophecy.

There was no human reason that Jacob blessed Ephraim above his older brother. But in so doing, Jacob was illustrating a divine principle which he had learned: God blesses us apart from any merit on our part. The world would have picked the skillful archer, Ishmael; God picked quiet Isaac. The world would have picked the rugged outdoorsman, Esau; God picked conniving Jacob. The world would have picked the older, Manasseh; God picked the younger, Ephraim. In his unexpected crossing of his hands, Jacob is rehearsing his own experience of God's grace.

Why doesn't God operate on the merit system? Why doesn't He choose the most gifted, intelligent, upright, promising people for His church? Paul tells us it is so that no one can boast before God. That's what got Satan thrown out of Heaven. We have no merit of our own. It is only because of God's amazing grace that we receive His blessing in our lives.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has





chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things, that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

If God gave us what we deserve, we would all go straight to hell. We must humble ourselves before the sovereign God and gratefully receive His grace, rather than grumble about why someone else seems to get better treatment than we do.

VII. HELP THEM PICTURE HOPE AND A BLESSED FUTURE IN THE PROMISES OF GOD

Genesis 48:21-22

Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. ²²I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

As he blesses his grandsons, Jacob tells them how God has been his shepherd all his life and how God will be with them too (Gen. 48:15, 21). If you were a refugee shepherd and had two grandsons who had been raised in the palace in the most advanced nation on earth, what kind of future would you hope for those boys? They had all the comforts of wealth and opportunities for power and prestige. Should they give that up to be shepherds? By faith Jacob helps these grandsons envision a future in which they are identified with the covenant people of the God of the universe. By faith he paints a picture of Joseph's future in the Lord: "God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers." Jacob believes God will fulfill all His promises. Not one will fail.

Through loving, encouraging words, written and spoken over and over, we paint for our children and grandchildren a hope for a wonderful, amazing future bright with the promises of God.

CONCLUSION

Genesis 48:15 says that Jacob blesses Joseph, but as you read the blessing, you discover that Jacob blesses Joseph by blessing Joseph's sons. Parents are truly blessed when *their* parents take a concern for the spiritual well-being of the grandchildren. Grandparents who love the Lord are a wonderful gift to a child. They can sometimes impart spiritual truth in a way that parents cannot, and they can reinforce the spiritual values that parents are trying to impart.

We do not truly bless our children or grandchildren if we encourage them to worldly success instead of success with God. By our example, through stories we read to them, through the values we live and teach, we need to give them a vision for the coming kingdom that God has promised for those who love Him. We need to encourage them to follow the Lord with

Theme Verse

Philippians 4:8

*Finally, brethren,
whatever is **true**,
whatever is **honorable**,
whatever is **right**,
whatever is **pure**,
whatever is **lovely**,
whatever is of
good repute,
if there is any
excellence
and if anything is
worthy of praise,
dwell on these things.*

Psalm 16:6

*“The lines are fallen
unto me in pleasant
places; yea, I have a
goodly heritage.”*

(KJV)

all their hearts but at the same time realize that the Lord may not want them to be what we want them to be.

We do not bless our children or grandchildren when we are always unhappy and complaining. By looking at your life, would your family say, “God sure is faithful”? Or, would they say, “God doesn’t do much to help you”? Even young children are skilled in reading between the lines. If we profess to know the Lord, but our lives are a constant complaint, they put it together and make a mental note that they don’t want anything to do with our God. We must tell them by our words and attitudes that God is faithful, even in hard times. He keeps His promises.

The best heritage we can pass on to our family members is faith in the promises of God. Put aside everything that would hinder you from this and work to give your family that kind of godly heritage.

Questions to Consider:

- Could we use these same principles to impact people who are not family members? To impact those who are our enemies?
- What is the biggest enemy we face raising godly children? Time pressure? Peer pressure? Drugs? Sex? TV? Success syndrome? Other?
- How can we teach our children grace (unmerited favor) and yet teach them that behavior has consequences?
- Most of us aren’t starting with a clean slate. How can a parent or grandparent with a messy past begin to develop a godly heritage for his or her children or grandchildren?

FOOTNOTES

All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*.

Some of this material was gathered from Pastor Steven Cole’s work found at <http://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-79>



Pastor Arin Hess



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