



Week Six: Joseph's Reunion

Spiritual Discipline: Submission

Read: Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34; 47:1-12, 27-31; 48:1-22

Consider: Joseph's family leaves Canaan for Egypt (46:1). On the way, God speaks to Jacob, reassuring him that moving to Egypt is God's will (46:2-3). God says, "I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes" (46:4). What a comfort it must have been to Jacob to know that he would be with Joseph for the remainder of his life. Jacob and his family take everything that they own to Egypt with them (46:5-7).

Jacob and his family arrive in Goshen ("the best of the land" [47:6]), and Joseph joins them there (46:28-29). He and his father reunite after all these years: "He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. Israel said to Joseph, 'Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive'" (46:29-30). Jacob considers his life now complete since he has reunited with Joseph. Joseph then prepares to present his father and brothers to Pharaoh (46:31-34).

Pharaoh bestows Goshen upon Joseph's family and also tells Joseph to have his family take care of the royal livestock, in addition to their own (47:1-6). Jacob explains to Pharaoh that he is 130 years old and that he has had a hard life (47:9). Joseph returns everyone to Goshen and gives them the supplies that they need (47:11-12).

We are told that Jacob lives an additional 17 years in Goshen (47:28). As he is preparing for his death, he speaks to Joseph, "If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place" (47:29-30). Joseph agrees (47:30-31). Note: the word translated "kindly" in verse 29 is the word *hesed*. (Strong's Hebrew Lexicon, "Lexicon::Strong's H2617 - *hesed*," Blue Letter Bible, Accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h2617&bn=1#lexResults>.)

Joseph brings his sons to Jacob to be blessed by him (48:1). The scripture informs us that Jacob can no longer see well, and Joseph must guide him in understanding who these young men are (48:8-10). The scripture is also very specific in describing the blessings that Joseph bestows (48:14-20).

Jewish tradition holds that the firstborn son has priority over all other children. Remember that this is Jacob who is doing the blessing – the same Jacob (second born) who tricked his own father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing reserved for his brother Esau (the firstborn) so many years before (see Genesis 27). Jacob received the blessing of the firstborn through deceit. However, now that he is blessing Joseph's sons, whom he is claiming as his own (48:5), Jacob is choosing to give the blessing of the firstborn to Ephraim, Joseph's second son. Joseph thinks that his father is simply confused and attempts to correct him. However, Jacob insists that he is blessing them in accordance with their destiny (48:17-20).

Submission: Richard Foster says of submission,

In submission we are at last free to value other people. Their dreams and plans become important to us. We have entered into a new, wonderful, glorious freedom – the freedom to give up our own rights for the good of others. For the first time we can love people unconditionally. We have given up the right to demand that they return our love. No longer do we feel that we have to be treated in a certain way. We rejoice in their successes. We feel genuine sorrow in their failures. It is of little consequence that our plans are frustrated if their plans succeed. We discover that it is far better to serve our neighbor than to have our own way. (*Celebration of Discipline*, 112)

Along these lines, Foster explains, "...self-denial means the freedom to give way to others. It means to hold others' interests above our interests." (*Celebration*, 114)

Joseph's life is a notebook filled with continued acts and attitudes of submission. Though he is second in command in Egypt, he lives to be a blessing to his father and his brothers and their families. When his father lay dying, Joseph is eager to fulfill his wishes. He extends to his father the same *hesed* that he has received from God (47:29).

When Jacob gives the blessing of the firstborn to Ephraim, the scripture tells us that "... it displeased [Joseph], and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head" (48:17). When Jacob insists on proceeding with the blessing in reverse order, Joseph complies. He honors his father with his submission.

Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline*, notes several "acts of submission," of which Joseph specifically fulfills four: submission to God, to his family, to the Egyptians among which he lives, and to foreigners who were also experiencing famine. (122-123)

Foster says of submission to God, "We surrender our body, mind, and spirit into the hands of God to do with us as he pleases..." (*Celebration*, 122) We have already seen numerous examples of Joseph's submission to God, the most apparent in his confession to his brothers, "And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God" (45:7-8).

Following is Foster's description of submission to family: "Freely and graciously the members of the family make allowance for each other. The primary deed of submission is a commitment to listen to the other family members. Its corollary is a willingness to share, which is itself a work of submission." (*Celebration*, 122) Joseph's compassion for his brothers, his willingness to continue their relationship, and his commitment to take care of them are all ideal examples of submission.

Foster maintains, "The fourth act of submission is to our neighbors and those we meet in the course of our daily lives. The life of simple goodness is lived before them. If they are in need, we help them." (*Celebration*, 122) Joseph has served the Egyptians by providing for them the food that they need. Though his power is nearly unparalleled, his motivation is to serve his "neighbors." His goal is to render the famine powerless, "so that the land may not perish through the famine" (41:36).

Along these lines, Joseph's concept of "neighbors" extends beyond the Egyptians. The scripture tells us, "Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth" (41:57). Foster says, "We live in an interdependent, international community. We cannot live in isolation. Our environmental responsibility, or the lack of it, affects not only the people around the world but generations yet to be born. Starving peoples affect us. Our act of submission is a determination to live as a responsible member of an increasingly irresponsible world." (*Celebration*, 123) Joseph is doing his due diligence to protect people beyond the borders of Egypt.

Application: Take the above four "acts of submission," and rate yourself in each category:

- Are you submissive to God? In what ways? Can you think of ways in which you rebel against God? What might cause you to change?
- How do you live in submission to family? Do you "listen to [your] other family members"? If not, what might you do differently to express submission?
- Do you help people around you who need help? Name one way that you have helped someone in your community in the past month. Name one way that you could have helped and chose not to.
- What ramifications do your choices have for our world? How can you be a blessing on an international basis?