

Who are you?
 Have you ever looked back on your life and asked the question?
 Some of you don't have far to look.

Most people define themselves by their accomplishments...

"I get good grades. I am a fast runner. I have a PhD. I am a mechanic, a farmer, a pastor.."

People define themselves according to their family, particularly in small communities.

"I am a Twedt. I am a Fahlberg. I am a Mochel... though no one knows what that is. I am told it might mean turtle."

Some people will say that who you are is determined by your genetic makeup... that you are genetically determined.

Many evolutionists say this. But, even identical twins are different. I think this is obviously wrong.

Others will say that who you are is the result of the sum total of all the things that have happened to you in your life.

I suppose that in this way of thinking a person is sort of a victim of their accumulated circumstances.

I have heard a preacher say in a preached message, "You make your decisions and then your decisions make you."

While this may be true to some degree, it surely leaves too much out.

I think the Bible presents people differently than all of these. You are a work of God. And you are a work in progress.

Do you believe that? It is, I am convinced, a transforming thought.

This is who you are: An unfinished work of God.

And, though genetics play a part, as do your experiences and decisions you make, God is the architect of your life.

He puts people in and takes people out. He is crafting you for His particular purpose.

He takes you places and sends difficulty and rescues you from those difficulties.

He grants blessings and struggles... yes we often contribute, but even then, the lessons we learn come from Him.

God is doing something in you and with you and it is His plan.

God is Sovereign over your life.

There are two men in the Bible beside Jesus who appear to have no flaws.

Now, I think we need to realize that this is certainly not the case,

But the writers of the Bible are not interested in our noticing their flaws... we are meant to notice their godliness.

These two are Joseph and Daniel, possibly two of the healthiest individuals in the world.

When I think of the gifts of the Spirit listed in **Galatians 5:22-23** I think of these two men.

This morning we get a glimpse of how Joseph's view of his God impacted his life.

And, for Joseph, God was everywhere and in everything. It was this view that made him an amazingly healthy man.

So, at the end of Joseph's life, we are going to look back with him in three different ways.

I. God gives you ability to be faithful.

Gen. 49:28-50:14

Joseph buries his father in Canaan. This is the last action that we read of in Joseph's life. And, at first it seems unremarkable.

But, look again.

He buries his father in Canaan because of a promise he made to his now deceased father.

His father is not around, but Joseph knows that he lives before God. God is watching. His promise is binding.

He buries his father in Canaan at considerable inconvenience to himself.

40 days of embalming. 70 days of mourning. The long trip to Canaan with everyone going along.

He buries his father in Canaan and the Egyptians mourned and came with him.

I find this amazing. Why would they do this? Who was Jacob to the Egyptians?

He was an old shepherd and we already know that in Egypt shepherds did not get much respect. (Gen. 46:34)

Well, we don't really know what the Egyptians thought of Jacob. Pharaoh received a blessing from Jacob in Gen. 47.

What we do know of is the impact that Joseph had on Pharaoh and all of Egypt. They knew about Joseph's God.

I imagine that this is why Pharaoh wanted a blessing from Jacob 17 years earlier. He knew about Joseph's God.

Why did all the important people in Egypt go with Joseph to Canaan to bury Jacob?

They knew about Joseph and his God... it was because of all those years of Joseph's work and witness.

God had placed him there and enabled him to have a platform to be a witness to the entire country.

Notice too that when he buries his father in Canaan it is even a witness to the Canaanites. (Gen 50:11)

Where has God placed you in your life? How has He enabled you to be a witness?

Do not overlook even the smallest things. Here God used a funeral.

Earlier God used Joseph's faithfulness as a slave to be a witness to Potiphar.

Then God used Joseph's faithfulness in prison to be a witness to the jailor.

Then God used Joseph's ability to interpret dreams (an ability that God had given him) to be a witness to Pharaoh's cupbearer.

Then God used that same ability to be a witness to Pharaoh and all of Egypt.

Then God used Joseph's God-given wisdom to save Egypt from starvation.

Then God used Joseph's presence and power in Egypt to save his own family from starvation.

It was all God's plan... and, along the way, Joseph never knew completely what God was doing.

But, he knew this at every turn, in every dark hour, at each moment of success: He was in God's hands. his life was in God's hands. And, even his ability to serve God and honor God was a gift from God.

II. God gives you power to forgive.

Gen. 50:15-21

Now we get to the most remarkable part of the passage.

In vss. 15-18 we can almost read the minds of Joseph's brothers.

They knew that they had betrayed Joseph.

They had their reasons back then... Joseph was the favorite. They were jealous. Maybe they thought him arrogant.

In any case they had power over him and they used it to destroy him... or at least they tried. Recall God's plan.

But now... the situation had been reversed and their father was dead.

There was no human reason why Joseph should not have his revenge.

Maybe some of them thought that that is what they would do.

So, they send Joseph a message (vss. 16-17). They did not even come and speak to him in person. They were too scared.

In their message they remind Joseph of his father's words and ask him for forgiveness again.

You can understand their fear. What will Joseph do now?

It is his reaction that is the sweetest moment in the entire story. What does he do when he hears their plea for forgiveness?

He weeps.

Why does he do that? It is because Joseph understands. He understands his brothers. He understands the human heart.

He weeps because they do not yet understand forgiveness.

Jacob's forgiveness of his brothers was never because of their father.

It was not even a result of their realization of their own sin, or any kind of repentance on their part.

Joseph had put their sin behind him before they ever showed up in Egypt. **Gen. 41:51**

Apart from Judah we don't really see evidence that the other brothers ever repented or asked forgiveness before now.

It didn't matter, Joseph had forgiven them long ago. That is why he could get on with his life and honor God.

He refused to carry around the weight of that offense... because of God.

God is like this, always prepared to forgive. Daniel knew it too... **Daniel 9:9-10, 17-19**

God is always looking to forgive... to restore... this is the message of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son.

God, our Father, waits to forgive... and so should we.

Joseph weeps because he realizes that his brothers think that he still holds the offense against them. He doesn't. It's gone.

How can a person forgive like that? **Matthew 18:21-35** It is because of how much God has forgiven you... on the Cross.

I think about this text all the time... How much God has forgiven me... surely I can let the sins of others go...

Now, there is something else with Joseph. A further lesson about God and forgiveness.

We find it in Joseph's words when his brothers actually come to speak with him in Gen. 50:18.

The lesson is in vs. 19. What does Joseph mean when he says, "Am I in God's place?"

Joseph is well before his time. We find the answer to the question in the New Testament... in Romans 12.

Romans 12:17-21 Do not put yourself in God's place.

Joseph is the perfect example of this passage. He is its illustration. Don't you want to be like this?

Now, there are some people to whom God has delegated responsibility to punish sin.

Romans 13 talks about that... Government. Judges. Police. But, most of us here are not in that position.

And, lest you think that this was somehow easier for Joseph than it is for you... recall the nature of the sin forgiven.

It was a crime of the highest order. They thought that they were sending him to his death... and they lied about it.

Gone. Forgiven. Not going to let it run my life... ruin my life. Not my place to take revenge.

There is another thing with Joseph and God and forgiveness. **Gen. 50:20**

"You meant evil against me" = he got that right. They did. His own brothers. You can't get much worse than that.

"But God meant it for good..." = What? What is Joseph saying? Well, this ought not surprise us. We've heard it before.

Gen. 45:5-8 Now you might say, "Wait a minute! Joseph is minimizing their sin! He's letting them off the hook!"

But, then you entirely miss Joseph's point. He's not concerned with being their judge or prosecutor.

Joseph is focusing on what God is up to in the whole thing, and he's excited about God's plan.

He's saying, "Look at what God is doing! Is this not fantastic! What mercy! What grace."

You did wrong, that was bad... but look at what God can do in spite of your sin... with your sin.

I cannot begin to express how liberating this is. All of a sudden life is not about me and how I'm offended and debts owed.

Nope... bring it on, jealousy, betrayals, slavery, false witness, forgotten in prison... look at what God will do with it!

Bring it on Satan, do your worst, and see me revel in forgiveness and the mercy of God given to others.

Because God is in charge and my life is in his hands.

There is a final lesson here about God and forgiveness. It is in vs. 21

Not only does God give Joseph ability to forgive, but he goes above and beyond in his forgiving.

Rather than using his power and place to make life miserable for those who so deeply hurt him... he takes care of them.

Jesus said to do this... "Bless those who persecute you."

Has someone hurt you? Pray for them (really). Find ways to bless them... care for them. It'll complete your forgiveness.

III. God gives you promises for the future.

Gen. 50:22-25

What God is doing in your life through all of this... it has a purpose. It is going somewhere.

The promise was first to Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob, now Joseph and to his brothers... and their children.

Let the little things go... offenses, persecutions, sins of others... you're on your way to the promised land, forever.