



**THURSDAY, 5/14/20**

**SERIES: Choosing Faith Over Fear**

**Speaker: Nat Crawford (w/Arnie & Cara)**

**Title: Joseph Pt. 2**

Let's fast forward a bit in the story and see what happens as a result of Joseph's honesty. Joseph goes to visit his brothers as they graze their goats. Ticked off, his brothers devise a plan to kill Joseph, but his younger brother Judah suggested they capture Joseph and sell him into slavery. That's exactly what they do.

Now I want you to remember this story the next time you think your family is dysfunctional. This will make you feel pretty good!

Joseph ends up in Egypt and inside Potiphar's house. Potiphar is the captain of the bodyguard for the Pharaoh. Let's pick up the story in Genesis 39, verse 2.

**Genesis 39:2-9 (ESV) The LORD was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. <sup>3</sup> Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. ....<sup>5</sup> From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the LORD began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. <sup>6</sup> ... With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing...**

Joseph was faithful. His faithfulness would send him on an unexpected journey. He ends up in the home of a modern-day five-star general. The text says that the Lord was with Joseph, and the result was that Joseph was put in charge of Potiphar's household. In just 5 short verses, it says that all Joseph did for Potiphar prospered or was blessed.

When people are faithful, things get done. They get done and done well. They get done and done on time. They get things done with the right attitude. They get it done no matter what.

Not only are people reliable because of what they do, but they also hold people accountable.

Joseph is in charge of all of Potiphar's house. This meant he was the VP of HR. Maybe you are

in management. Maybe you're not employed right now. Maybe you're not in a traditional leadership role. But rest assured, you influence people. And when you delegate responsibility or people volunteer, your faithfulness is measured by their faithfulness. You aren't helping them or yourself by not holding them accountable. What gets measured gets done. What gets done gets rewarded. This was true for Joseph. The work he did and the people he led resulted in success. This is the result of being faithful.

And his success did not go unnoticed. Look what happens in the remainder of verse 7.

**and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded. <sup>8</sup> But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. <sup>9</sup> No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."**

Joseph got tested. Joseph worked in the presence of Potiphar's wife who took notice of Joseph. She came onto him and asked him to have sex with her. But remember, Joseph was reliable and honest. So he refused. But notice something so important about what Joseph says. Joseph makes a case at first from man's perspective. He says, "Hey. Potiphar has put all he owns in my hands. I am in charge of it. Nothing is out of my permission except you. You're off-limits." Now that's where a lot of us would leave it. I have these rules--these restrictions. If I commit this act of indiscretion, I could lose my job – my family – my retirement – etc. But then notice what Joseph says, "How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" Wow. Joseph was honest in relation to who He was in relationship to God and reliable in his love and obedience to God first. I pray when we get tempted to sin and we refrain, we give our real reasons – we love God more than anything else.

She came at him day after day. So what does Joseph do? He does what anyone of integrity should do. He fled – he ran out. Potiphar's wife grabbed and attained Joseph's coat. This resulted in Joseph being wrongly accused. One moment, Joseph is the man, and in a moment, it appears Joseph became a long-term loser in life, as he ends up in jail. For what? For doing good. But that's not the end of the story.

As we read on, we find that Joseph remains faithful. The chief cupbearer and baker end up in prison for making Pharaoh angry. The Bible tells us Joseph is put in charge of them, and he is

still willing to serve, in spite of his injustice. They have dreams that need to be interpreted. He interprets them rightly, even though one dream meant death for the baker. Joseph remains in prison for 2 years. Then suddenly the cupbearer remembers Joseph's name when the Pharaoh has dreams that cannot be interpreted. That's where we'll pick it up in Genesis 41:14-16.

**41:14-16 <sup>14</sup> Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh.<sup>15</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it."**

**<sup>16</sup> "It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."**

Joseph goes on to rightly interpret Pharaoh's dream, but don't miss what Joseph says and believes. Joseph says, "It's not me – God is the one who will do the work."

Joseph presents another quality of a person who chooses faith over fear: they are dependent upon God.

Let's be honest with ourselves. If I was stuck in prison, and I had an opportunity to get out, I would want to look as good as possible. If Pharaoh asked me, can I interpret dreams, it would be hard not to say "Absolutely!" I am your man!" Joseph does the right thing and gives credit where credit is due. He says, "It's not me! It's all about God."

Joseph was a man totally dependent upon God. That's why He could continually choose faith over fear.

## **DISCUSSION:**

N: Why do you think Joseph was so faithful?

C: I don't know, Nat. I'm just going to say that when you read the story, God continues to show up and improve his situation. So maybe just that. I don't know. That's a good question.

N: Arnie, what do you think?

A: I agree.

N: Yeah. I think if you had the opportunity to sit down with Joseph and ask him why, I have no doubt that he'd give a great answer, but I think it's clear though. Whatever he knew about God, he believed to be true. And whatever he experienced about God, he always pointed back to, and then held to, as he looked forward into the trials he would go through.

A: Just a tremendous faith.

N: And I would say, that's an encouragement to us today. We only get what we see in the Bible, right? We can speculate. We can try to put in our own narrative at times, but the reality is, he had a story, and if we could sit down with him, we would want to. So it would be true for us in this discussion, that we need to be willing to share our stories of God's faithfulness, so people could cling on to that and use that to propel them into their faith in God. Would you agree?

C: Well, I think we talked about that. Whose faith do you kind of steal? [Right.] I think that would go along the lines of that, where you see people struggling through something, and they hold tight.

N: Okay. Clearly the circumstances are different. People are dealing today with their dysfunctional families, right? And they're dealing with trials that they didn't sign up for. And honestly, there are situations that they didn't deserve, I mean a lot like Joseph. But how would you encourage those people, when they're struggling with the dysfunctional family, with the trials and the situations that they didn't ask for, they didn't sign up for? How would you encourage them and coach them to keep trusting in God, despite the physical circumstances around them?

C: I always have this saying Nat, and it's, who owns the problem? And I know we care about our family members, but sometimes you just have to focus on yourself and your own faith. And I always say, as long as people have the Gospel and it was delivered kindly, then you've got to let God do His work. And he's orchestrating such big things. And you know, when the cupbearer and the baker, we know what maybe happened to the baker. The cupbearer was let go, and he still didn't tell people that Joseph was in prison. But just that orchestration, that that cupbearer just happened to be there when the Pharaoh was looking for someone to interpret his dreams. I

don't think that's any kind of a coincidence. So God's got it sorted. He's orchestrating things. And I know people are frustrating and you love them so much, you want them to change some things about their life, or come to Christ, but who owns the problem? If you know they're in that, you've just got to let them work through some things on their own. You can't, you don't have saving power. And I think people put so much pressure on themselves to say that thing, to recite that piece of Scripture, and it's just not there. You know, Jesus told people and they just didn't want to hear it or believe it, but a lot of them came later on. So just let God do the work.

N: That's excellent. What about you, Arnie?

A: I'd agree. I think if you focus too much on dysfunctional family members, you become one.

N: How has dependence upon God benefited your life?

C: In every way, positively. But for me, I'm stubborn. I'm a fixer, like you are Nat. And you know, I moved away and had my own radio career, and things were going well. If there was problems, I felt like I was probably the one solving them. So I was sort of a hard one to come to Christ. But when God broke things down, to the point that all I had left was a reliance on Him, it really opened my eyes up to, that's all I need. So now everything I do is God first, and then everything else just kind of fits into that extra space, which there's not much there.

A: Yeah, I think it's just a complete opening of your eyes. The eyes of your soul.

C: Yeah. You know, it's all serving Him. It's all giving your life to Him. So I am fully aware now, my eyes were opened to who is in charge, and I am totally thankful for that. So when you get to a point, when you're okay, when you just say, I am not in charge, and you relinquish that, that's when you really start to soar spiritually.

-----

Joseph was a man totally dependent upon God. He could continually choose faith over fear. And I'm convinced that's because his focus was always on God and not on the problem. But in order to have that kind of dependence, it takes great humility.

To have that kind of dependence upon God, you have to be humble. One of the humble leaders in the marketplace today is Tony Hsieh.

Tony Hsieh is the CEO of the world-famous Zappos. Anyone buy a pair of shoes from Zappos before? I've never heard a bad story about Zappos. Zappos is known for their legendary customer service. This has led to Tony Hsieh's wealth. Tony Hsieh is reportedly worth 840 million dollars. Do you realize this man does not have a corner suite? He doesn't come to work in a suit and tie? He wears jeans and a t-shirt and has a cubicle along with those he leads. If that wasn't enough, he is reported to live in a silver old school mobile home in Las Vegas. Rent is \$840 a month. Insane and humble.

To be humble -- the kind of humble that is totally dependent upon God, we need to see ourselves accurately. This is true humility. It's not thinking less of ourselves. It's not being an Eeyore saying, "Poor me. I'm miserable, and I deserve it, so here I'll stay."

No, humility is seeing yourself rightly. It's seeing ourselves as God sees us. How do we do this? We remember we are all made in the image of God.

**Genesis 1:27 "So God created human beings<sup>[a]</sup> in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."**

Because we are created by God in His image, we all deserve respect. We will be thoughtful with every word and action to each other.

And second, we become humble when we remember we are all sinners in need of a Savior.

How do I know? Well first, Scripture tells us so:

**Romans 3:23 "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard."**

So the Bible rightly declares man's sinful nature. But, look around you! I have yet to find someone who doesn't sin. My own precious children sin willingly and with gusto.

It's not just seeing ourselves accurately, to be truly humble. We also need to be in a posture of remembering and desiring God's grace and forgiveness.

**Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."**

It's real easy to get dismissive of my sins and become real critical of the sins of others, but the reality is that God paid a great price for the forgiveness of sins. My sins were so great that He sent His son to die a painful death on the cross. Every reaction out of anger, every curse word, every lie, every lustful thought was a sin that Christ died for. That's very humbling. If I sinned just one time each day until the time I was 80, I'd sin 29,200 times. Well, I don't sin just once a day, so that's really humbling! That's why I'm totally dependent upon God. In reasons I will never know, He chose me and saved me from my sins. The same is true for you. For by grace you've been saved through faith. That makes me and should make you entirely and thankfully dependent upon God.

When I keep this in the forefront of my mind, my humility increases. My dependence upon God increases. So I remember and embrace that forgiveness. When I do, I am less quick to judge. I become quicker to forgive others. This is exactly what Joseph did. In Chapters 42 through 45, he is reacquainted with his brothers. Most of us would want to humiliate and punish someone who tried to destroy our life. Not Joseph. Joseph was faithful and dependent upon God. So what did he do? He forgave them. Again, that takes faith. Joseph again chose faith.

----

N: We've covered a lot of ground here. Humility, dependence, forgiveness. What keeps you dependent upon God?

A: When I became a believer, when I was 47 years old, one of the things that I can remember to this day, in my prayer life after that was, Lord, I pray that you keep me in the front lines of the battle. Don't ever let me become so that I feel so comfortable, and in a situation, where I'm really going nowhere. So keep me in the front lines, because otherwise I'm in it. I was so passionately afraid of becoming a burned out Christian. Like many people, I thought I knew at the time, and then my testimony would actually be a testimony in the wrong direction. And so that was my prayer, is keep me on the front lines for as long as I live Lord.

N: So you weren't afraid of burnout from the battle. You are more afraid of the burnout from the vacation?

A: Oh, no kidding. Because you know, standing still, in the spiritual sense, is actually moving backwards. So to me, if the best way to grow is get in there, get in the battlefield, don't sit back and take a bunch of courses, go to seminars, all of this stuff, even though they're good, they have their place, but it's frontline. Keep me in the front lines at all time, Lord.

N: Wow.

C: I would agree with that. I would definitely agree with it. And I would like to say, that from an outsider looking in Arnie, He definitely has answered your prayer, because Satan's trying to kill you off every other day, but you just keep going. No, for me, I'd rather much be in the game than sitting on the sideline. When I'm on the sideline, I start getting antsy.

A: Oh, me too. Me too. I try to make things happen.

N: Yeah. I think that posture to want to be in the middle of the battle, and to be in the middle of the pain, actually will always keep us in that place of dependence upon God. Not an easy place to be, but an essential place to be. And I think even C.S. Lewis, his quote about pain, even applies to us. He said, *pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.* And so that is so true for nonbelievers, to get them to a point of dependence upon God. But how much more beneficial is it for us as believers, to keep us dependent upon Him, and that's a good place to be, as He's our Heavenly Father. Well, we also talked about forgiveness. How has forgiveness changed how you view and treat the people around you?

C: One of the more sobering moments that I've had with God, is when He was like, you know, I forgave you, so you must forgive others. And then to really reflect back on my life, that how much forgiveness I have been given is really sobering. So you know, you sort of forget what a jerk you are sometimes. And so I noticed, I always put my spiritual walk next to somebody like Jeffrey Dahmer, where, well, I haven't been that bad, but you really are. You're awful. You're an awful person. And so I extend that forgiveness. The other thing that I'll say about forgiveness, Nat, I was really thinking about just how hard it is sometimes in certain situations, where you've been hurt so deeply by somebody that is supposed to love you, or that you're maybe in a relationship with, say a family member or whatever it is, that forgiveness, you don't come to Christ and then you just start forgiving people.

It's a process and people really need to understand that, that you forgive and you mean it, you really forgive it. But then Satan pulls those tricks, where he reminds you of all the things this person's done to you. But sometimes, it's helpful for me to remember all the good things the person has done, at the times they have shown up, and maybe there aren't those, but I just, forgiveness is a process. And so you go, Nope, not today Satan, and you forgive them again, and you forgive them, I think all the way to Heaven, right? It's in your heart. You truly want to forgive somebody.

N: Arnie, how does our choice of fear or faith impact how we treat the transgressions of others?

A: It has tremendous impact. We have to act in faith. We have to act in knowing that God is in charge, not only of our lives, but in other people's lives. And so to come across out of fear is just totally self-defeating for everybody involved.

N: When we're dependent upon God, God can do great things. We saw that in the life of Joseph, and we've heard it from the lives of our discussion partners today.



