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***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is  
The Author and Perfector of our Faith  
October 1, 2017, Adrian Moskal  
Genesis 37; 39-47***

When we were last together, Pastor Jeff was sharing what God was doing in the life and times of Abraham and it culminated with Abraham trusting God with the life of his son Isaac. This was a pivotal moment.

We also have been carefully watching 3 themes as we journey through His Story:

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1. God is up to something. He is actively working at bringing back the shalom that was lost at The Fall in order to restore relationships with each other and with him.
2. Satan is actively working at destroying God's shalom. He is all about destroying relationships. He is actively working at disrupting unity in the church so the name of Jesus will be discredited. And if that isn't enough working against us,
3. Left to our own devices, without the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, we naturally move away from God. We are our own worst enemy at times.

Today we are going to dig into what God did through the amazing life of Joseph but first what happened from where we left off to the time of Joseph?

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From Genesis 23-36:

- Sarah dies. Abraham sends his servant away to find a wife (Rebekah) for Isaac from the land he had originally come from. Abraham dies at the age of 175 years old.
- Isaac and Rebekah have twins. The first boy to come out was Esau and the 2nd son was Jacob. God foretold that the younger would rule the older.

In this time period, the oldest son would receive the birthright.

Sure enough, one day Esau came in from the fields and was famished and asks Jacob for some of his stew.

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***Genesis 25:31 (NLT) All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."***

Esau was famished and relented and had bread and stew and grew to despise his birthright.

Then we see:

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- God makes this covenant with Jacob:
- **Genesis 26:3-5 (NLT) <sup>3</sup> *Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. <sup>4</sup> I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, <sup>5</sup> because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.***

- What are we learning: God keeps his promises.

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- Jacob also tricks Isaac into blessing himself instead of Esau. He disguises himself to look like Esau and Isaac's sight is failing. Isaac blesses him and Esau is upset again as he feels cheated.
- Jacob goes back to the land of his forefathers (as did his dad - Isaac), to find a wife. He falls in love with Rachel (his uncle Laban's daughter) and works 7 years for Laban for the right to marry her. Laban tricks him into marrying Leah (oldest daughter), and Jacob has to work another 7 years to marry Rachel. That's right, he has two wives.

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- In this time, Jacob, who God now calls Israel, comes to his brother Esau. Esau just wants to see his brother but Jacob is scared and because of his own past grievances, cannot trust Esau. Jacob lets his insecurities get in the way of relationship.
- God blesses Jacob with 12 sons and at least 1 daughter and his flocks of sheep also grew large.

We see our major story themes at work. We see throughout this journey that God is up to something. God is in control and no matter our failings, God's will ends up being accomplished. We see through these lives, that often each of them is their own worst enemy. Our sin and pride hold us back from God using us fully.

This takes us up to where we need to get today. We are well into God's epic story and Chapters 37-49 of Genesis brings us up to the time of Joseph but as we have seen in previous chapters, if you focus on the people of the story, you are going to miss the point of the story because this story is primarily about God.

Now Joseph is 17 years old and he is disliked by his brothers. Why is Joseph disliked, well chapter 37, gives us 4 reasons right of the bat. Joseph is either infinitely naive, or the ultimate brat of a younger brother. Let's give you the top 4 reasons his brother's disliked Joseph:

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**Gen 37:2 (NLT)**

***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.***

Reason 1 of their dislike of Joseph: he snitched on them.

Let's continue:

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**Gen 37:4 (NLT)**

***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.***

Reason 2: Israel (Jacob) loved him most.

Let's continue as Joseph shares a dream with his brothers:

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**Gen 37:7-8 (NLT)**

***"We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"***

***<sup>8</sup> His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.***

Reason 3: Joseph dreamed his brothers would serve him.

And lastly

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**Gen 37:9 (NLT)**

***Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"***

Reason 4: Joseph's 2nd dream showed his whole family would bow down to him.

Now, depending if you are an older sibling or a younger sibling, it may skew how you feel about Joseph. Yet, he couldn't control who his dad loved or dreams that God gave him. So far though, Joseph's life is pretty good.

Now, Israel sends Joseph to check on his brothers who are pasturing the flock and they see him coming and conspire to kill him and blame it on a fierce animal. Reuben talks the rest of his brothers out of killing him and just throwing him into a pit (cistern). He had plans of coming back later and rescuing him. So the brothers stripped him out of his robe and threw him in the pit.

The brothers though saw a caravan of Ishmaelites and decided to sell Joseph to them as a slave. The Ishmaelites in turn sold him to Potiphar, the captain of the Egyptian guard. The brothers took his robe dipped into goat's blood and told his father he had been devoured by a fierce animal.

So if you are Joseph, life is pretty bad. It couldn't seem that it could get any worse. What would you be thinking right now? If it is me, its pretty tempting to do the "Woe is me thing."

But...God was with Joseph.

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**Genesis 39:2-4 (NLT)**

***<sup>2</sup> 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>4</sup> This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned.***

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God is in charge. God is up to something that is more than we can appreciate when we are in the middle of a crisis or valley. Is this something you can relate to? I can relate to this. When you are in the middle of a struggle, the temptation is to claw to remove yourself from the situation, rather than trust God and see what he is doing.

Life is much better for Joseph...the Lord blessed Potiphar's house for Joseph's sake.

Now Joseph worked hard for Potiphar and was a great servant who had full control over Potiphar's wealth. Soon Potiphar's wife was attracted to Joseph and wanted to lie with him. Joseph said no because of his loyalty to Potiphar. But when there were no men around she caught him by his garment in hopes of lying with him but he left his garment and fled the house.

Potiphar's wife screamed and said Joseph wanted to lie with her and he fled, leaving his garment. Potiphar was terribly angry and threw him into prison.

Again, life is pretty miserable for Joseph. One would wonder how so many unfair things could happen to him.

But... God was with Joseph. God gave Joseph favour with the keeper of the prison. Whatever Joseph did, God made it a success and the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners.

One day, while in prison, the king's cupbearer and his baker, who were also both in jail for an offence came to Joseph with their dreams that could not make any sense out of.

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**Genesis 40:8 (NLT)**

***And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean." "Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."***

Joseph interpreted their dreams and told the cupbearer that he would be restored to his office in 3 days. He told the baker that in 3 days, Pharaoh would put him to death and sure enough that is what happened. Joseph asked the cupbearer to remember him and mention him to Pharaoh but he did not remember him.

Two more years pass... not good for Joseph

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**Genesis 41:1-4 (NLT)**

***Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. <sup>2</sup> In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. <sup>3</sup> Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. <sup>4</sup> Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.***

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**Genesis 41:5-7 (NLT)**

***But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. <sup>6</sup> Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shrivelled and withered by the east wind. <sup>7</sup> And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.***

No one in Pharaoh's employ could decipher his dreams. Then the cupbearer remembered Joseph in prison. Let's think about that for a bit. Joseph was put in a pit,

sold to slavers, sold to Potiphar, put in prison, and has been in there another 2 years. What is his state of mind? What would your state of mind be?

Well, Pharaoh sends for Joseph immediately.

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**Genesis 41:15-16 (NLT)**

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

Today, culture tells us we should never struggle. We deserve things now. Instead of struggling until we can afford something, culture tells us to go into debt and get it now. Our present culture is all about self. Most people would be thinking only about themselves after all of the struggles that Joseph had been through but he gives God all the glory.

Joseph tells Pharaoh his two dreams are one. It speaks of 7 good years and 7 bad years. The famine will consume the land and all will perish unless drastic action is taken. Pharaoh needs to appoint overseers to take produce of the land in the 7 good years and store it up so they can survive the 7 years of famine.

Pharaoh put Joseph in charge because obviously God was with him. Joseph was in charge of everything and second only to Pharaoh at the age of 30.

In the seven years of abundance they piled up the food. It piled so high they couldn't measure it any longer. Then the famine came and it spread all through Egypt and beyond.

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**Genesis 41:57 (NLT)**

***And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.***

So people came from all over...including Jacob's family. They had heard there was grain for sale in Egypt so Jacob sent his sons to buy some. They came and bowed to Joseph and did not recognize him but Joseph recognized them.

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**Genesis 42:18-20 (NLT)**

***On the third day Joseph said to them, "I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. <sup>19</sup> If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. <sup>20</sup> But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die." To this they agreed.***

Joseph is testing them. All the while this is going on Joseph is speaking through and interpreter even though he understands them. The brothers are speaking to one another and feeling guilty for the brother that they sold and feeling this is a “reckoning for his blood”.

Joseph secretly weeps and gets their sacks filled with grain and secretly puts back the money that they were paying with. When the brothers come back home to Jacob, they unload all the grain and tell him everything and then find that all their money is also there.

They are worried that the Egyptian will feel cheated and he still has their brother.

The famine continues and now they need to go back to get their brother that they left and get more grain. They take double the money and presents and Jacob relents and lets Benjamin, the youngest go.

As they return to Egypt, Joseph tells them to not be afraid and come and feast. Joseph asks about their dad, if he is well? Joseph had to leave as he secretly was overcome and wept. Life might be well, but his humanity is real here.

Joseph has their caravan filled with grain, secretly returns their money and puts his personal silver cup in with Benjamin's stuff.

Joseph sends his military after they had only left a short time and they find the cup in Benjamin's stuff. Joseph threatens to keep Benjamin. The brothers plead with him and share that if they return without Benjamin, their dad will surely die as previously his other son did not return and this will end him.

Joseph is overcome with sympathy and cries. He sent all his people out and revealed to his brothers his true identity.

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**Genesis 45:4-5 (NLT)**

***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. <sup>5</sup> 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.***

The brothers returned to Caanan to get Jacob and their family to settle in Egypt.

It comes back to one of our main threads from the sermon series:

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1. God is up to something. He is actively working at bringing back the shalom that was lost at The Fall in order to restore relationships with each other and with him.

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God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God keeps his promises no matter if we cooperate or not. God's plan will be accomplished.

The only question is if we are going to be a part of his rescue plan.

Joseph could have given into despair and self pity at any point along the journey. When he was in the pit, sold to Ishmaelites, sold to Potiphar, thrown in prison, or forgotten for another 2 years by the cupbearer. In the lows, Joseph kept his eyes on God. Also, in the highs, he still kept his eyes on God. Had he not been focused on what God was doing, he could have exacted revenge on his brothers. Instead, he saw how God used him to further his plan. God is the author of His Story.

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Let's wrap this up by giving us some tools when we find we are in a valley/crisis.

We often ask: Now what do I do?

The problem is, this is the fourth question, not the first question. These four questions are from a book called "I can change," by Tim Chester.

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What is the first question? 1. Who is God:

- God is great – so we don't have to be in control.
- God is glorious – so we don't have to fear others.
- God is good – so we don't have to look elsewhere.
- God is gracious – so we don't have to prove ourselves.

This is all about trusting God to be God. Do we believe these things. If we do, then we should not be anxious about anything in any circumstance.

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And if this is true, what is the 2nd question? 2. What did God do/doing?

These are all of the promises that God has made and kept in the bible and in our lives. Because of who he is, he sent Jesus to live amongst us, lived a sinless life, showing us the way. Even though he was God, he took our place and died on the cross but not staying dead. He rose again, conquering sin and death to make a way for us to be reconciled with God.

How have we seen the gospel at work in our lives?

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What is the 3rd question? 3. Who am I?

In light of who God is and what he has done--- it leads to I am a follower of Christ. If I believe 1 and 2, 3 is inevitable.

Back to the original question:

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What is the 4th question? 4. What do I do? In light of 1-3, we take a step of faith and trust God.

These are the 4 questions that we ask in any hard decision or crisis. This is what Joseph did. He never wavered because he knew who he belonged to and that was the determiner of how he responded in every situation.

The struggle is we want to compare ourselves to our friends, family, etc. We look left and right instead of up and see what God is up to.

There is no way Joseph could have foresaw how his God would keep his covenant through his family, but he trusted God at each step.

Joseph looked up and knew he was God's and that God was in control. He was created on purpose for this purpose -even though HE saw no way through.

The response is the key. It has to affect our behaviour. This is heart change. If you know a lot about God, that does not lead to a more loving you. A more joyful you. A more peaceful you. A more patient you. Kinder you. Gooder? Gentler. More in Self control.

The only way you grow in Christ is to by trusting him.

What does Joseph believe about God? God is with him.

He knew God was in control and Joseph just had to be himself (who God had created him to be). Don't we waste a lot of time trying to be something we are not. God created us with gifts/talents/personality for a divine purpose. Do you believe that?

He loves us how we are. He wants to grow/change/transform us - to be like him. Not all powerful and all knowing but servant, humble, loving, and sacrificing.

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We need a Paradigm Shift.

“Living Life on Purpose” - Who did God create you to be. He has given you the gifts, talents, etc to accomplish great things (with him) that he has created for you.

When I was sick last year so much with Meniere’s Disease it caused me to get regular bouts of vertigo. It was really tough. One of my (our) sister’s in Christ gave me a present. I unwrapped it. I would have brought it, but it is packed away in boxes until we move into our house in November. This is what it says, Don’t tell God how Big your problems are...Tell your problems how big your God is!”

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**Hebrews 12:1-2 (NASB)**

***Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

God is writing his story and we can lean into him and be a part of it because he is going to accomplish his mission.



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The Author and Perfector of our Faith***

**October 1, 2017, Adrian Moskal**

**Genesis 37; 39-47**

**Objective of this study:** To allow God to be in control in all circumstances of my life and follow him in His mission.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.

3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 27:1-6** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything jump out at you?**

**Welcome (5 minutes)**

What is your favourite movie theme song? How does it make you feel when you hear it?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to your heart.]

**Word/Work (45-60 minutes)**

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Scan Gen 37 and 39-47 (especially Gen 37:1-9, 26-28, 39:6-18, 40:8-23, 41:37-42, 42:17-26, 45:1-5)
3. Describe the major plot points: The highs and the lows.
4. How does the sacrifice of Isaac and the story of Joseph point to Christ?
5. What are you feeling during the high points of Joseph's story? The low points?
6. How does Joseph respond when asked to decipher the cupbearers dream? Pharaoh's dream? When he reveals his identity to his brothers? How would he approach the 4 questions in each part?
7. What are you going through right now that it would be worthwhile to go through the 4 questions?
8. Pray for each other.

### CRBC Prayer Points

- a. That we would engage in God's call to reach Campbell River for Jesus.
- b. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
- c. Our Young Adults ministry led by Derek and Jenn Bird
- d. Our missionary of the month: Ngorika Children's Home - check them out on our website and on the big chalkboard in the foyer
- e. Our missionary of the week: Rod and Donna Black - Rod had plans for some mission work in the Philippines and Pakistan, but had to cancel because of emergency eye surgery. Pray for healing.
- f. Local CR church: Discovery Community Church (Pastors Larry Martin and Dave Dixon) - that God would use them to reach people for Jesus in Campbell River.