

## How to Overcome Fear

“The Life of Joseph: but God Intended It for Good”

Genesis 43:1-14

**January 7, 2018**

### BIG IDEA

After an advent break we delve back into the narrative of Joseph. As we look at this story we are struck by the implicit work of God. Just when everything seems lost and our story is spiraling toward darkness, we can exclaim: But God! Yes, God was working all of the time. He is working in your life, too. When you believe this truth, you can overcome fear.

### REVIEW

*These are some of the main ideas we discussed during our last message regarding Joseph:*

- There was a great famine in the land, just as Joseph’s dream had predicted.
- After leaving Joseph for dead, the brothers came before him to buy grain.
- Joseph wanted to see his youngest brother, Benjamin, and demanded that he accompany the brothers on their return.
- He placed silver in their bags. They feared he would think it was stolen.
- They were terrified of him.
- Fear crippled the family.

### THIS WEEK’S SCRIPTURE

*Context:*

The brothers knew that they would return and ask Egypt’s governor for more grain. Simeon was being held as ransom. The caveat was that they must bring their youngest brother, Benjamin. But the father didn’t want to let him go. He was afraid.

### Genesis 43:1-14 (ESV)

*Now the famine was severe in the land. <sup>2</sup> And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go again, buy us a little food.” <sup>3</sup> But Judah said to him, “The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’ <sup>4</sup> If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. <sup>5</sup> But if you will not*

send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.'"<sup>6</sup> Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?"<sup>7</sup> They replied, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'"<sup>8</sup> And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. <sup>9</sup> I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. <sup>10</sup> If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice."

<sup>11</sup> Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. <sup>12</sup> Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight. <sup>13</sup> Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man. <sup>14</sup> May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

## MAIN IDEAS

- The family was afraid of Joseph. He had all of the power because he had the food.
- Jacob had to make a difficult decision. Could he let Benjamin go and save his family?
- Though fear had gripped this family, God was working behind the scenes.
- We can overcome fear by trusting that God is working.

## DISCUSSION & APPLICATION

### 1. But God...

*Genesis 50:20 - As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*

These words say a lot about this story. Everything appeared to be falling apart at the seams, *but God* was implicitly working to save Joseph's family (Israel). Thus, Messiah Jesus Christ could come from Israel as promised by the prophets.

#### a. Can you think of times in your life when you felt that all was lost?



- b. As you look back, can you see what God was doing? Does this help you to trust him more?**

## **2. The Family Was Afraid of Circumstances**

*Genesis 43:2 - And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go again, buy us a little food."*

Moses, the narrator, shrewdly sets up the characters in order to reenact this drama.

- **Joseph** is the son that knows what is happening and has all of the power. He's not afraid but needs the touch of reconciliation.
- **Jacob**, by contrast, is the father who knows nothing, is grieving, and is terribly afraid of events repeating themselves.
- **The brothers** are the intermediaries between the two. They are afraid of getting killed by Joseph.

But the real struggle is between Jacob and Joseph, father and son. And the son will win because he has the food. The son will win because he'd had a dream dreamed over him. And the real struggle is for control of Benjamin. Joseph wants to be united with him. Jacob wants to protect him. That creates fear and anxiety.

- a. Circumstances must have seemed overwhelming to this tiny family from Canaan. How do you think knowledge of God's work could have helped them overcome fear?**

- b. Can you find passages in scripture that confirm the fact that God is in control?**

## **3. The Family Was Afraid of Joseph**

*Genesis 43:3-5 - But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'<sup>4</sup> If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. <sup>5</sup> But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.'"*



The brothers are terrified of Joseph. They've seen him once, and they aren't thrilled about going back. As we read through the narrative, we notice that the change in Joseph is palpable. In chapter 37 he is naïve, for sure, but still innocent regarding the ways of the world. In 39-41 he is a man of integrity who is not intimidated by Potiphar's wife, the officers of the court, or even Pharaoh. But in 42-44 he is a ruthless governor. He exploits the power of his office. He seems to relish this opportunity to manipulate the situation.

- a. **Joseph wasn't acting in a godly way toward his family, yet God still used him. What does this tell you about the power of God?**
  
- b. **The family didn't yet know that "the man" was their brother. Can you see how Moses is setting this up? What a sweet reconciliation this would be! Is there someone that you need to reconcile with? Can you begin to pray for the courage and opportunity to do so?**

#### **4. Jacob Was Afraid He'd Lose More**

*Genesis 43:13 - Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man.*

Jacob's acquiescence to let Benjamin go ended with a prayer for safety. There was also a cry of a helpless victim of circumstances. Pessimism had apparently set in his heart and had deepened after the loss of Joseph.

- a. **Jacob feared that he'd lost everything. But God was working. Do you believe that he is working in your life?**
  
- b. **Take a moment and pray for faith. Pray that God will help you to trust. This is how you can overcome fear.**



## PRAY

Dear Lord, I want to trust. I have been hurt. I have lost much. Still, I know that you are God. Help me to believe that your sovereign mercy extends to me. I want to be free of fear. I want to serve you with an open heart. Amen.

## DIG DEEPER

For further study this week:

- [\*What Are You Afraid Of? Facing Down Your Fears With Faith\*](#) - from David Jeremiah (Tyndale)
- [\*John Calvin: A Little Book on the Christian Life\*](#) - from Ligonier Ministries

## NEXT WEEK'S BIG IDEA

The brother's face Joseph for the second time in Egypt and reconciliation begins.

