

The Thread

Discovering The Thread of the Gospel
Through The Big-Picture Story of the Bible

Week 8

Week 8, Day 1

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” – Matthew 5:10

This week, you'll be spending another few days looking at Joseph's life, and then you'll begin looking at what the Israelites' lives were like once Joseph died. In both Joseph's case and in the case of the Israelites, you'll notice that they were treated unfairly even though they did nothing wrong. This is a common thread in the Bible, and a common thread in the lives of modern day Christ-followers.

There will be times when you experience pretty crummy treatment because you publicly identify with Jesus. But take heart. By doing so, you join a centuries-long list of people who have experienced similar treatment.

This week's memory verse will help you find a little strength for those times when you find yourself on the receiving end of others treating you unfairly because of your faith. Memorize this verse. When you need it most, it will be there.

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Week 8, Day 2

“And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.” - Genesis 42:8

If you've read *The Hunger Games* books, or watched the movies, you know that the friendship/romance between Peeta and Katniss is central to the plot. Do you remember the part where the rebels stage the daring arena rescue that leaves Peeta behind and at President Snow's mercy? Snow brainwashes Peeta and allows the rebels to rescue him. Katniss finds out the hard way that Snow had programmed Peeta to kill her, which he almost succeeded at doing. But even after this near-successful assassination attempt, Katniss clings to her devotion to Peeta.

Many readers and viewers wanted Peeta to face justice for attempting to kill Katniss. But Katniss showed no such desire. And when they healed Peeta from his brainwashing, Katniss didn't reject his friendship. The brand of forgiveness and compassion shown by Katniss doesn't always happen in real life. Not always. But sometimes it does . . .

Read Genesis 42:1-17. Joseph had a choice to make. He had the opportunity to exact revenge on those who wrecked the better part of his life. You may have that choice, as well. Whether it's a family member or friend who has betrayed you, or a bully who has made your school or neighborhood feel miserable, you have a choice. You can choose revenge and bitterness. Or you can choose to forgive.

You'll be left hanging today on the outcome of Joseph's story. So while you anxiously await tomorrow's devotion, ponder these questions:

- How hard is it for you to forgive those who do wrong to you?
- What would you have done to your brothers if you were in Joseph's position?

Pray that God will give you the strength in real life to do the right thing by showing compassion and forgiveness when given the opportunity.

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Week 8, Day 3

“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. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.” - Genesis 45:7-8

Resiliency. Do you know what that word means? It means that nothing can keep you down. It means you can take a shot and keep on trucking. Back in the day, there were these watches made by Timex. The slogan for these nearly indestructible watches was, “It takes a lickin’ and keeps on tickin.” (Kind of the opposite of, say, your smartphone, as you know if you’ve ever dropped it on the ground.)

Take out your Bible and look up Genesis 45:1-15. As you read this passage, you will discover a remarkable true story of forgiveness, compassion, and even undeserved gifts. Joseph could have had his brothers imprisoned or even executed. Yet, he honored them. How illogical does this seem? When looking at the situation from a human perspective, this seems ridiculous. However, a closer look at verses 7-8 reveals God’s perspective.

Joseph was kind of like one of those old Timex watches: He was resilient. And his resiliency came from trusting in God and His plan. God’s plan for you is constant, and holds eternal implications for you and those around you. Following God’s plan, through faith in Jesus Christ, will lead you to forgive even the harshest of offenders. A relationship with Christ will compel you to show compassion to those who don’t deserve it.

Something to think about . . .

- Why is it so hard to grasp that your time of suffering might be so you can help someone who doesn’t deserve your help?
- How would you have felt if you were in Joseph’s shoes, suddenly having it made clear to you how God is always working in and through you?

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Week 8, Day 4

“Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.” - Exodus 1:11

Imagine being a king. Not just any king, but a self proclaimed “god-king.” (That’s what the Egyptian pharaohs were thought to be: part god, part king.) Every word you said, and every action you took, would all carry the weight of deity. If you’re honest, don’t you think it would be overwhelming? What if you made the wrong decision? No one would be there to check you and get you back on the right path.

Read Exodus 1:8-14. Imagine the backstory that must have lead the young king to act this way. Imagine how he and his friends would grumble about the fact that a few generations before he came to power, an *idiot* pharaoh gave these *foreigners* the best land in the country. We can imagine him complaining about how the Israelites have grown so numerous, and have become strong from all the labor forced on them. Now, the time has come when this young king comes to power. Unfortunately, he decided to act harshly toward the Israelites for no other reason than they weren’t Egyptians. He had forgotten the story of how Joseph saved Egypt.

The new king made the wrong call. And in doing so, he caused a ton of pain for the Israelites, who suffered for no reason. But, it was all part of God’s plan to ultimately call a people to Himself.

Something to think about . . .

- Can you think of something you went through that seemed bad, but looking back, it actually made you stronger? Maybe you owe God an apology for being mad that He allowed that to happen in your life. Now’s a good time to make it.
- Think of someone specific in your life that you think is mistreating you. Now switch places with him/her in your mind. Is there a reason they mistreat you? Perhaps it’s his/her own weaknesses, fears, or small mindedness. Is there a way you can change his/her attitude about you by first seeing life through his/her eyes?

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Week 8, Day 5

“Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, ‘Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.’” Exodus 1:22

Can’t you see it now: “What in the world!?! Is she crazy!?! Mom seriously just put our *baby* brother in a basket and floated him down the *Nile*?” Crocodile bait, anyone?

Reading Exodus 1:22 and 2:1-10, it all seems so plain and sanitary; we miss the absolute insanity of it all. Don’t just “blah, blah, blah” right over the fact that they were rounding up little baby boys and tossing them into the river! Imagine the horror, the screaming wails of mothers, and the bloodied faces of fathers who tried to fight off the soldiers. Israelite parents had two choices it seems: helplessly watch, or die trying to fight. Except that Moses’ mom figured out a third option. With everything going on in the neighborhood, Moses’ mom doesn’t seem fazed. Instead of fighting only to have her baby ripped from her arms anyway, she calmly surrendered the situation and gave God a chance to be God.

Moses’ mother isn’t the only heroine. The shrewd decision of Moses’ sister shows how awesome she was. She played the situation with cool intelligence. She went right up to the sister of the king (the king who’s killing her people) and said, “Hey, I get it. He’s really cute, but you’re a princess. You don’t want baby spew on your dress. I just happen to know a lady who, if you paid her, might be convinced to raise this kid for you.” And then she goes and gets Moses’ mom!!! (That’s cool-headed thinking.)

The point of this story is that Moses’ mom could have tried to do what she thought best according to her own reasoning. But ultimately, she did what God was leading her to do. And the crazy, seemingly half-baked idea just so happened to work. Imagine that . . .

Something to Think About

- In what ways are you kicking and fighting when you should be calmly surrendering and allowing God to be God?
- When you see your chance to be the hand of God (like Moses’ sister) are you brave enough to take a chance? Why or why not?