

Joseph - Finding Who We Are in Christ (Part 8)

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4:41 PM

We have been on a journey through the life of Joseph asking The Holy Spirit to show us who we are in Christ and how we can grow into the person we were meant to be

So far, we have learned that...

- We are wanted by God and were created to add to His kingdom
- We are loved and highly favored by God
- God has put dreams and purposes within us that He wants us to fulfill
- It doesn't matter how old you are, God has plans for you. And it doesn't matter how long you have been waiting, you can't give up on the dreams God has put in your heart. Believe what God has said. Hold on to the things the dreams and visions he has planted in you.

We said that there will be times when the enemy wants to strip us of our God given identity, purposes and dreams. In these times we must hold on to who we are in Christ by...

- Having HOPE for better days ahead
- WALKING forward in faith one step at a time
- TRUSTING that God still has a plan and is still in control
- PRAISING God in spite of the pain

We discovered that God uses the tool of Servanthood to help form us and shape us into the masterpiece that He created us to be. Servanthood shapes us by...

- Instilling a heart of humility
- Exposing the dangers of pride
- Teaching us the value of hard work
- Shifting our focus from ourselves to others

Through Joseph's life we saw the importance of maintaining our identity in Christ by living with integrity and doing what is right...

- Even if it seems very small
- Even when we believe it won't hurt anyone
- Even if we feel we deserve it
- Even when we think no one will know
- Even when we assume, we can get away with it
- Even when we feel it is justified
- Even if others don't
- Even if we are falsely accused
- Even if it doesn't seem fair
- Even if the cost is great

Our journey with Joseph also taught us that there will be times in all of our lives that who we are in Christ will be challenged by times of waiting. While we are waiting, we must...

- Stay the Course
- Stay Active
- Stay Productive
- Stay at Peace
- Stay Close to God

The next stage of Joseph's journey involved Pharaoh's call for Joseph to leave his prison cell and interpret his dreams. This part of Joseph's story teaches us that, In Christ...

- We are **CHOSEN**
- We are **CALLED**
- We are **FORGIVEN**
- We are Set **FREE**
- We are **CLEANED UP** (Made New)
- We are **NEEDED** (have a purpose)
- We are **CLOTHED** (anointed)
- We are **RAISED UP**
- We are **ADOPTED** into the family
- We have a **FUTURE**

The next 14 years of Joseph's life taught us that In Christ; I am one who perseveres in good times and bad times by...

- Trusting that God has a plan, and He is in control
- Not Turning away from God
- Learning to be Content
- Being Prepared
- Help others be prepared

Part 8 - Reunited with his brothers - Wrestling with Forgiveness

Genesis 45

45 Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. **2** And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.

3 Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! **5** And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. **6** For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. **7** But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. **9** Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay. **10** You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. **11** I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’

12 “You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. **13** Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.”

14 Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. **15** And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

16 When the news reached Pharaoh’s palace that Joseph’s brothers had come, [\(AI\)](#) Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. **17** Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, **18** and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.’

19 “You are also directed to tell them, ‘Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives and get your father and come. **20** Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.’”

21 So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. **22** To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekel of silver and five sets of clothes. **23** And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. **24** Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, “Don’t quarrel on the way!”

25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. **26** They told him, “Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.” Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. **27** But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. **28** And Israel said, “I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Reunited with his brothers - Wrestling with Forgiveness

Who am I in Christ? I am one who, with God's help, wrestles with issues of forgiveness until I surrender to His will for me to forgive.

Lest we forget the importance of the issue of Forgiveness and the fact that it is God's will for our lives, let's allow the scriptures to remind us.

As Jesus teaches the disciples to pray, He says...

Matthew 6:12

12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Remember, this isn't just a poetical phrase included in the Lord's prayer, but an important principle in our lives with Christ. After the conclusion of the prayer, Jesus reemphasizes this principle with these words

Matthew 6:14-15

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Later on, the Apostle Paul warns us not to grieve the Holy Spirit by failing to forgive...

Ephesians 4:30-32

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Who am I in Christ? I am one who, with God's help, wrestles with issues of forgiveness until I surrender to His will for me to forgive.

I say wrestling for two reasons...

1. Forgiveness isn't easy

- a. Sometimes the wounds are very deep and painful
- b. Sometimes the acts against us are vicious and violent
- c. Sometimes there is no justification for the wrongs committed against us
- d. Sometimes reconciliation and restoration of the relationship is not possible or is not in the best interest of the persons involved. In other words, God always calls us to forgive, but I believe that God does not always call us to have to restore the relationship in order for that forgiveness to occur
- e. Sometimes the person or persons involved do not seek our forgiveness or are no longer around for us to speak with face to face

2. Forgiveness is a process

- a. I use the image of wrestling, because in wrestling there are moves and counter moves. There is struggle and sometimes you are in a position to win and sometimes you are in a position to lose; but the match continues until that final slap of the mat.
- b. Forgiveness is not a 1, 2, 3, orderly process... Sometimes it is messy and confusing
- c. Notice in Joseph's story that Forgiveness didn't just happen the first time he saw his brothers. These chapters show us that Joseph was wrestling with forgiving his brothers. It took a process, and it took time.
- d. There will be days of victory and there will be days of defeat when it comes to the issues of forgiveness
- e. There will be times when what we thought we had forgiven, pops its head back up again.
- f. But we wrestle with it and do not give up, eventually the forgiveness comes.

***See "I Still Believe" (Part 6) and "Growing" (Part 4) for messages on Forgiveness**

“Forgiveness is God’s invention for coming to terms with a world in which, despite their best intentions, people are unfair to each other and hurt each other deeply. He began by forgiving us. And he invites us all to forgive each other. Forgiving seems almost unnatural. Our sense of fairness tells us people should pay for the wrong they do. But forgiving is love’s power to break nature’s rule. To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

— Lewis B. Smedes, Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve

Thoughts to help us along the way...

1. Forgiveness focuses more on **PEOPLE** than **PROBLEMS**
 - a. One of the most helpful things we can remember is that behind our problems are real people. Sometimes we need to focus on the people behind our problems and see them as people.
 - b. Joseph could have chosen to focus on the problems between he and his brothers; but instead, he was more interested in finding out about them and how they were, how his father was and his little brother. This was his family and in spite of their problems, he loved them
 - c. *“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”* — C.S. Lewis

2. Forgiveness focuses on **RECONCILIATION** and **RESTORATION** rather than **REVENGE**
 - a. Joseph wrestled with forgiveness. At first, it appears he struggled with wanting to get some payback for what he went through by putting his brothers through the ringer a couple of times. However, Joseph shows that ultimately his heart was to be reunited, to have reconciliation and the restoration of his family.

 - b. We have already established that reconciliation and restoration may not be possible, or even God’s will, for every circumstance and situation. However, this does not mean that we should not hold this as our highest Goal in most cases involving the need for forgiveness. In addition, regardless of the possibility of Reconciliation and Restoration; we should never seek revenge

3. Forgiveness focuses on **LETTING GO** rather than **HOLDING ON**
 - a. Forgiveness will present many opportunities to let go. Let go of the hurt, the pain, the remembrance of the event, the need to get even, let go of anger, bitterness, rage.

 - b. In each instance you must make the choice between holding on and letting go

4. Forgiveness focuses on the **FUTURE** rather than the **PAST**
 - a. Like our sins we want to come to the point that we remember their sins no more
Isaiah 43:25
²⁵ “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions,^(A) for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.
 - b. *"Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future."* –Paul Boese
 - c. *"Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future."* –Louis B. Smedes

5. Forgiveness **ACKNOWLEDGES OUR EMOTIONS** rather than **DENY THEM**
 - a. Sometimes the process of forgiveness is hindered by our failure to acknowledge and deal with our emotions. Sometimes those emotions are negative and destructive, like anger and rage. Suppressing them only causes us harm and usually results in something eroding or exploding
 - b. At other times we want to deny our feelings of regret, compassion love or the desire within us that misses the relationship we use to have. Acknowledging these feelings is sometimes perceived as being weak; but nothing can be further from the truth.
 - c. Joseph’s emotions finally came forth. He didn’t deny them. He could no longer control them and gave into them. But this very act became a demonstration of his willingness to forgive his brothers.

6. Forgiveness focuses on **HELPING** rather than **HURTING**
 - a. **Romans 12:17-21**
17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. **18** If it is possible, **as far as it depends on you**, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. **20** On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
 - b. Your own hurt or hurting them
 - c. *"Forgiveness is me giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me."* –Anonymous

- d. On December 2, 2012, in a cross country competition held in Burlada Spain, Ivan Fernandez was about to finish a distant second behind Olympic Bronze medalist Abel Mutai, from Kenya.

In the final moments, however, Ivan saw something that didn't make sense.

Just a few steps short of the finish line, Mutai stopped running. He had misread a sign and thought the race was over, but there were still 10 meters to go.

Ivan called out to Abel, encouraging him to continue forward, but since the two athletes don't speak a common language, Abel couldn't understand what Ivan was saying.

What should Ivan have done next, given the circumstances?

He *could* have passed his competitor by, easily taking first place for himself.

Instead, when he caught up with Mutai, he remained a step behind as he motioned him toward the proper finish line. The race ended as it should have: Abel Mutai was awarded first place; Ivan Fernandez came in second.

What an inspiring, heartwarming example of sportsmanship. No wonder this story is still making the rounds, eight years later.

Maybe Ivan Fernandez understands, better than most, where the race is really taking place.

Maybe he understands, better than most, what winning really looks like.

When asked why he would make such a choice to surrender an easy prize, Ivan was quoted as saying...

"My dream is that someday we can have a kind of community life where we push and help each other to win."

In this race we've been called to run, winning the prize means that **we make it our objective never to cross the finish line alone.**

There may be someone running the race near you — to the left or to the right; slightly ahead or slightly behind — and today you'll have the chance to nudge them onward.

Winning the prize, in this part of the race, means that we win it together.

The post [When Second Place Wins the Race](#) appeared first on [Your Life Is Now](#).

- e. Forgiving someone is choosing to help them finish the race

7. Forgiveness seeks to **UNDERSTAND WHAT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD** and **ACCEPT THAT SOME THINGS WILL NEVER BE UNDERSTOOD**
 - a. Why they did it, what were the underlying circumstances, are they aware of what they did, or how it made you feel, how did it make you feel, why did it make you feel that way,
 - b. Sometimes these things are just unknowable or don't make sense. At this point we have to accept that fact that there may not be any type of explanation, we will never understand.

8. Forgiveness tries to **SEE THINGS FROM MANY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES** rather than **JUST ONE**
 - a. There is an old saying that says put yourself in my position.
 - b. Sometimes trying to see things from someone else's perspective can help us understand and have the strength to forgive
 - c. Again, I am not talking about justification (and some things can't be justified no matter how hard we try to see it differently) but simply trying to gain a greater perspective

9. Forgiveness seeks to **ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY** rather than **PLACE BLAME**
 - a. We have to be careful not to take shift the blame to ourselves; but we do need to learn to search ourselves and ask God to reveal to us any part that we had to play in the situation

10. Forgiveness seeks to **BLESS** rather than **CURSE**
 - a. **Luke 6:27-28**
²⁷ "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.
 - b. *"Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart."* — Corrie Ten Boom