

“The Main Lesson of the Joseph Story”

Genesis 41:57

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

Introduction: I grew up in church memorizing Bible verses and hearing Bible stories.

- I had two Sunday School teachers who inspired me to memorize Bible verses (Mrs. Ruth Cooper and Mr. George Tucker).
- You have heard me tell the story of memorizing Proverbs 3:5-7. My motive was wrong but memorizing those verses has helped me time and time again and helped me help other people.
- Scripture memory enables us to maintain our mental equilibrium and spiritual vitality.

Application: Our “memorizers” slow down as we grow older, but if we can remember other things, we can memorize Bible verses.

Growing up in church I heard the Bible stories and had my favorite ones.

- One of my favorite Old Testament Bible stories was David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:45-51).
- One of my favorite New Testament Bible stories was the story of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25-31).

Bible stories are different from Bible parables.

- Bible parables did not actually happen. A Bible parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning (The Sunday School scholar). Parables use material objects to express spiritual truths.
- Bible stories did happen.

Examples: Abraham did offer Isaac (Genesis 22). A great fish did swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:17). Jesus referred to Jonah being in the belly of a great fish in Matthew 12:40.

Every Bible parable has one main lesson. One error in interpreting parables is to try to get meaning out of every detail of the parable. There may be some truths in the details, but the parable itself has one main lesson.

Every Bible story is the same. The details of the Bible stories may have some truths, but the Bible story has one main lesson.

The story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50:

- It has many details, and each detail can apply to things in our lives. For example:
 1. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son (Genesis 37:2).
 - son of his old age
 - Born to Rachel (also Benjamin born to Rachel).
 - Lesson: Parents should have no favorites.
 2. Joseph was falsely accused of rape by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:6b-19).
 3. Everything Joseph went through has truths to learn, but the Joseph story has one main lesson.

T.S. The Joseph story is not about Joseph. The Joseph story is about God!!

Text: Genesis 41:57; 45:1-9; 50:20

The main lesson in the Joseph story: God is in control of all things to fulfill His purposes.

- Psalm 115:3
- Psalm 135:6-7
- Isaiah 46:9-11

Application: Once we understand and believe that God is the all-powerful Creator, it is only reasonable to believe that God governs everything in His created universe as well.

- This is the providence of God.
- Even though the word "providence" is not found in Scripture, it is taught throughout Scripture.
- It refers to God's ongoing relationship to His creation.

- How God combines His providential control with man's choices, Scripture does not explain.
- Man is responsible for his choices, but God's purposes and plans will be fulfilled.
- Why? Because God is sovereign.

Illustration: If I am on a plane going to another city, I have choices on the plane ride. I can talk to the person next to me, eat the delicious food served on the plane or not eat it, take a nap, stay awake, etc. The plane will land in the city I was going regardless of my choices.

Relate this to the Joseph story. God's plan was to get Joseph to Egypt. The bad choices people made had consequences but in God's providence He got Joseph to Egypt.

1. Joseph told his brothers about his dreams (Genesis 37:5f). BAD CHOICE
2. His brothers were jealous of Joseph (Genesis 37:4-5). Bad CHOICE
3. His brothers wanted to kill Joseph (Genesis 37:20). BAD CHOICE
4. His brothers threw Joseph into a pit (Genesis 37:24). BAD CHOICE
5. His brothers sold Joseph to the slave traders (Genesis 37:28). BAD CHOICE

But God's plan for Joseph ended well. Joseph got to Egypt.

"God sent me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5).

"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good..." (Genesis 50:20).

Conclusion: Our bad choices will not stop God's purposes and plans. If we make good choices, we can be part of fulfilling God's plan.

Invitation: Our choices do matter. Nowhere is this truer than our choice about trusting Jesus alone for our salvation.

