

Dealing with Change

Genesis 37-45

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Out of curiosity who here still primarily uses cash when buying every day things? I remember when I was a kid my parents weren't super rich but my dad was famous for always having a wallet of 20 dollar bills. I don't know if he had any money in his bank account, I think it was all stacked up in 20's in his wallet. I remember I was hanging out with my dad one day and I think I was buying a chocolate bar and pulled out my debit card for the 1 dollar transaction. He gave me a lecture about how stupid it is that no one in my generation actually carries any money. I told him I just don't want a bunch of nickels and pennies lying around, I don't know what to do with them, I don't want to deal with a bunch of change.

And that's not the only kind of change that people don't want to deal with. I'm pretty good with change and I still hate it. For instance our staff team went bowling last week, and we played a couple games, the first game I beat Adrian, I was on top of the world it was great, the next two games, I didn't beat Adrian, I didn't like that change.

But this morning we're going to be talking about how to deal with change and we're going through the life of Joseph. Some of you might know a lot about him and maybe you've never heard of him before and that's fine too. He was a guy who went through a lot of change in life, sometimes he handled it well and other times not as much.

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So starting off with Joseph. Joseph was a brat, Genesis 37: 1-2 says this ***"So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner."***

² 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."

So we don't know what Joseph's brothers were doing, since it doesn't go into detail it's probably something small, they were probably taking 5 extra minutes on their coffee break and Joseph thought he would tell their dad every time. Typical younger brother right? (I'm a younger brother by the way)

he was the little brother that everyone hated and he is 17 and of course everyone knows that no matter who else is in the room if you're 17 you're the smartest person, at least according to yourself. When I was 17 I knew that I was special, I was so enlightened and I had so much experience, and if the adults only knew just how smart I was then they would listen to me. Also when I was growing up I was taught that I was the centre of the universe, no one specifically said that to me but as a millennial how could I not be special. Growing up I would get trophies for trying at soccer, that's pretty special, so by the time I was 17 I thought I was amazing.

Anyways Joseph has the same thing going on, and proving even further that he is so special he gets a super fancy jacket from his dad Jacob. Jacob obviously not being the best parent here decides to give just one kid something. Way to go Jacob, father of the year goes to you. And Joseph like any 17 year old is working and he's on the bottom of the chain of command, he's working for all of his half brothers. But he's got his super fancy jacket on, so he's thinking he's pretty hot stuff. So he's working with all his brothers and he says this.

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Gen 37: 6-9 **6 “Listen to this dream,” he said. 7 “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!”**

8 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.

9 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!”

So people are typically attracted to humility and this 17 year old kid doesn't really have much of that now does he? so his brothers already kinda hated him and this really didn't help his case so they plot to kill Joseph, this is sibling rivalry going to a whole other level. Anyways, the oldest brother comes up with a genius and merciful idea to just throw him in a hole and get him later. But his other brothers see some traders and they think to themselves instead of killing why don't we just trade Joseph for some silver. So that's what they do.

I think these stories are hilarious, it's not like they got anything decent, it was about like 200 dollars worth of silver, they just traded him for twenty silver coins or about a day or two's wage, that's how much they cared about him. It's like when Vancouver traded Luongo, just calling up everybody do you want this guy? he's an overpaid goalie, hates playing under pressure? great in the regular season, terrible in the playoffs, eventually florida takes the bait yeah we're interested in Luongo, would you take our 9th round draft pick and a tim hortons gift card? Vancouver then immediately takes the offer. That was like the Joseph trade, “what do you got, 200 bucks? ok sure, we'll take it.”

So now Joseph is probably not feeling too good about himself because immediately after the traders bought him they started to regret it, and they're like I can't believe we paid two hundred bucks for this brat, he won't stop talking about how much his dad loves him and how cool his jacket was, so they sell him in Egypt to a guy named Potiphar. And Joseph has just gone from feeling on top of the world, having dreams about the sun bowing down to him and now he's a servant for some Egyptian guy. His whole world has been rocked and everything has changed.

I remember 3 years ago when I just got hired here. I remember I quit my old job in Victoria, I got married, Sarah and I went on our honeymoon and then a week later we started work here in Campbell River. That was a lot of change. Actually there is a test of 41 biggest stressors in life and apparently I had 15 of them all at once. and each stressor is given a number value and if you score higher than 300 you are at an extreme risk of illness, I was well over 300. I had a lot of change happening in my life, not quite as much as Joseph mind you but it was still a lot. And there are a few lessons that we can learn about change and the first is to not get stuck reminiscing. Sometimes this is hard for me, when I first got married I wasn't reminiscing too

much because I was married and no matter what else is going on being married to Sarah was clearly better than not being married. So I didn't spend too much time reminiscing but I was able to embrace the change that God had for me.

But often times I would think about friends back in Victoria, and I would think about my old church and I would remember how in Victoria if I wanted to go to a store after 8pm I had more options than just walmart. I see this a lot, I hear people in their marriages reminisce about their college days, or people reminisce about where they used to live. In church I hear people reminisce about how church used to be. And it's funny if you stay around people long enough who do this you'll eventually find out that they were never happy, people will talk about how life was great in the 70's and if you went back in time the same people would be complaining about how the 60's were so much better. We look in to the past with rose colored glasses. Stop reminiscing, God is doing awesome stuff now and I know it's tough because things are changing but life will never stop changing and life actually gets really fun if you go along with the ride and make the most out of the change instead of reminiscing.

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So after all of that change this is what happened as soon as Joseph was traded to potiphar: ***Genesis 39:2-6 "The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. 3 Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. 4 This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. 5 From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. 6 So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!"***

When difficult situations come our way we can complain about it, and that's usually my go to response, I love me some complaining, or we can realize that God has placed us there and make the best out of that situation. Joseph has just been tossed around probably feeling worthless but he works hard for this guy who just bought him. That's really special, notice how it says the Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did. Well I believe the Lord is with me, I believe that the Lord is with all of you too if you believe in him, and because of that if we're walking with the Lord we will succeed in everything that we do. Now this is a tricky one. I'm not going to be like one of those preachers saying if you believe in God you'll have a great job, great family and end up being a millionaire because that's not the case, but if you believe in God and you walk with him you will succeed, maybe not by the worlds standards, but you will succeed. I believe some of the best successes are successful failures, you might do something that ends up being a disaster, you might lose all your money, or a relationship but if you walk with God through that you will gain a lesson learned. Walking with God you will be successful and it may be as simple as loving God and loving people while it appears as though everything else in life is falling apart, that can be a success.

Joseph was able to succeed and work hard through this change, how do you guys do with that? for a lot of you the summer means change, kids aren't in school, maybe family is around more, maybe your planning for vacation, maybe this is a really busy time for you. And you can complain this summer away, you can complain that the kids are around too much, you can complain about being busy. My favourite summer complaint is complaining about the weather.

You just finished complaining about the cold and the rain and now you can instantly switch that and start complaining about the heat and no rain.

But there's a couple things that stand out about Joseph, the first is that it says the Lord was with him. And this is a theme throughout Joseph's life and we're going to be talking more about this later. It says this twice already in just this passage here. I want you guys to be thinking about that, every time it says that the Lord is with Joseph because that's important. The second though is that he worked hard. He succeeded in everything he did. He was a great employee. Is that something that you can grow in? do you work hard, or are you a complainer?

But things don't stay perfect for too long with Joseph, like myself Joseph was cursed with good looks and Potiphar's wife had a bit of a thing for him. So Potiphar's wife keeps going up to Joseph asking him to sleep with her in which he continues to refuse, eventually she grabs a hold of him when no one else was around she demands that he sleep with her, he runs off and then she accuses him of trying to rape her. Potiphar finds out about this and sends him to prison.

This screams out injustice, he did the right thing and he got punished for it. It's tough to trust in God when you're doing the right thing and you still end up getting screwed. I remember when I was 9 years old growing up in Victoria my school backed on to this forrest. It was really cool because you could build forts and all that kinda stuff, it was awesome. And I remember me and three of my friends built this fort and it was amazing, you could stand up in it, it had like three different rooms, we found this gross rusty bench that we could sit on. It was amazing. And I remember this girl had a fort that was close and her fort sucked. It was falling apart and it was small. And she goes up to us and she's like "your guys fort is so great" and we're just like "yeah, of course, we're amazing fort builders, ours is way better than yours." And then she says "could you guys tear mine down and help me build a new one?" and since we were feeling really generous that day we said sure we'll tear this one down and build one that doesn't suck. So we tear it down and then she just leaves, and we think that's kinda weird, whatever, we'll just go back to our fort then. She comes back about 5 minutes later with the principal and she's crying she points at me and three of my friends and says that we tore down her fort. So me and my three friends start trying to explain to the principal that she asked us to tear down her fort. Now who do you think the principal is going to believe, 4 9 year old boys, or one 9 year old girl who's crying? so after our two week long detention we were finally allowed back in the forrest and guess who's in it, that lying little girl and her friends.

You try to do something nice for someone and that's what you get, that's what's going on with Joseph except for instead of detention for two weeks, he gets prison for two years.

Ughh, that's tough hey? I'm sure many of you have been in that situation before you're trying to do the right thing and you end up getting in trouble. When that happens to me I'm done, I want to give up on love when that happens when a situation which I was expected to be praised for changes so that I'm condemned for it, that's brutal, but check out what Joseph does.

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Gen 40: 5-7 **5 While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. 6 When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. 7 "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.**

here Joseph is in prison and he notices two guys who look upset and he goes to comfort them. Wow, that's so counter-cultural isn't it? when things in our life are difficult we usually look out for number one don't we. I like to think I'm a pretty nice guy but I don't know if I was in prison I don't know if I would care about a couple guys who look distraught. What about you guys, when things are tough what do you do. when money is tight are you less generous, when things are tough at home are you less loving? Joseph is stuck in prison and he's putting others first. That's amazing.

So he's talking to these two guys who are distraught in prison, he interprets their dreams, he's got great news for one guy for the cup bearer he said pharaohs going to give you your job back. So the baker asks Joseph to interpret his dream too, but that didn't turn out too well because his dream was interpreted to mean that Pharaoh was going to kill him. So both dreams end up happening and he asked the cup bearer to remember him when he was free, but the cup bearer was probably one of my ancestors because his memory just turns out to be the worst, and he totally forgets about Joseph.

So two years later Pharaoh has a dream, Pharaoh is trying to get people to interpret the dream, he gets all the magic dudes all throughout Egypt to try and figure it out, and then our good friend the forgetful cup bearer's memory gets jogged and this is what he says, I think this is a great line, he goes up to Pharaoh and says this: ***"Today I have been reminded of my failure,"***

You're right cup bearer, you really screwed up there didn't you. I can see maybe putting it off for a day, but how do you forget about that for two years? that's pretty bad. Well I can't really get too upset at this guy if I didn't have my wife to remind me about stuff I would literally forget everything, so, I'll cut this guy a break. So the cup bearer tells pharaoh about Joseph who can interpret dreams. Then Pharaoh goes to Joseph and tells him his dream:

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"In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, 18 and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. 19 But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. 20 These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. 21 But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

22 "In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. 23 Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. 24 And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."

25 Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. 26 The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. 27 The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

28 "This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. 29 The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. 30 But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the

land. 31 This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. 32 As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

So Pharaoh decides that Joseph is obviously the most intelligent guy in Egypt so he puts him in charge of everything and it goes as expected they get 7 great years and everything is going well and Joseph is doing great, and then the second part of the dream kicks in and the famine begins. Egypt is still obviously doing just fine because they stored food through the good years. But people from all over the world start coming to Egypt for food. And Joseph's brothers come to Egypt as well looking to buy grain, and Joseph is in charge of selling the grain.

And before I go into what happens here, I have to go back, Joseph had handled so much change so gracefully throughout his whole life. He went from being a beloved son working for his father to being sold into slavery, to being bought by Potiphar, to being accused of rape, to prison, to handling Egypt through seven good years. In all of that he was able to work hard and glorify God. But now he has his brothers who started all of this asking him for food and this is what he does.

The brothers come asking to buy food and Joseph recognizes them but they don't recognize him. Joseph then claims that they are spies even though he knows they aren't and he puts them all in prison. After 3 days he lets all of them out except for one (Simeon) and he says you'll get him back if you bring my younger brother Benjamin back here.

Now I know Joseph is in a tough spot here maybe with the people around he can't reveal his true identity but it seems to me like he's having a bit of fun with his brothers, I'm sure that there was a more graceful way to deal with his brothers than this. And Believe me, I'm not saying it would be easy to see your brothers who sold you into slavery but it's still a little surprising because he handled every other change so well, and this time he seems to be missing the mark. The change to power was difficult.

A while back I was at a conference and the speaker was a guy who had worked closely with Mark Driscoll who some of you may know he was the pastor of a mega church in Seattle. For those of you who don't know Mark Driscoll was involved in some scandals and he is no longer the pastor there. But this conference happened before all of that came out. The guy at the conference had gone through a lot of hurt in his life and he was recalling a time when he was having a conversation with Mark Driscoll, and Mark said to him I wouldn't be able to handle all the pain that you've gone through, in which that guy replied to Mark, I wouldn't be able to handle all of the success that you've had. As it turns out Mark wasn't able to handle that success either. This kind of change can be the most difficult when you've changed into a situation with power.

If you get a promotion in work and now you have authority over someone who treated you poorly. If you come in to money and people who mistreated you are now in need. How do you deal with that change. I wish that this happens to none of you because it is tough and I see many people fail at this kind of change. Joseph got through so much but this change comes up and now he has power over his brothers who sold him and he doesn't handle it with a lot of grace.

Maybe he had some resentment towards his brothers that he had been holding onto, maybe he was still hurt from what happened years ago and wanted a little revenge, I don't know. But it was a difficult change.

But there's a little bit more to this story than that, although Joseph was kind of rough with his brothers for a while he kept one in prison for a bit, he framed one of his brothers for stealing, he called them all spies but eventually here's what happens:

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Genesis 45: ***Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, "Out, all of you!" So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. 2 Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly CARRIED to Pharaoh's palace.***

3 "I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. 4 "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. 5 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. 6 This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor HARVESTING. 7 God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.[a] 8 So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser[b] to Pharaoh—the MANAGER of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

The final change for Joseph was to step into honesty and forgive and love his brothers who sold him into slavery and assumed he died. Wow. There was a couple bumps along the road but in the end Joseph says this: ***God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.[a] 8 So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser[b] to Pharaoh—the MANAGER of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.***

He got it, yes change happened, sometimes it just straight up sucked, but it was God moving him from one place to another for a reason. Change doesn't just happen, it's not God just messing with you, it's God moving you, it's God shaping you into the person you're supposed to be.

So change even though we almost always hate it, it's always God doing something good in our hearts. Today you might be someone who is known for fighting change at every chance you get. Stop it, you're missing what God is doing in the change. You might be someone who just goes along with the wind and maybe you think you're good with change but maybe you fail to learn the lessons that God is teaching you through change. Take a moment to stop and think about the changes in your life and pray about what God is doing, because he is doing something great. God will continue to change you until your perfect, and on this side of eternity, that's never going to happen, so instead of fighting it, I ask you to like Joseph learn from the changes God is placing in your life.