



GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

The Church of the Resurrection – Weekly Guide

November 1, 2015

“The Why and What for of Your Life” – Rev. James Forbes

Scripture: Genesis 45:1-11; John 10:1-10

Joseph’s unpromising beginning

MONDAY 11.2.15 Genesis 37:2-8, 12-14, 23-28

Jacob strongly favored Joseph, Rachel’s first son, over his other 11 sons. The “dreamcoat” showed Joseph’s favored status. Family therapists now know that being a “chosen child” like Joseph can skew emotional growth and relationships. Jacob cluelessly sent Joseph to see his brothers. They acted on their outrage—their brother lorded it over them, their father undervalued them—and sold Joseph to traders going to Egypt.

- Jacob’s mother and father had different favorites, which badly strained his bond with his twin brother Esau, yet he didn’t see the danger of parental bias. Have you been “the favorite” in your family or some other setting? Or have you felt like Joseph’s brothers, pushed aside for “the favorite”? What have those experiences taught you? How can you avoid making either mistake as you relate to your children, or other people?
- Put yourself in Joseph’s shoes. Life is good. Oh, sometimes your brothers get mad at you, but still, you can trust your own brothers, right? Wrong. His own family betrayed Joseph terribly. Have you ever felt the pain of betrayal? Did that experience tend to weaken or strengthen your faith at the time? In what ways have you grown stronger because of surviving that painful time?

Prayer: Lord God, despite the mess in Joseph’s family, you guided his life. I trust that you are guiding my life, too, beyond any issues that may cause me problems. Amen.

Joseph and his brothers met again

TUESDAY 11.3.15 Genesis 42:1-15, 43:1-9, 29-30

Jump ahead many years. Facing a famine, Jacob sent his sons (all but Benjamin, Rachel’s other son) to Egypt for food. Over time, Joseph had thrived in Egypt (the story is in Genesis 39-41), and ran the famine relief plan. His brothers didn’t know him, and bowed to him. (Remember his dreams?) But Joseph recognized them.

- Now imagine yourself in Joseph’s place. In all Egypt, only Pharaoh had more power than he did. What might Joseph have done when he saw his brothers coming before him? On a spectrum from “most vengeful” to “most generous,” where would you put his response? How would you have responded in his position?

- God had been at work on both sides of this story. Judah, who'd helped sell his brother Joseph, now pledged to protect Benjamin at all costs. And Joseph, despite his tough initial questions, could hardly keep his composure when he saw his youngest brother. When have you seen God gradually change angry, hate-filled feelings into caring and love despite the strains of life?

Prayer: Lord God, St. Francis of Assisi prayed, "Where there is hatred, let me sow love." Grow me into the kind of person who treats others in the same reconciling spirit with which you treat me. Amen.

Joseph's "what for:" to save lives

WEDNESDAY 11.4.15 Genesis 45:1-10

Joseph could bear it no longer. He revealed who he was. He made peace with the brothers who almost killed him, and did sell him as a slave. He said that God had brought a good result even from their evil actions. Joseph had grown from a spoiled boy into a mature man with a clear sense of what his life was about.

- When Joseph revealed who he was, Genesis says his brothers were terrified (which made sense!). What impact do you imagine Joseph's forgiving generosity had on them? In what ways did Joseph give us a vivid image of the way God treats each of us when we seek God's grace?
- "Don't be angry with yourselves that you sold me here. Actually, God sent me before you to save lives," Joseph told his brothers (Genesis 45:5). Recall a time when someone harmed you. How are you letting God redeem that evil, and bend it for good purposes? Do you trust God to be as creative and redemptive in your life as he was in Joseph's?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when life brings difficult times my way, I pray that you will give me trust and patience that, as I walk with you, you can bring good even out of evil experiences. Amen.

God can turn bad to good

THURSDAY 11.5.15 Genesis 50:15-21

When their father Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were afraid. It had taken Joseph time to work through his feelings before he forgave his brothers. In the brothers, we see that it can take time to accept and trust forgiveness for deep hurts, too. Their frightened, transparent effort to put words in their dead father's mouth moved Joseph to tears.

- Now imagine yourself in Joseph's brothers' shoes. The brash kid you sold to slave traders is now the second most powerful man in a foreign land where rulers hold absolute power. He SAID he forgave you, but the family patriarch, the one person whose moral authority might have held Joseph back, just died. Would you be at all afraid of what might happen? Why or why not?
- In verse 20, Joseph said, "You planned something bad for me, but God produced something good from it." He was clear that selling their brother was "something bad," not God's design. And yet God used it to produce a life-saving result for many people. How

does it affect your ability to trust God to know that God never wants to see evil happen, but when it happens, God immediately goes to work to force it to serve some good purpose?

Prayer: Lord God, please strengthen me to persevere in the process of forgiveness—for the sake of my own healing, and perhaps that of others. Amen.

“Life to the fullest”

FRIDAY 11.6.15 John 10:1-10

At first, as Jesus spoke of serving as a shepherd, he said he was “the gate.” The figure of speech may sound strange. But on open hillsides, sheep sometimes spent the night in a three-sided enclosure. The shepherd would lie across the opening, thus literally serving as “the gate” to protect and guide his sheep. Jesus said his purpose for all of us was that we could live “life to the fullest.”

- Scholar William Barclay wrote, “The Greek phrase used for ‘having it more abundantly’ means to have a superabundance of a thing. To be a follower of Jesus, to know who he is and what he means, is to have a superabundance of life.” In what ways have you found life deeper and more meaningful as a follower of Jesus?
- Jesus said, “All who came before me were thieves and outlaws.” He didn’t mean God’s great Old Testament servants, but the many false messiahs who tried to convince people that violence and hatred were the way to bring God’s kingdom on earth. Do you ever find it surprising that Jesus’ peaceful followers changed the world for the better more effectively than all the violent revolutionaries in his day or since?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your gift of superabundant life. Help me discern, and live into, the wonderful ways that your gift makes my life more than I could have ever imagined. Amen.

The Good Shepherd, who gave up his life for his sheep

SATURDAY 11.7.15 John 10:11-18

Ezekiel, a prophet among Hebrews exiled in Babylon, portrayed God as a good shepherd who would “seek out the lost, bring back the strays, bind up the wounded, and strengthen the weak” (Ezekiel 34:16). Jesus picked up that image as he reached out to the lost and the strays, bound up our wounds and took special interest in the weak. He was the Good Shepherd, and in the end, he did indeed give up his life for the sheep—us.

- Jesus’ shepherd image assumes a bond of deep trust. Sheep cannot care for themselves. They **MUST** trust their shepherd for well-being and safety. How much of the hectic pace of our lives grows from our efforts to ensure that we and those we love are safe and have a chance to succeed? How can learning to trust that Jesus has already provided eternally for the security of all the people we love (including ourselves) help us learn to rest in him, to live less hectically and with greater peace?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for giving your life for me. I open my heart to you—transform my inner life, broaden my horizons, and shine out of me as I enter into your joy. Amen.

Family Activity: Cut out a cross from an 8½ x 11 inch piece of cardstock or poster board. Gather magazines, scissors and glue. Talk about the meaning of the cross and how it reminds us of Jesus' love for everyone in the world and that even though we don't know everyone's name, God knows each one of us by name. Cut out pictures of people from different ethnicities and cultures from the magazines. Include men, women, boys and girls, families of different types and a picture of your family. Glue the pictures on the cross. Commit to praying for the people in the pictures and the groups they represent. Pray for yourselves, too. Thank God for Jesus and for his incredible love for all people.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer

Prayers for Health & Healing: Kathy Goldstein

Prayers for Peace & Comfort for:

- Donna Karlen and family following the death of her sister-in-law Lin Karlen, 10/15
- Mike Golec and family following the death of his father Thomas Golec, 10/20
- Margaret Jansen and family following the death of her brother Rob McGregors, 10/16
- Jerry Hancock and family following the death of his brother Ronald Belton, 10/20
- Kay Hudson and family following the death of her mother Margaret Townsend, 10/14
- Ginny Howell and family following the death of her grandfather William "Harry" Offutt, 10/26