

## TAKING THE HIGH ROAD

### Doing What's Right Even When Life Treats You Wrong "How To Leave A Legacy Of Grace "

Genesis 48:1-4; 15-16

Several years ago there was an article that appeared in the *Reader's Digest* that was entitled "*If I Had My Life To Live Over—I'd Pick More Daisies.*" Are you familiar with it? It goes like this.

If I had my life to live over, I'd dare to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers.

I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely, hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had to do it over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day.

I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances, I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies.

I suppose there are a lot of things we would do different if we had our lives to live all over again, but the fact of the matter is we can't go back and live our lives all over again. All we have is today and the prospects of tomorrow.

We cannot change our past. We cannot go back and rewrite our personal histories. We cannot change what has happened and how we have lived and what we have done or not done. But what we do have is the present...and that's what I want to talk about this morning.

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Someone has said it like this: "*Yesterday is canceled check; tomorrow is a promissory note; today is the only cash you have—so spend it wisely.*"

The Bible puts it like this in **Isaiah 43:18**. "*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past*" (NIV). *Why?* Because you can't change it! All we have is today and tomorrow...and so that's what I want to focus upon as I conclude this series of sermons about the life of Joseph which I have entitled: **Taking The High Road—Doings What's Right Even When Life Treats You Wrong.**

Now here's what I want you to notice about Joseph's life.

Even though his family mistreated him and wronged him and sinned against him;

Even though society let him down and allowed him to become an innocent victim of human trafficking;

Even though he was treated badly at work, lied about, falsely accused, unfairly punished;

Even though his friends, people he had helped, abandoned him, forgot about him, deserted him when he needed them the most;

Even though bad things happened when he chose to do what was right;

Even though it seemed that even God had forsaken him and forgotten all about him and the dreams that had been planted in his heart;

**HE TOOK THE HIGH ROAD.** He did what was right. He did what was hard. He did what was honorable, what was godly, what was gracious...and God, in the end, not only blessed his life but used Joseph to bless his family and the people around him and his children's, children's, children's children.

He left a lasting legacy of grace...and that's what I want us to focus upon this morning – **How To Leave A Legacy Of Grace.**

There's a little cemetery in **Berlin, Wisconsin** where one man wanted to make sure that everyone remembered the most significant achievement of his life even after he was dead and gone. He had these words etched on his tombstone: "**Bowled 300 in 1962.**"

Now that's pretty significant. I've bowled before and I'm pretty happy if I break a hundred! *But is that really what he wanted to be remembered for?*

Let me put that very question to you. *What do you want to be remembered for when you're dead and gone? What do you want to leave in the hands of your children and your family and your friends and future generations? What do you want your legacy to be?*

Well, Joseph, because he took the high road through life, was able to leave a lasting legacy of grace. He is what is known as a **"type"** of Christ. When I was in college studying for the ministry, I took a class one time that was called **"Types and Shadows."** *Do you know what a "type" or a "shadow" is in the Bible?*

It is someone or something in the Old Testament that points to, prefigures, foreshadows someone or something that is going to occur in the New Testament. For instance, all of the Jewish sacrifices in the Old Testament—the Sin Offering, the Burnt Offering, the Peace Offering, the Wave Offering—were pointers, pictures, predictors, symbols, signs of that perfect sacrifice Jesus would make in the New Testament at Calvary.

The writer of **Hebrews** puts it like this: ***"Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people's bodies from ritual defilement. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our hearts from deeds that lead to death so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins"*** (Hebrews 9:13-14 NLT).

Well, Joseph is a "type" or a "shadow" of Jesus. Just think of some of the similarities. Joseph was rejected by his brothers. Jesus was rejected by His brothers. Joseph was sold, betrayed, for 20 shekels of silver. Jesus was sold, betrayed, for 30 pieces of silver.

Joseph was stripped of his richly ornamented robe of many colors and thrown into a pit to die. Jesus was stripped of His seamless robe and hung on a cross to die.

Joseph forgave the very ones who persecuted him. He said, ***"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives"*** (Genesis 50:20 NIV). Jesus forgave the very ones who persecuted Him. From the cross, He prayed, ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"*** (Luke 23:34 NIV).

What a legacy! To be a "type" of Christ and to bring blessing and honor and deliverance to your people! *Isn't that the kind of legacy you want to leave to your family and your friends and your children and your grandchildren and your grandchildren's grandchildren?*

*How do you do that? How do you leave a legacy of grace?* I believe the Bible shows us how to do that in the closing scenes of Joseph's life. Take your Bible and turn to the **48<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis, verse 1.**

**Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed.**

**Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.'"**

(Now skip over to verse 15.) **Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the Angel who has delivered me from all harm—may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth."** Genesis 48:1-4, 15-16 NIV

Jacob then blesses all of his sons and then we read these final words in the very last verse of that next chapter: ***"When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people"*** (Genesis 49:33 NIV).

I believe Joseph learned how to pass on his faith to his children by watching how his father passed on his faith to his children. Here's how

you do it—three incredibly important things we must do.

**Number One – Tell It.** Tell your story of faith to your children. Tell them what the Lord has done for you. Tell them how you came to know God as Savior and Lord. Tell them about those special times in your life when God dramatically answered your prayers.

Tell them about how you trusted Him even when you couldn't track Him and how that He has always been faithful. Tell them about your faith and let them know that they're not alone in life.

Isn't that what Jacob did? He told them his story. He reminded them of the covenant God had made with him and with his father and with his father's father. And then he reminded them, "***This covenant is also for you.***"

**Number Two – Live It.** Walk the talk. Children learn by what they see. They imitate and emulate that which is lived out before them. They try to balance what they hear and what they see.

Jacob spoke out of his own experience. He not only talked the talk, he walked the walk. He said, "***The God who has been my shepherd...the Angel who has delivered me from all harm.***" You can't really lead someone to a place where you haven't been. You can tell them about it but you can't lead them there.

We create a legacy of faith and grace not by laying out some grand plan but by what we do every day. How we react. How we respond. How we handle situations. How we deal with stress. Where we go when we need help. *Do we turn to God or to something else?*

**Number Three – Show It.** The last thing a child needs or a friend needs is a "closet" Christian. Your faith needs to be out in the open, visible, obvious, detectable.

Several years ago, my son gave me a book entitled, "***Jesus Freaks.***" It was written, compiled, by the contemporary Christian singing group, **D.C. Talk.** You know, that's what our families need. That's what this church needs. That's what this community needs - people

who are open with sharing what is really important to them—their Christian faith. **Phil Jackson**, the Hall of Fame basketball coach, has no trouble talking about Buddha. Why should we have trouble opening expressing our Christian faith?

So here is a special opportunity this morning for you and for me to openly express our faith in Jesus by participating in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. You're not just saying something to God through this act – you are saying something to your family and your friends and the world.

Jacob wasn't a perfect man. He made a lot of mistakes in life. He messed up royally, at times. But there came that point in his life where he left the past to the past and became a new man with a new name who was able to leave a lasting legacy of faith and grace to his children.

No matter where you're at in this journey, here is your opportunity to openly express your faith in Jesus Christ.