

Genesis 46:8-47:12 — Attitude

November 20, 2016

Welcome to CrossWinds. As a church, on both of our campuses, we are studying Genesis. For the last few weeks, we followed the story of Joseph. We saw the rough beginnings of Joseph's life. He was sold into slavery and falsely accused of rape, which landed him in a dungeon. We also saw his God-orchestrated rise to power to become second-most powerful man in Egypt and the ancient world. God took him from the dungeon to the throne room in one day. Most recently, we saw Joseph's testing of his brothers and how he finally revealed his identity to them and they wept together as the relationship between him and his brothers began to mend.

Last week, we saw how Pharaoh reacted to Joseph's brothers coming to town. He was thrilled to bless Joseph's brothers because he wanted to bless Joseph. Pharaoh was so thrilled with Joseph that he wanted to bless Joseph's family. In a similar way, just as Joseph's brothers were blessed beyond their wildest dreams in ways they never deserved because of Joseph's good work to save lives, as Christians, we also are blessed beyond our wildest dreams for all of eternity in ways we never deserve because of our brother Jesus and his good work to conquer Satan, sin and death.

This week — as we pick up the story — Joseph's family comes to town. This study seems strangely appropriate with Thanksgiving this week. Our crazy relatives are also coming to town for the holidays. The good news is that our relatives go home in a week. For Joseph, his relatives were there to stay.

As we dive into our text, we are immediately met with a page from the Hebrew phone book. Unless you are a genealogist or a Mormon, these names are extremely boring and something most of us are happy to skip. I am going to read the names and show you how this list of names applies to us. By the way, go easy on me because my Hebrew is a little rusty. All the pregnant ladies, take good notes if you are looking for a unique biblical baby name because we have a bunch.

Now these are the names of the descendants of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan); and the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Yob, and Shimron. The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, together with his daughter Dinah; altogether his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three. The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, with Serah their sister. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob—sixteen persons. The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin. And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera the priest of On, bore to him. And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob—fourteen persons in all. The son of Dan: Hushim. The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob—seven persons in all. All the persons belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who were his own descendants, not including Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all. And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two. All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy. Genesis 46:8–27 (ESV)

For all the trivia buffs, who was the least fruitful? Dan. He only had one son. Do you remember who was the most fruitful? Benjamin, the baby in the family, was very busy. He had 10 kids. Apparently he read the earlier part of

Genesis where it talks about “being fruitful and multiplying” and made that his life verse.

The way the list is organized is by Jacob’s four wives. Remember that he didn’t want four wives. We also don’t recommend four wives. He only wanted one but was tricked into two when Laban slipped the ugly older sister into the bridal chamber on his wedding night and he woke up to the surprise of his life. Jacob served Laban an extra seven years to get Rachel — the wife he originally wanted. These sisters had a battle to see who could have more kids and be the favored wife. To help win, each of them gave their maidservants to Jacob in marriage so their side of the family would pump out more kids than the other sister’s side of the family. Jacob found himself living with four women that were all desperate to bear his children. As a result, he had a house full of kids.

Let’s break these verses apart so you can see them visually. That will make things clear.

Reuben	Simon	Levi	Judah	Isachar	Zebulun
Harod	Jemuel	Gershon	Eli	Tola	Seraf
Phallu	Jemim	Kulath	Ozan	Phenah	Elen
Hizzon	Onad	Merari	Shelah	Job	Jarkeel
Canan	Joshin		Pharez	Shimon	
	Zamar		Zarah		
	Saul				

Here are Leah’s sons and their families.

Next came the kids of Gad and Asher, Leah’s servant.

Gad	Asher
Ziphion	Jinnah
Haggi	Imnah
Rouni	Isul
Echor	Dorah
Eli	
Aunli	
Avdi	
Joseph	Benjamin
Manasseh	Manasseh
Issachar	Issachar
	Asriel
	Osia
	Reuben
	Eli
	Hosh
	Phappi
	...
Gad	Isachar
Ilushim	Valued
	Guni
	Joad
	Shimon

Next came the two sons of Rachel and their kids.

Finally, came the two sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s servant.

Why are these names important? They represent real people — people like you and me. Abraham and Sarah had only one child at the end of life. Isaac

had two children. Jacob has a dozen of his own kids plus his kids were now having lots of kids. If you throw in the wives you have more than 100 people going to Egypt, and they were all over Jacob's house for thanksgiving. That is a big family! For years God's chosen people were just a handful of people on the planet. Then they were up to 100. In the following 400 years —when they came out of Egypt — they had multiplied to several million. Think of this from Jacob's perspective. He went from one man following God to a nation following God because his wives had lots of kids and his kids had lots of kids. They went from nothing to a nation because God blessed them with a big family. This wasn't just kids but this was influence for Jesus. Jacob and his wives taught their kids about the things of God. His kids taught their kids about the things of God. In 400 years, there was an entire nation of people following God and telling other people about the one true God of the universe. It all began with Jacob's family having a lot of kids. All these kids had a huge influence on the world.

I say this because I want to encourage young families. Mom and Dad, you are not just having kids. You are raising the church for the next generation. You are changing the future. Mom, when you teach your kids Bible stories, those are the foundations of your kids faith. Your kids start out as children on your lap but they end up as the leaders of the church of the next generation. They end up as pastors and missionaries and elders and ministry leaders. They end up leading other people to Christ that you would never. Mom and Dad, you are changing the world having and raising kids that love Jesus. Today, one or two kids is considered enough because anything beyond that cramps your retirement. What

matters? Cramping your life or having a bigger influence for Christ on the next generation?

We were just talking about this at home. I am an only child and so is my wife. The holidays were usually small events in our house. Cindy and I decided to expand things. We have three children. We also have my father living with us. Our dining room table is already too small. It only seats six. What happens when David and Daniel marry and have kids? What happens when Deanna marries and becomes a mother? We either need to get a larger dining room table or we need to have Thanksgiving in the garage with fold up chairs. My hope and prayer is my kids marry godly spouses and raise Christ-loving children, and someday when I am old I can sit back and see all the places in the community and the world where my children and my grandchildren are having an influence for Christ, and Cindy and I can say, "What a blessing to have a long list of names and so much influence for Jesus in this world." We will be old and wrinkled but filled with joy as we see our children and grandchildren go places Cindy and I could never go and meet people Cindy and I could never meet and tell more people about Jesus than we ever could on our own.

I look at this list of 70 people two generations in from Jacob following the true God of the universe and I hope and pray there is also a long list of names two generations in from my name of children and grandchildren following Christ. Young families, don't be afraid of having kids and leaving a huge footprint for Christ in the future. The more kids we have, the more influence for Christ in the future our children will enjoy.

He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to show the way before him in Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen. Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive." Genesis 46:28–30 (ESV)

This moment is often underplayed. Imagine you were Jacob. You had the funeral for your son 22 years before. You buried a coffin that was empty because they never found the body. No parent should have to bury his or her child. Now imagine your son is alive and second in charge of the most powerful nation on earth. Can you imagine the swing in emotions and the anticipation of this moment that Jacob felt?

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes. You were taken away from the father you loved. You and your dad were close. Your dad was your best friend. Now you find out your father is old. He won't live much longer but he is still alive. He is coming to see you. Can you imagine that moment? What would you say? I don't know what I would say. In the text, it doesn't tell us they said much of anything. They just cried.

It is such an emotional moment. I love when Jacob finally spoke and he said, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know you are still alive. Today is a good day to die," he said. "My dreams are complete. My hopes are restored. If you have to die, now would be a good time to go. If I died, I would die happy. They couldn't wipe the smile off my face. Seeing my son alive and ruling over the world and saving the lives of millions. I can't think of a better ending."

I wanted to point something out for you. Jacob didn't always feel this way. In fact, for the last 22 years, he felt the exact opposite. In Genesis 37, after

Joseph never came home from helping his brothers because he was sold into slavery, we saw that Jacob refused to be comforted. He never moved beyond the grief. In Genesis 42, when the brothers needed to bring Benjamin with them to Egypt to get any more food, Jacob refused to let Benjamin go because he was so afraid of losing him like Joseph. He brought the entire family to the brink of starvation because he was still in mourning over the loss of Joseph. For 22 years Jacob was not just convinced Joseph was dead but he was convinced all hope was dead.

I think this is instructive for us. It is easy for us to look at a situation and see it as hopeless. This is often why people commit suicide. They see no hope for the future. As we look at Jacob, we need to be reminded that no situation is hopeless, no matter how bad it looks. While we don't see a future, God sees a future. The one thing Jacob never expected to happen was to see Joseph. It wasn't even conceivable that Joseph was alive and ruling the world, yet that was the hope he could not see but God knew was there for him for 22 years.

If you are here this morning and you are discouraged, if you don't see hope for the future and you are like the Jacob of Genesis 37 and Genesis 42, you need to know all hope is not lost. Your hope is not in the future you can see which looks so bleak but in the future God knows. Remember our hope for the future is not found in our circumstances. Our hope is in our God who can turn around circumstances in ways we never imagined. There is no such thing as a future that is hopeless because our God holds the future.

Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were

in the land of Canaan, have come to me. And the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.' When Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians." So Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, "My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan. They are now in the land of Goshen." And from among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, as our fathers were." They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. And now, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen." Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them settle in the land of Goshen, and if you know any able men among them, put them in charge of my livestock." Genesis 46:31–47:6 (ESV)

Now Joseph has a problem. His family came to town but he knew what life was like in the city. Egypt was a place that was far from God. It was a place that could easily influence his brothers and their children. Joseph knew the best thing was for them to live next to Egypt but not in the city of Egypt. Joseph set things up for his brothers to talk with Pharaoh. He coached his brothers on what to say. He told them to make sure they told Pharaoh they came from a long-line of animal lovers. They had their cats, dogs, sheep, goats, and pet worms with them. They were not looking to move into Egypt. They were only looking for grazing land that was part of Egypt. They were already in the land of Goshen, which was vacant and it was the best grazing land in Egypt. It wouldn't be a bad idea if they stayed there. Goshen was the land just outside of Egypt proper. It was great agriculturally. It had the Nile River on one side. It was the perfect place for grazing flocks. In Canaan, the animals were skinny and starving. In Goshen, they would be fat and happy.

Joseph selected only five of his brothers to talk to Pharaoh. I don't know why he only took five. I suspect he selected the brothers that were the most red-neck in the group. Joseph probably told Reuben to wear his coveralls. He wanted him wearing the coveralls that had the nasty stain in the front that wouldn't come out in the laundry. He probably also told Reuben to make sure he didn't wear a shirt with the coveralls, just like he did at home. When it came to Simeon he told him to talk with Pharaoh and keep that annoying piece of straw in the corner of his mouth the whole time, just like he did back home. It was his trademark. Joseph probably told Gad to wear his cowboy boots and the belt buckle that was the size of a dinner plate. This way it would be clear to Pharaoh that Joseph's brothers were incurable country boys and they would never fit in the city.

I love the way Pharaoh handled this. He gave Joseph the green light to settle settle his family in Goshen and even offered to put some of Joseph's brothers in charge of Pharaoh's animals.

Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?" And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning." And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh. Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their dependents. Genesis 47:7–12 (ESV)

Finally, on a day that was convenient, Joseph brought in his father to see Pharaoh. Jacob, who was the head of this huge family, and Pharaoh, who was the head of the most powerful nation in the world finally met. I love the way

Pharaoh started the conversation. “How old are you?” Apparently Jacob looked his age. I picture Jacob looking like Yoda from Star Wars as he leaned on his staff. Jacob said, “I am only 130. My forefathers lived a lot longer.” That is true. Isaac lived to 180. Abraham lived to 175. Jacob was not dead but he looked like Yoda, which meant he looked almost dead. The good news is Jacob would live for another 17 years.

I want to camp on one little piece of the text for a few minutes. When Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he is, he said, “I am 130. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life.” Reading that, it struck me that Jacob sounds like a complete pessimist.

Was it true that his life was hard? In some ways, yes. Remember he had to run for his life after he stole the birthright and the blessing from his brother. It is also true he had his bride switched to a different woman on his wedding night. That will scar most young men for life. It was also true that Laban, his father-in-law, kept cheating him out of his wages. For a while he worked for a crooked employer. His favorite wife also died in childbirth. His favored son was presumed dead for 22 years. In some ways he was right. His life was difficult.

The problem is that was only part of the story.

Didn't God also bless Jacob in amazing ways? Every time Laban, his father-in-law, cheated him, God intervened and Jacob became richer, not poorer. Didn't Jacob get the wife he loved only one week after completing the wedding week with Leah? While his father and grandfather had only one then two children, Jacob had a huge family of more than 100. He was a blessed patriarch.

The son he loved turned out not to be dead but was alive and ruling the world. It sounds to me like he was blessed more than he realized. The sons that walked away from home and married Canaanite women repented and were back in the family — that was Judah and Simeon. All of his kids were walking with God. That counts big time when you have a dozen kids. While the rest of the world was starving, his family was relocated to Goshen, the best pastureland in all of Egypt. While the rest of the world had no food, Joseph was providing them with food.

I understand why Jacob felt depressed because he had some rough bumps in his life. When we step back and look at it, he was ignoring all the many ways God was incredibly good and kind.

Then I realized that each of us can be just like Jacob. It is so easy to focus on everything that goes wrong in life, instead of seeing all the ways God is incredibly good, kind and loving toward us. While we have problems, look at all the good things God has given us. It is so easy to fixate on everything that has gone wrong that we forget to thank God for everything that goes right.

I want to take a few minute and look at this topic of thankfulness and a godly attitude. As Christians, what does the Bible say should be our attitude as we go through life?

Applications

1. My attitude shouldn't rest on my circumstances, it needs to rest of God's love and faithfulness.

I love sports, wrestling in particular. For you, it may be football or baseball that you enjoy on the weekend. If I am into the wrestling match, especially if it is one of my children, I am ecstatic when he wins and in the dumps when he loses.

It is part of the game. It is natural to have your emotions go up and down based on who wins the game. The Bible tells us that this is the way the world works. Everyone's attitude is based on his or her circumstances. As Christians, we are not to rest our attitude on our circumstances but on God and how he feels about us, which is more important than our circumstances.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 100:4–5 (ESV)

When we come to church, we are to come filled with thanksgiving and praising God. Why are we to have thankful hearts in church? Why do we sing upbeat praise and worship music even if your week was rotten? As Christians, our attitude does not come from our circumstances. At church we are celebrating that God is good and he is faithful. He loves us and will not leave us no matter what happens in life. If our circumstances change for the worse, God's love and faithfulness to us will never change for the worse. That is something to sing about!

So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:6 (ESV)

I love this verse. When people undermine us, when they lie about us, when they try to ruin our lives, don't lose hope. Don't get depressed. If God is our helper, that is all that matters. People can do nothing more to us than God will allow. People can't ruin our future. God determines our future. People don't determine your future. Some of you were deeply hurt when a spouse cheated on you or left you. Some of you lost a job you love. Don't lose hope. God is in charge. He is still on the throne. What can man do to you? God can take care of

it no matter how hopeless the future looks. As we walk with God, don't place your attitude in your circumstances. Place your attitude in God's faithful and underserved love for you and me.

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." Lamentations 3:21–24 (ESV)

We need to look at the context of these verses. The book of Lamentations is about the grief of the nation after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is a funeral eulogy that graphically depicts the sorrow and suffering in the destruction of the city.

What makes it so special is that even though God's people were unfaithful to him so God sent another nation to conquer them, while they were unfaithful to God, God's love for them was still faithful to them, even in the midst of God's discipline. Every morning God would give them a new day and new mercy. Those God had broken, he would heal. The theme is the same. If your attitude comes from your circumstances, you will be depressed. If your attitude comes from God, there is hope.

This week, if you are in a hard time, take your attitude off your circumstances and base your attitude on the faithfulness of God and his love for you. That is the only way to be a man or woman full of joy in spite of our circumstances.

2. An attitude of grumbling tarnishes my witness.

One of the best ways to open the door to talk about Jesus is simply to have a great attitude in life. Life is tough for all of us, but a positive attitude is like

a breath of fresh air in the room. I love how the Bible tells us that as Christians, our attitude is to make us stand out from other people. While other people are depressed and negative, as Christians, we are to be positive.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Philippians 2:14–16 (ESV)

Paul's simple point was we live in a world of grumblers. Look at the news == everybody is whining about something. They are protesting and rioting, especially when their candidate loses an election. Newsflash! Nobody wants to be around a grumbler. Grumblers suck the life right out of you. Nobody wants to be around people that are argumentative and difficult to work with. Will you get your way if you are a grumbling argumentative person? Many times people will let grumblers have their way. The problem is that while you get your way you lose your witness. People give you your way to shut you up, not because they admire you and want to be like you.

Paul said that God's plan is that we would not be known for grumbling and whining. Our attitude in this world is to be different. We are to stand out in the world like stars stand out in the night sky because our attitude is positive and people notice the difference right away. Where does our different attitude come from? It comes from knowing God loves us and will never leave us, even if our circumstances are not easy.

3. An attitude of grumbling can lead to God's judgment.

That sounds harsh. You say, "Pastor Kurt, are you telling me that God sometimes judges people because they have a bad attitude?" Yes! In the Old Testament book of Numbers, we see that God's people were taken out of Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land. They forgot how they were slaves in Egypt and were forced to throw their children into the Nile River. They forgot how bad life was in Egypt when God rescued them.

All they could think of was the inconveniences of life in the wilderness. They grumbled against Moses as their leader. They grumbled that all they had was manna to eat. Each morning the miracle of manna was on the ground as a gift from God. Rather than being thankful that God provided their daily bread, they whined because they wanted more variety in types of bread. Instead of being grateful for what they did have, they grumbled and whined about what they didn't have. As a result, God judged them multiple times for their bad attitude and even killed many of them.

Look what Paul said in 1 Corinthians about this.

...nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 1 Corinthians 10:10–11 (ESV)

When God's people turned into grumblers, God sent his destroying angel and actually killed the grumblers because of their attitude of ingratitude. Paul said this is instructive for us. God's anger burns when his people become ungrateful grumblers instead of thankful people.

Am I saying God will kill us for a bad attitude? No. The simple point is our attitude matters. Grumbling does not please God.

4. An attitude of gratefulness in all circumstances is God's will for us in Christ.

...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)

It can't be much clearer. As Christians, even when life is hard, God's desire is that we constantly have an attitude of thankfulness in all of our circumstances. This is the way everyone knows we are different. Everyone else in the world has an attitude based on his or her circumstances. For us, it is based on our God who loves us and who can turn things around, just like he did for Jacob.

...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... Ephesians 5:20 (ESV)

Life can be hard, very hard. The good news is that God is good. His faithfulness never ceases. His love for us is new every morning. Our attitude doesn't rest on our circumstances, which are always changing, but on God's faithful love for us, which will never let us go.

This week, my challenge is to rid our lips of grumbling, complaining and whining and to replace it with thankfulness, in spite of our circumstances, so that we shine like stars in the universe. Do you think you can do that? Could you make an entire week without grumbling, whining or complaining but being thankful to God even when life is hard?

As I close, if this will be especially challenging for you, I encourage you to cement this challenge in your mind by writing one word on your comment card. It

is the word, “Attitude.” When I read your comment card, I will take the time to pray for you this week asking that God will help give you an attitude of gratefulness that is found in his faithful love for us, not in our circumstances.



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