

Joseph Digging Deeper Week 1

Our study of Joseph this week kicked off with a lot of genealogical information. It is important for us to understand where Joseph came from – his family heritage in order to better understand him. Joseph came from the line of the patriarchs with Abraham being his great grandfather, Isaac being his grandfather and Jacob being his father. While it is important to note his family heritage as it certainly has an impact on his life, we need to keep in mind that one's heritage doesn't define him.

Because Joseph came from the line of the patriarchs one thing was very clear – God made a covenant with Abraham and He continued to be faithful to that covenant even when His people were not faithful. Let's revisit a verse we looked at in the teaching.

2 Kings 13:23 But the Lord was gracious to them (the descendants of Israel) and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now.

This verse comes from the time of King Jehoahaz who was the eleventh king of Israel and there were 8 more kings that followed him. The time from Abraham to Jehoahaz is about 1356 years. That is an incredible amount of time for the Lord to remain faithful and yet, He is faithful way beyond this time frame. One lesson we take from this is that the Lord is faithful even when we, His people are not.

Can you recall a time when the Lord was faithful in the midst of your disobedience and unfaithfulness? Record it and write a prayer of thanks. If you are facing something challenging right now, praise Him in the midst of your challenge because He IS FAITHFUL!

Abraham and Sarah were Joseph's great grandparents. You might recall that God told Abraham he would be the father of nations but in his old age, he and Sarah had still not conceived a child so they took matters into their own hands.

Genesis 16:1-4 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. ² And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³ So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. ⁴ And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.

In his commentary on Genesis, Warren Wiersbe has this to say, "Remember, true faith is based on the Word of God (Romans 10:17) and not on the wisdom of man (Proverbs 3:5-6), because faith is living without scheming." Take some time to think about that – that faith is living without scheming.

Examine your life and your circumstances. Are you living that kind of faith or are you scheming, manipulating or taking matters into your own hands with the circumstances in your life right now? Record your thoughts and if the Lord reveals areas where you are scheming, manipulating or taking matters into your own hands, confess it, repent and seek His forgiveness.

Warren Wiersbe goes on to say, "Abraham and Sarah were not willing to wait on the Lord but rushed ahead with their own plans. They acted only to please themselves and not to glorify God. They were not obeying the Word and what they did certainly did not bring joy and peace to their hearts and home." What about your heart and your home? Are you experiencing joy and peace? If not, could it be because you are not waiting on the Lord but have instead rushed ahead with your own plans? Are you acting to please yourself or to glorify God? Are you obeying the Word of the Lord? Record your thoughts and write your prayer to the Lord.

Abraham and Sarah had to wait a long time for the fulfillment of God's promise of a child. Abraham was 75 at the time of the promise (Genesis 15:4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.") and he was 100 when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.).

Imagine waiting 25 years for the promise to come to fruition. That is a lot of waiting. As I shared in the teaching, Louie Giglio says, "If you're waiting with God, waiting is okay. If you're always waiting on God, you'll be frustrated." Does this change your perspective at all – the fact that while you are waiting you are waiting not alone, but with God?

The fact is that we do have to wait on God but we do not have to do it alone and when we do wait on the Lord, He is good to us. (Lamentations 3:25 The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.) If you are in a season of waiting there are a couple of things I want you to know. First of, all waiting is hard but not impossible because you aren't doing it alone – ask the Holy Spirit to give you the patience to wait and to wait well – without frustration or complaining. Second of all, there is always something for us in the waiting. Sometimes the Lord is working behind the scenes to change someone else's heart or to put circumstances in place. Lastly, when we wait we build our dependence on the Lord.

Share a time when you have had to wait and what that looked like for you – how did you wait, did you wait with Him or simply on Him? If you are in a season of waiting ask the Lord what He has for

you in the waiting, are their lessons for you to learn, character that He is trying to develop in you or perhaps is He trying to increase your dependence upon Him?

I want to take a bit of a bunny trail here but I think it will be worth it. Let's look for a minute at Hagar and how things played out for her.

Genesis 16:5-6 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.

We know that Hagar looked on Sarai with contempt after becoming pregnant and now we see that Abram gave Sarai power over Hagar and Sarai misused that power by treating her harshly.

Have you every misused power and treated someone harshly or have you ever been treated harshly by someone else misusing their power over you?

Genesis 16:7-8 The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." ⁹ The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her."

Hagar responded to Sarai's harsh treatment by running away. Have you ever ran away from a situation? How did that work out for you?

The angel responds with, 'Return to your mistress and submit to her.' What a huge ask! Return and submit. How hard that must have been for Hagar. Notice that the angel of Lord did NOT allow Hagar to run away, the angel of the Lord did NOT fix her situation, nor did the angel say that things would improve – he simply said return and submit. I think there are times in our lives where we have fled from the Lord – when we have decided to do what we want and not what He wants us to do, times when we stray from worshipping Him, praying and studying His Word, times when we run away from what He is calling us to do. Has that ever happened to you? If so, what was the result? If during this pandemic season, you have drifted from the Lord, are you willing to return and submit?

Genesis 16:11-12 And the angel of the Lord said to her,
“Behold, you are pregnant
and shall bear a son.
You shall call his name Ishmael,
because the Lord has listened to your affliction.
¹² He shall be a wild donkey of a man,
his hand against everyone
and everyone's hand against him,
and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”

Don't you just love the fact that the angel of the Lord tells Hagar that the has listened to her affliction. Again, he doesn't say the Lord is going to remove the affliction or even improve the affliction but she is assured that he has listened to her. Isn't that what we so desperately crave – to be listened to? Don't we tell our spouses, sisters or friends about our challenges NOT for them to fix it or even solve our problem, but simply to be heard?

Look at the beautiful way Hagar responds to KNOWING that the Lord had heard her.

Genesis 16:13 (NIV) She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

We serve a God who sees us! There is nothing that happens in your life that is out of the eyesight of the Lord. He sees and He is right there with you. He has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell within us to be our constant companion, to lead, guide, teach, convict, comfort and transform us. He may not take you out of your struggle or even improve it but He sees you and He is with you! What does that mean to you?

Who do you know that needs to be reminded that the Lord God Almighty hears her and sees her? Ask the Lord to reveal to you who needs to hear that message today and then follow through by sharing it. Write down the person who needs to hear it and come back and write what happened when you shared it with them.

So far, we have established part of Joseph's heritage. It began with Abraham and Sarah having Isaac. Now we will follow the line of Isaac. Isaac married Rebekah and they were Joseph's grandparents and they had two children Esau and Jacob.

Genesis 25:21 ²¹ And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

It is interesting to note that both Sarah and Rebekah were barren until the Lord allowed them to conceive. Did you realize that infertility was part of the patriarch's story? Why do you think this may have been the case?

Along with the theme of infertility, the patriarchs have a theme of favoritism. There is no doubt that Ishmael was not treated the way that Isaac was and we will see favoritism play out between Esau and Jacob.

Genesis 25:28 Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Favoritism always causes conflict and strife and it is a sin to show favoritism.

James 2:9 (NIV) But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

Have you experienced favoritism in your family – whether you were the favorite or you were not the favorite? Have your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews accused you of having favorites? Ask the Lord to reveal any favoritism that you have or are currently showing. Seek forgiveness, repent and ask the Lord to help you treat those around you fairly and evenly.

We need to do a heart check on whether or not we show favoritism because it is not pleasing to the Lord and it creates conflict and division in families. In addition, if you have been on the short end of the favoritism stick, you need to be willing to forgive the person and not allow your hurt and anger to turn into bitterness and resentment. Have you been on the short end of the favoritism stick? Ask the Lord to heal your heart and help you forgive those who have treated you unfairly.

Let's review how Esau sold his birthright to Jacob.

Genesis 25:29-33 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. ³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) ³¹ Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." ³² Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" ³³ Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So, he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.

Jacob made a permanent decision based on temporary feeling. He was willing to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew. It certainly shows us that he was impulsive. Impulsivity and a desire for instant

gratification can be a challenge for all of us. Can you think of a time when you made a permanent decision based on a temporary feeling? How did it work out?

Joseph's father, Jacob, not only got the birthright from his older brother, Esau, he also got his blessing. Read Genesis 27. What all did Jacob do to deceive his father and get his brother's blessing?

What are some examples of Isaac questioning that Jacob was really Esau?

It is clear that Jacob went to great lengths to deceive his father in order to get Esau's blessing. Once you make the decision to lie or deceive someone, it often leads to more lies and manipulation. It's like the quote by Sir Walter Scott, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when we first practice to deceive." One lie leads to another because we need the second lie to cover up the first and the level of manipulation and deception just continues to increase. Is there a time when you have been lied to and manipulated?

Have you ever been the one to lie and manipulate someone else? If so, have you sought their forgiveness? Confess your dishonesty to the Lord and seek His forgiveness.

How does Esau respond to Jacob stealing his blessing?

After reading the full account of the lengths to which Jacob went to steal the blessing, it is easy to understand why Esau would want to kill Jacob. We are going to jump ahead in our narrative to the next time that Jacob and Esau meet. Can you remember from the teaching how fearful Jacob was when he returned to his home country with his wives, children and livestock and was going to be reunited with Esau?

Genesis 32:6-7 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.” ⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.

Jacob had good reason to be afraid and distressed. He knew that he had taken both Esau’s birthright and stolen his blessing and that Esau wanted to kill him. However, Esau did not respond the way Jacob anticipated.

Genesis 33:4 But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

So Jacob, upon hearing that Esau was approaching with 400 men feared his brother was coming to attack. From Jacob’s limited perspective, the situation looked really bad. In reality, Esau was thrilled to see his brother and had no ill intent. How often do we misinterpret things that we see or hear based on our limited perspective? Share a time when you viewed a person or a situation from one perspective only to learn that you were completely wrong – that your perspective was off?

If there is a situation or relationship that you are currently struggling with, take some time to seek the Lord and ask Him if your perspective is limited or perhaps it’s off. Record what the Lord reveals to you.

Back to our genealogy - Abraham and Sarah had Isaac, Isaac and Rebekah had Jacob and we will see that Jacob and Rachel had Joseph. We’ve finally made it to the point in the genealogy that will lead us to the birth of Jacob.

Jacob fell in love with Rachel and asked her father if he could marry her. Her father agreed if Jacob worked for him for seven years. By being willing to work for seven years to obtain Rachel as a wife, we learn that Jacob, unlike Esau was not all about instant gratification. He was willing to wait and to work for Rachel. Unfortunately after the seven years, Laban, Rachel’s father tricks Jacob by not presenting him with Rachel on their wedding night but rather with her older sister, Leah.

Genesis 29:25 And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?”

It’s pretty ironic that Jacob is accusing Laban of deceiving him. Now if this isn’t the pot calling the kettle black, I don’t know what is. Jacob is incensed that his father-in-law had the audacity to deceive him – yet Jacob had no qualms about deceiving Isaac.

While Jacob was married to Leah, he loved Rachel more than Leah. Once again we see the theme of favoritism popping up.

Genesis 29:30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.

Unfortunately for Leah, these were not easy years. Her husband loved her sister and now there was tension between her and her sister Rachel. Just as the Lord saw Hagar, the Lord saw Leah.

Genesis 29:31 When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

We're going to spend a little time looking at Leah's situation.

Genesis 29:32 And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, "Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me."

Leah recognized that the Lord saw her affliction and thought that giving Jacob a son would make him love her. Leah is not the only woman who thought that having a child would make her husband love her or thought that having a child would 'fix' her marriage. Unfortunately, it didn't do either for Leah. Do you know someone who had this same faulty thinking or perhaps you have thought it yourself? Do you know someone who was willing to do anything to get a guy or hang onto a relationship? If you know someone who is in that position, write a prayer for her. Reach out to her and be a source of encouragement and support.

While Leah recognized it was the Lord who gave her children, she did not recognize that her satisfaction could come from the Lord alone and that His love was enough for her. Each time she had a child she thought it would make Jacob love her or want to be closer to her.

Genesis 29:33-34 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. ³⁴ Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi.

Read Genesis 30:1-21. Isn't it heartbreaking to see how Rachel and Leah competed with each other to have Jacob's children and how they even gave him their maidservants so they could have children through them? Leah even 'bought' time with Jacob by selling Rachel her son's mandrakes. I can't begin to imagine how much turmoil they both must have been in and how much heartache Leah must have had by never being loved by Jacob and how much heartache Rachel must have had not being able to conceive a child and watching her sister and maidservants conceive.

Women are so hard on each other. We compete, we scheme, we criticize and judge one another. Think back to being in middle school or when your children were in junior high. I don't know of anyone who makes it through middle school and high school without experiencing a mean girl. Some of these mean girls turn into mean women. Share your experience with a mean girl or a mean woman.

Ladies, the minute we try to compete or compare ourselves to another woman we can be assured that we will be discontent. As followers of Jesus and daughters of the King of kings, we need to live as kingdom women. We need to build up our sisters and not tear them down. We need to be willing to straighten their crowns and not point out their faults. We need to encourage them rather than criticize them and we need to be willing to love them rather than judge them. Mother Teresa says, "If you judge people, you have no time to love them."

I don't need to ask if you have competed, compared, criticized, judged or celebrated another woman's failure because we all have. I want you to spend some time with the Lord and ask Him to reveal to you who and how you have done it. Record what He reveals. Then I want you to be bold and reach out to the woman or women He reveals to you and confess it and repent and seek their forgiveness. I know this is a huge ask and it is one that I am not just asking of you but one that I will be doing right along with you. Don't skip this and don't procrastinate it. Do it today. Let's make 2021 a year of women truly loving other women. Let's set a good example for our daughters, granddaughters and nieces. Let's teach the next generation how to cheer and not criticize, how to encourage and not discourage and how to love and not judge.

We will wrap up our lesson with the birth of Joseph.

Genesis 30:22-24 Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. ²³ She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." ²⁴ And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the Lord add to me another son!"

Heavenly Father, thank you for seeing us and for being faithful even when we are not. I pray, Lord, that you help us to wait not just on You but with You. Help us to have faith in You and Your timing and not take matters into our own hands. Give us the desire to love others well. Help us be women who truly love other women and help us raise up the next generation to do it better than we have. We love you Lord and desire to follow you wholeheartedly. Amen.