

Getting Settled Genesis 47:1-12

Apparently, meeting the head of state from another country is a pretty big deal. Months of planning goes into this one visit. It's not like meeting a friend at the corner café for a casual cup of coffee. As soon as the chief of protocol learns that a head of state will be arriving, plans begin. It's more than just planning schedules and meetings, they also research the do's and don'ts of how the person is to be greeted and what foods should or shouldn't be served. Some in this position read biographies about the head of state and catch up on current events. It is their job not to do anything that would offend the visiting dignitary.

I can think of only two people of some notoriety that I had the privilege of shaking hands with. One was Dr. Tony Evans and his wife. The other was Michelle Bachman. If it counts for anything, I did shake hands with another pastor who met Joe Montana and Sugar Ray Leonard. Oh, and I did get to be in the same room as Vice President Pence.

Last week Jacob was told by God not to be afraid of going down to Egypt because He would be with him. He has made the same promise to us when we are walking with Him. Did you find an occasion this past week where His abiding presence was most comforting and encouraging?

So Jacob and his family made their way to Egypt where there was an emotional meeting between father and son. We now find ourselves in **Genesis 47** where we will be looking at **verses 1-12**. It's time to meet their benefactor, Pharaoh himself. He had invited them to live in the land of Egypt because of the severity of the famine. From our passage I am drawn to a couple of questions to ponder. The first is in regard to Joseph's brothers. Why did Joseph only choose five and which five? What was it about them that they were chosen to meet the most powerful man in the world?

The second question is about Jacob's pilgrimage. We're all on a journey, so how should we walk the days of our lives especially during times of trial?

Our text begins with an official meeting.

I. AN OFFICIAL MEETING – vs. 1-6

In **verse 1** we see the report about their arrival.

A. The Report About Their Arrival – v. 1

There are a few instances in Scripture that speak of being in the presence of the head of State. In Esther no one entered into the king's presence without him extending the royal scepter. Without that invitation that was his last day. In Acts we read about King Agrippa and Bernice entering the audience room with great pomp while other high-ranking officials followed them as they prepared to hear Paul's defense on the reason of his imprisonment. Of course, we all know that when we enter into God's presence, we will all fall down in worship.

We aren't given much detail about what took place at this meeting with Pharaoh or what kind of fanfare was involved. Maybe I've watched too many movies where someone announces the guest by name before they are presented to the head of State. Whether or not there was someone with that responsibility is unclear. What is clear though, is that Joseph personally brought them into Pharaoh's presence. He made the introductions and told Pharaoh three things.

He first informed Pharaoh that his family had arrived in Egypt. It's as if he was reminding Pharaoh that he was the one who had invited them to live there and even though Joseph was second in command, he still needed Pharaoh's approval, especially since they were foreigners.

The second point of information was to let Pharaoh know that they had brought all their possessions with them including their flocks and herds. Now remember that Pharaoh told them they didn't need to bring a thing because the best of Egypt was being offered to them, but they still brought everything. But why did Pharaoh need to know that? It seems to be more information than someone in his position needed to know. We learned last week that Joseph gave specific instruction to tell Pharaoh their occupation. It was an intentional point to ensure

they would remain separated from the Egyptians in order to maintain their own identity. It would keep them from getting assimilated into Egyptian culture. In Canaan it was too easy for them to become like the people around them – live like them, worship like them, but not in Egypt. Several weeks ago we read in **Genesis 43:32** that Hebrews were detestable to Egyptians. Last week we learned from **46:34** that shepherds were detestable to Egyptians as well.

When I was a kid boys believed girls had cooties and girls believed the same about boys. For those of you who don't know, cooties is an imaginary germ that you caught just by touching a person you didn't like. You were safe as long as you had cootie protection written on you somewhere.

Being both Hebrews and shepherds was like Jacob and his family having double cooties, so there was a natural separation that would protect them from being assimilated into Egyptian culture.

The third piece of information Joseph spoke to Pharaoh about was where they were camped out. They were here, they brought all their possessions including livestock and they were in Goshen. Again, mentioning where they were was as if Joseph was reminding Pharaoh that he had promised them the best land Egypt had to offer. **Genesis 45:17-18** **““Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Tell your brothers, ‘Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.’””**

Joseph gave a report and informed Pharaoh of their arrival.

Then Joseph introduced Pharaoh to five brothers who represented the family.

B. The Representation Of Their Family – v. 2

A young man stood at a pay phone, plopped in a couple coins and dialed a number. A person standing nearby overheard the caller asking the person on the other end of the phone if he could use an honest, hard-working, capable employee? There

was a pause and then the caller was heard to say “No, you already have one? Well thanks anyway.” And then he hung up.

As he turned to leave he was smiling and whistling. The eavesdropper said he couldn't help but overhear the conversation and wondered why he wasn't upset that he had been turned down for a job, but instead seemed quite happy that he was rejected. The caller replied by saying he was that honest, hard-working, capable employee they already had. He was calling to check on his job.

How about you? What if you were that caller?

Why did Joseph select only five brothers and who were they? Two things are possible. The first is that all eleven brothers stood before Pharaoh and Joseph chose five to introduce to the king or second, he only brought five with him to present to Pharaoh. We are left to wonder. We are also left to wonder which five brothers he selected. He could have chosen the four sons of Leah and his brother Benjamin. I'm going to suggest three of the five. I think he chose Benjamin for obvious reasons. That was his full flesh and blood brother.

I think he chose Judah. I think that in the course of Joseph's interaction with them in their previous visits when they came to buy grain, Joseph began to see why Judah had risen as the spokesman for the family, especially when he pled with Joseph for the life of Benjamin. He saw the heart of someone who was truly willing to be a substitute in an effort to spare their father more grief and heartache.

I also think he chose Reuben. For all his weaknesses, it was clear from the first visit, that Reuben had attempted to spare Joseph from the other brothers when they sold him into slavery. But I'm only even guessing on these three.

What did Joseph see in the five he chose? We'll never know. I'm reminded of another occasion in which Samuel was directed to visit Jesse and select a new king. When he met the young men, Samuel sized them up and had varying reasons why this one or that one would be chosen, all of whom God had

rejected. He reminded Samuel that man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart (**I Samuel 16:7**). Did Joseph choose them for the appearance or for their character?

For a moment let's consider what kind of character traits these five brothers may have had that Joseph would select them to represent the family and present to Pharaoh. For that matter, what kind of character do we have that would warrant our being selected to represent say our family or our church or our community?

I did a Google search asking about the top positive qualities of an individual. Here's what I found.

1. Integrity
2. Honesty
3. Loyalty
4. Respectfulness
5. Responsibility
6. Humility
7. Compassion
8. Fairness
9. Forgiveness
10. Authenticity

They are all admirable qualities and if we did some digging in Scripture we could find them woven into the fabric of qualities that a godly person should possess. So let me suggest my own list from the Bible and hold them up to the mirror of my life and see if they are in me. You might do well to do likewise.

When it comes to the kinds of character we should possess, you can't go wrong with the fruit of the Spirit from **Galatians 5:22-23** "**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**"

If you want a barometer of godly character ask yourself how you are doing in these nine areas. Better yet ask some people who know you well who aren't afraid to give you honest feedback. But before you do, you may need to sit down. Do we love others as we should? Do we forgive, hold grudges, criticize, or belittle

anyone? If so, we have some work to do.

Do we exhibit joy even when stuff happens like being stuck in traffic, an unexpected bill or illness, a last minute assignment by the boss, an accident? Are there occasions when we are anxious instead of being at peace?

Do we show kindness to others?

You get the picture.

Did Joseph see the evidence of these characteristics in his brothers?

Let me suggest three character traits that Joseph may have seen in them, traits we would do well to develop. We could spend a month of Sundays and my list would by no means be complete. I think there is one character trait that is foundational on which all the others are built on or rooted in, including those listed in the fruit of the Spirit. They are traits we need to pursue and to practice.

Seek holiness – by that I mean endeavor or desire to live a godly life through a pursuit of loving God, knowing God and growing in God. Some great reads are J. I. Packter's Knowing God or The Knowledge of the Holy and The Pursuit of God both by A. W. Tozer and Jerry Bridges book The Pursuit of Holiness.

I Peter 1:15-16 "**But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'**"

We can't be holy unless we first understand what holiness is and that it is the nature of God. He is completely without sin, without any moral imperfection. He is holy in everything. He didn't get to be holy over time. He has always been holy. It is His nature.

God's instruction for us to be holy means that we be distinct from those around us by living in obedience to how God wants us to live. Those instructions on godly living are etched for us in the pages of Scripture. It's our guide, our manual, our policy book for daily life and living by those instructions produces godliness or holiness in our lives. If you don't read the manual, you can't know how to live. If you never use a map or GPS to get to a

destination you have never been to, you will never arrive. Paul tells us in **Romans 12:2** not to be conformed to the world but transformed by the Word. The transformation is the development of godliness or holiness through obedience to the Word of God. Read it and live it.

So in my opinion, seeking holiness or godliness is foundational to all the rest. Without this foundational character trait, the rest, in my opinion, are just a façade. We would be no different than the Pharisees who only wanted to get noticed by others and appear to be godly. Paul described it in **II Timothy 3:5** as “**having the form of godliness but denying its power.**”

That’s why I believe that a true pursuit of godliness is essential as a foundation on which the others are built. Seeking holiness will change your character. Otherwise, no matter how it’s sliced, it’s self-seeking aggrandizement. So seek holiness, not for yourself, but because you truly love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Serve lovingly – **Galatians 5:13** “**You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.**”

Several weeks ago Pastor Jim spoke from **Romans 12**. In that chapter we learn that our love must be sincere. Without love, we cannot serve lovingly. We’ll only think about ourselves. Without sincere love we can’t be devoted to one another. Without sincere love we won’t be hospitable. Without sincere love we won’t be forgiving. Without sincere love we won’t be kind, we won’t be patient, we’ll be envious, hold grudges, be critical and condescending. When sincere love is combined with humility we put others above ourselves.

When asked to do something, especially something not all that appealing, how is it done? Is there an attitude of sincere love in the serving or is it done half-heartedly with less than your best? We are to serve lovingly.

We could speak about other character traits that we

should exhibit like integrity, being above reproach, forgiving, trustworthy, and hospitable, but let me give you one more trait that is essential.

Stand humbly – **Micah 6:8** “**He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**”

Colossians 3:12 “**Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.**”

I Peter 5:6 tells us to be clothed with humility and that the humble will be exalted by God, while **James 4:6** says that God gives grace to the humble. It is the opposite of pride or being self-seeking and is described in the Bible as meekness (not weakness), lowliness and absence of self. Paul put it this way in **Philippians 2:3-4** that we put others before ourselves. The word literally means lowliness of mind, which essentially is an attitude of the heart, not just something we display outwardly. You can’t be humble and tell others about it. It’s something they witness because you don’t seek attention for yourself. Humility is an essential character trait of the person who would be godly.

We aren’t told who Joseph chose or why, but I think these may have been traits he wanted to highlight, traits that over the years and especially in the preceding months he had witnessed in the lives of his brothers who had matured in the 20 years since their last time together. Joseph picked five brothers to represent the family.

What is your character like? Would you have been selected to stand before Pharaoh?

In **verses 3-4** we see the request by the brothers.

C. The Request By The Brothers – vs. 3-4

Joseph had already instructed them on how to answer Pharaoh about their occupation because the topic was sure to come up. It was an effort to assess where they might fit into the Egyptian economy. He

was asking what skills they had and how they could use them to benefit Egypt.

They told Pharaoh that they had carried on the family business. They also told him that they had come because of the severity of the famine in Canaan and that their flocks needed pasture and that they didn't intend to stay long.

What they said next wasn't on the approved list of things to say. They went off script and didn't use the tell-a-prompter. Maybe Joseph cringed a little because the request wasn't theirs to ask, but the right of Pharaoh to give. We might even say that it was a bold request on their part, even though the best of the land had already been promised to them. So they waited for a verdict on their request. Maybe Pharaoh sized them up for a moment. Maybe he wondered if they were anything like Joseph. In **verses 5-6** we see the response given by Pharaoh.

D. The Response Given By Pharaoh – vs. 5-6

There were two directives.

One was about their settlement.

The other was about their serving.

Settle the family in the best of land, Goshen.

If any of them were really skilled at their work, let them be in charge of Pharaoh's flocks and herds.

Perhaps again, if Joseph was good at organization, maybe some of his brothers had similar ability.

It wasn't the same kind of promotion Joseph got, but it was a promotion to be in charge of Pharaoh's livestock.

Proverbs 22:29 “Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.”

Skill includes more than just ability for doing something. It's more than just hard work and devotion to your task at hand. It's even more than having an aptitude or mind to grapple with the responsibilities or the ability to cast a vision for how to get things done or expand a business. I think it also includes integrity and honesty and humility and a servant's heart.

They were given a tremendous opportunity as

foreigners to serve Pharaoh, to serve the people of Egypt. We aren't told if they took on that employment, but it was a great opportunity.

There was an official meeting followed by an offered greeting.

II. AN OFFERED GREETING – vs. 7-10

First of all we note the blessing given.

A. The Blessing That Is Given – v. 7

The dictionary defines blessing as the act or words of one that blesses or a thing conducive to happiness or welfare. The Hebrew has several words that are translated blessing. We see it used in **Psalms 1:1**. There it means happiness. A man is happy or blessed when he doesn't walk, stand, sit in the presence of the ungodly or follow their advice. On the other hand, he is happy or blessed when he meditates on and is delighted in God's Word.

The most common word for bless means to praise, congratulate, or salute. Some Bible translators prefer to translate this as merely a greeting between the two. In that culture it was customary to give a greeting of some kind at the beginning and then again at the end upon departing.

Pharaoh may have been the more powerful between the two, but Jacob showed his superiority because he is the one who gives the blessing. **Hebrews 7:7** says that the lesser is blessed by the greater. Pharaoh may have been seen by the world as the greater, but in God's eyes Jacob was the greater. He was a man walking with God. The more common word for blessing is used here. Jacob praised or congratulated Pharaoh for all that he had accomplished, maybe even praising him for how well Joseph was taken care of.

Henry Morris writes “A reading of the passage suggests that Pharaoh indeed sensed this, in Jacob's presence. He seemed subconsciously to recognize he was speaking to a man of unusual spiritual depth and perception, a man who had known and walked with God for many years.”

What ever this blessing included, a blessing always had some kind of prayer invoking God's favor. We might even wonder if such a prayer included the heart of this powerful man turn toward the living God. A blessing was given, but when asked so was some background.

B. The Background That Is Given – vs. 8-10

How does that old spiritual go?

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
 Nobody knows my sorrow
 Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
 Glory, Hallelujah

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
 Nobody knows but Jesus
 Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
 Glory, Hallelujah

Sometimes I'm up
 Sometimes I'm down
 Oh, yes, Lord
 Sometimes I'm almost to the ground

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That sums up Jacob's life. He's 130 years old and it's been filled with misery. He hadn't lived as long as his father or grandfather, but they didn't know the heartache he lived through. The trials had been difficult on him and taken its toll on his health. He likened his life to that of being a pilgrim. That's what life is for the follower of Christ, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. If heaven's not my home, then Lord what will I do?"
Hebrews 11:13-16

Jacob realized life wasn't a bed of roses and that he was just on a journey. He still had a ways to go and hadn't reached his final destination yet.

Can we relate to what Jacob is saying about life being filled with trouble?

James puts it all in perspective when he writes:
"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not

lacking anything." (1:3-4) (Emphasis added)

Paul adds in **Philippians 1:6** "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

It's never easy to look on the front side of trials and see their benefit. But looking back we can see how God used them to grow us. Jacob had a life of hardship, but looking back I think he could see God's hand masterfully guiding him to grow in faith. That's the process God uses to mature us. We are told to "**grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ**", but then Paul says he learned about grace when God gave him a thorn in the flesh, some trial in order to learn that when he was weak in himself he would learn and experience the strength of God through His sustaining grace.

Your pilgrimage may be few and filled with trouble, but they are maturing your faith.

Let's close by looking at a settling that is organized.

III.A SETTling THAT IS ORGANIZED – vs. 11-12

This includes property in the land and provision from the land.

A. Property in the land

B. Provision from the land

They were settled in what would become know as the region of Ramses, one of the future rulers of Egypt. It was known as the land of Zoan, situated on the east side of one of the tributaries of the Nile River in the norther region of Egypt. They were given land to settle in and then provisions for their family. Just because they were Joseph's kin, didn't afford them any greater privileges. They received the same portion based on family size as everyone else in Egypt. This was a segment of the land where they would be somewhat isolated from the rest of the Egyptian population.

In the middle of a famine, God was taking care of His people in a most unusual way. I'm reminded of Paul's words to the **Ephesians (3:20)** "Now to Him

who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

It's not based on any power we have.

It's not based on any merit we think have.

It's not who we think we are or what we think we have.

It's based on the power of God. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that will do more than we ask or imagine.

What kind of character are you developing? Is it a godly one that points people to Christ?

How do you view the pilgrimage you are on in this life? Do you see it as growing your faith?

When you meet with others, do you give them a blessing that reveals your relationship with God?

Do you see God's provision of your daily needs even in the most unexpected ways?

Communion offers a time for some introspection, some self-assessment.

It's also offers time to review God's provisions and give Him thanks, especially when we consider the reason we take communion – to remember the death, burial and resurrection of Christ until He returns.

Before we take communion, I'd like us to sing Hymn #319 "Near the Cross".