

Genesis 44-46 • Reunited at last!

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Chapter 44. We're getting close to the end of the Book of Genesis so open your Bibles please to Genesis, chapter 44.

My voice is a little bit scratchy tonight. I've had a cold for about the last 5 or 6 days, just getting over it. We're going to do our best though to get through 3 chapters tonight because this is the conclusion, essentially, not completely, but essentially to the drama that we've been watching play out for quite several chapters now. But let's go ahead and just open up in prayer and then we'll get into it here.

Father, we do thank you this evening for the opportunity to come together as the body of Christ. And it's always delightful to gather with my brothers and sisters in Jesus and I thank you for them. And I pray tonight that you would use this Word to minister to our hearts and allow this Word to really challenge and encourage us as we go through it.

We just surrender ourselves, Lord, to your Holy Spirit to speak to us words of grace and wisdom. We ask these things in Jesus name, amen. Amen

Just by way of review, you'll remember way back in chapter 37 of this book, we were told that the brothers of Joseph; the sons of Jacob, hated their brother Joseph so much that they eventually sold him into slavery. There were some Ishmaelite merchants who were passing through the area on their way to Egypt so they literally sold their brother.

At first they were going to kill him. They seriously were talking about murdering him just because of their hatred. And they were talked into just selling him and basically allowing their father to believe that their son had been torn to pieces by a wild animal. And, boy, I tell you, what a bunch of great guys. Anyway, chapter 38 deviated and gave us a little bit of information about Judah.

But then when we got into chapter 39, we started learning about Joseph's time in Egypt, where he began to work for a man by the name of Potiphar, who purchased him as essentially a servant slave. And yet Joseph, even though he was a godly man, was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, and as a result, Joseph was put into prison where he stayed for quite a long time.

In chapter 40, we learned that he interpreted the dreams of 2 other men who'd been thrown into prison with him. And in chapter 41 we learned that Joseph was called out of prison to interpret the Pharaoh's dream.

And the dream that God had given to Pharaoh was of a coming famine, which would be preceded by a time of great abundance. And that was given to the Pharaoh in various pictures in the dream.

And so Joseph not only interpreted the dream, but he also was made the governor of the land, second only to Pharaoh. And given the charge to put into place a program of holding back some of the grain during the years of abundance so that the people of Egypt wouldn't starve during the famine. And that all went on in chapter 41.

When we got to chapter 42, we learned that Jacob's brothers began to feel the effects of the famine all the way in the land of Canaan. And so they traveled to Egypt in order to buy some grain. Lo and behold, there was their brother selling grain, but they didn't recognize him because he looked very much like an Egyptian.

And we learned how Joseph began a series of tests to his brothers. Testing them in terms of whether they had changed, whether the years..., and there's been some 20 years now that has passed since Joseph was originally sold into slavery. Had his brothers changed?

Joseph treated them rather harshly in chapters 42 and 43, that they might come to terms with the guilt of their past and prove to be different men. And you'll remember that one of the things Joseph did is he challenged them.

First of all, he accused them of being spies, and then he said, listen, you bring your little brother back with you. I'll let you go home, take the grain to your families. But if you have a little brother, like you say you do, bring him back here to prove that you are who you say you are. And of course, there was a reason behind that.

Joseph wanted to learn if their jealousy toward his little brother, another son of Rachel was the same as the jealousy that had caused him to be sold into slavery so he tested them by their actions. And that's where we get in chapter 44. As we finished chapter 43, we saw that his brothers returned to Egypt with their brother Benjamin and Joseph was able to see them all and see that they were okay.

Chapter 44 begins here in verse 1 by saying, *“Then he commanded the steward of his house, ‘Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack, ² and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, (that’s Benjamin) with his money for the grain.’ (and it says) And he did as Joseph told him.” (ESV)*

Now I want you to notice what's going on here. Joseph commanded his household steward to not only give them their money back for the grain they came to purchase for their families, but to also put a special silver cup into Benjamin's sack so that it would appear that he stole it. And that's what he's doing. He's setting them up, but he's doing it for a very specific reason.

Why did he put the cup in Benjamin’s sack? Well, the reason is, he's testing his brother's concern for Benjamin. In other words, had they really truly changed? Because remember, 20 years earlier or so, they showed no concern for Joseph when he begged for his life. They showed no concern for their father when they allowed him to believe that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal, and now he's testing his brothers to see if they have any concern for Benjamin.

In verse 3, it says, *“As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys. ⁴ They had gone only a short distance from the city. Now Joseph said to his steward, ‘Up, follow after the men, and when you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil for good? ⁵ Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he practices divination? You have done evil in doing this.’”*

And he's referring to the silver cup. And by the way, I personally don't believe that Joseph did use the cup for divination. I think that Joseph is just playing the part of a pagan Egyptian ruler in order to be convincing to them. But those things were used by people, like reading tea leaves or something like that.

Anyway, verse 6 goes on and it says, *“When he overtook them, he spoke to them these words. ⁷ They said to him, ‘Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing! ⁸ Behold, the money that we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?”*

And listen, look what they say here in verse 9. *“Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die, and we also will be my lord's servants.”* I want you to notice that, all right? And then it says in verse 10 that the steward said,

“... *“Let it be as you say: (and he says, all right, fine) he who is found with it (meaning the silver cup) shall be my servant, and the rest of you shall be innocent.”*”

Now, notice what he's doing. The steward is giving them freedom, or an open door to just turn Benjamin over because they don't know yet that the cup is in Benjamin's sack. But he's giving them the freedom to just say well, we didn't know this was going on. I guess Benny here has got sticky fingers and he's going to have to go back with you but we're just going to head on home since you said the rest of us are innocent. See, they're just given an opportunity here to show their colors. Have their colors changed? Let's check it out.

Verse 11. *“Then each man quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. ¹² And he searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest. (and guess what? of course) And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.”*

Now I want you to notice their reaction here, because they're not going to sell their brother down the river as it were. It says in verse 13, *“Then they tore their clothes, and every man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.”*

Now, guys, do you hear, do you see what's going on? They were given the freedom to just go on their way. They could have just gone on their way. The steward said, whoever has the cup, that's the one who will come back with me to be a servant of my master forever. The rest of you are innocent, and that means you can go home, right?

But yet what we see is that even though they were innocent, or at least it's shown here that they were innocent, they chose to return with Benjamin, to go back with him, to escort him back into Egypt and to stand with him, and this is a good sign, right?

Joseph is going to be watching this very carefully. He's not done testing them. But let's just say that their stock portfolio rose a little bit in Joseph's eyes in this particular situation or response.

Verse 14, *“When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground. ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, “What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?” ¹⁶ And Judah said, “What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? (listen to what he says here)*

God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found.”

I love this. I love this because this is the sign of a changed life. These guys are not going to just let Benjamin take the rap for this thing, although they were free to do and they could have gotten off scot free. And yet, I want you to see here, that in this latter part of verse 16, not only does Judah say, God has found us guilty but he also says, we will join Benjamin.

If Benjamin is going to be your servant for life, then we're going to stand with him. We will serve with him for the rest of our lives and that's what they're willing to do. They're literally willing to surrender themselves in support of their brother. I just think this is pretty amazing.

Now, you'll notice that Joseph gives them another out. In verse 17, *“But he said, “Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, (look at this) go up in peace to your father.”*

He's still testing them. He's giving them another opportunity. No, you guys, listen, if you want to be free, you can be free. Turn and leave now. You can go. You're fine. Just leave, Benjamin will stay.

And *“¹⁸ Then Judah went up to him and said, “Oh, my lord, (and you got to hear this, just the passion in his voice) please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself.*

¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father, or a brother?’ ²⁰ And we said to my lord, ‘We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.’

²¹ Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.’ ²² We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’ ²³ Then you said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.’

²⁴ “When we went back to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. ²⁵ And when our father said, ‘Go again, buy us a little food,’ ²⁶ we said, ‘We cannot go down. If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go

down. For we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' ²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. ²⁸ One left me, and I said, "Surely he has been torn to pieces," and I have never seen him since. ²⁹ If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.'" In other words, you will bring my grey hair down to the grave.

³⁰ "Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, ³¹ as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol.

³² For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, (he's talking about himself here. Judah is referring to himself, when he says, *your servant*, he's) saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.' ³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.

³⁴ For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."

Isn't that powerful? Isn't that just impassioned? I mean, not only does Judah just intercede for his brother's safety, he offers himself. He says, if you're willing to let these guys go, then let them all go and keep me instead. But whatever you don't keep Benjamin because if you do, our father will die. He will die of a broken heart. Would you say that these men have changed? Yeah.

Chapter 45. "Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it."

I read that verse and I thought, wow, either Joseph was a really loud crier or it means that the word of all this reached Pharaoh's house.

I'm not exactly sure which it is, but it says, verse 3, "And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence."

That's an interesting phrase, isn't it? "...*they were dismayed at his presence.*" The NIV and the New American Standard Bible (NASB) both say, "*they were terrified at,*" "*or in his presence.*" They were literally in shock about this thing.

It says, "*4 So Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come near to me, please.' And they came near. And he said, 'I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.'*"

He tells them that this is what's been going on. But what I really want you to pay attention to, is what we see here in the following verses, because I want you to see, and guys, please don't miss this.

I want you to hear how Joseph articulates his perspective, his renewed perspective about why he came to Egypt, because we know the story. It began with some bad choices on Joseph's part of saying things to his brothers. Their response of hatred, and jealousy, and bitterness, and murder. Finally selling him to these Ishmaelites into the slave trade. He then is sold to a man named Potiphar.

We know what happened and it's easy to dwell on the simple facts, this is what happened. But as we keep reading here, I want you to hear this renewed perspective that Joseph has on these things.

Look at verse 7, "*And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.*" Pause there please. This is so important. This is so important.

How long do you suppose it took...? Remember, this has been 20 plus years. How long do you think it took for Joseph to come to the realization that all of his circumstances, the ones we are very aware of, from reading the previous chapters, that they were part of a larger plan to save his own people. How long do you think it maybe came for him, for all that to be made clear? Probably a long time.

There was plenty of time to get bitter, to get angry. This didn't work out the way I wanted. We know that he went to prison for being a godly man. He was falsely accused for being a godly man. We know that. Boy, when you're living the way

you know you should, and then the bottom still falls out, that's tough to take. That's hard to take. Been living for Jesus, lost my job. Been living for Jesus, got in a wreck, my car's total. I can't afford to fix it. Insurance isn't going to do a thing. Been living for Jesus. My spouse left me. Been living for Jesus, got fired, got let go at my job and boy, those are hard things to take.

And the natural response when people go through those kinds of difficulties is to get angry and to get angry at God, frankly. Because we try to make sense of it and it doesn't work. We look at what's happening in our lives and we try our best to make sense of what's happening.

Can you imagine Joseph sitting in a prison for years trying to make sense of how he got where he was? A family that hates you so much, that they're willing to sell you into slavery. I'm trying to live for the Lord, here I am in prison. Thank you God. If this is the way you treat your children, I hate to see how you treat your enemies

Then it just spirals from there. Living for Jesus and I go to the doctor and I get some pretty bad news. What's up with this? And so we try to make sense of it and we become bitter and angry when it doesn't make sense. Because in our arrogance, we assume it ought to, we ought to be able to figure it all out.

I've had so many people say to me in the midst of the difficulty of their trials, if God would just show me why this had to happen. Now, there are times when, God can reveal some things like He did here to Joseph. And he realized that his life was part of a bigger plan. But can I tell you, more often you don't get that kind of revelation. More often, that insight doesn't come.

Here's the question. Are you going to still get bitter? Because we forget what the Bible says. We say to God, just tell me, why did this have to happen? And we forget what the Word of God even says related to the plans of God. I've shared this passage with you so many times, most of you should have it memorized. Put it up on the screen for you. It's Isaiah, you know it, chapter 55. God's speaking here. He says,

Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. (and He says) For as the heavens are higher than the

earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

I mean, that's just God's way of saying, don't even try. The question here is, if God chooses not to reveal, on this side of glory... I have a confidence that there is going to be a greater understanding when we advance on the other side of the veil, as it were, when we're with the Lord in His never removed presence.

I truly believe that there's going to come an understanding because Paul tells us that. When the perfection comes, he says, then I will know, as I am now known. (1 Corinthians 13:12) We're going to know one day, but we don't know now. Remember what Paul (apostle) said? We see as in a mirror dimly.

Here's the question. Are you still going to walk in obedience? Even if God doesn't make the end clear from the beginning. are you still willing to obey Him? Are you still willing to walk with Him? Or are you going to get mad and say, yeah, forget it, this isn't worth it. I've heard that a lot. I felt that a lot. I just think this is a pretty amazing attitude.

Joseph now is going to go on and give his brother some instructions. Look at verse 9, he says. *“Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰ You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have.*

¹¹ There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.’

¹² And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³ You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.”

¹⁴ Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.”

You got to know that they're still in shock. They're in shock about this whole thing.

“¹⁶ When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, “Joseph's brothers have come,” it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. ¹⁷ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Say to your brothers, ‘Do this: load your beasts and go back to the land of

Canaan, ¹⁸ and take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.’ ¹⁹ And you, Joseph, are commanded to say, ‘Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. ²⁰ Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’

²¹ The sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. ²² To each and all of them he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five changes of clothes. ²³ To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey. ²⁴ Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, “Do not quarrel on the way.””

I think Joseph knew that they're still laden with guilt over what they did and who knows what the conversation might turn to on the way home. I told you idiots not to do this sort of a thing and the kind of bickering and arguing that can go along. And so he just tells them, guys, just chill and just don't argue on the way home.

Verse 25, *“So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. ²⁶ And they told him, “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” (and look at this, it says) And his heart became numb,...*”

I looked up the Hebrew in that sentence and that is literally what it means. His heart became numb. We don't really know what that means exactly. But it, it says here that, *“...for he did not believe them.”* We assume that this is some kind of an expression of shock. He was just in shock and he didn't believe him.

And you know what shock does to people when you go to somebody and you tell them something that's very traumatic, they immediately push it away because they emotionally can't embrace it. And so the first thing someone will say when they hear that someone's passed away or some other really, really, terrible news, the first thing out of their mouth will be, no. And that's very natural and that's what Jacob is doing. And that is I think part of that description, *“his heart became numb.”* He just couldn't, he couldn't embrace it because of the shock.

It says in verse 27, *“But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸ And Israel said, “It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”*

Chapter 46. *“So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.”* Now, just so you get a sense of the geography, Beersheba is really the last point in the southernmost part of Canaan before you cross over and start going into Egypt. He's stopping at this place, the last part of the promised land. Beersheba is an important spot.

It's a place where both Abraham and Isaac had lived for a time. And it was there, you'll remember, that Abraham had planted a Tamarisk tree. And that of course, was many years before. And where both he and his son Isaac had called upon the name of the Lord there at Beersheba and Jacob is doing the same.

And in verse 2, *“...God (it says) spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” ³ Then he said, “I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. ⁴ I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes.””*

In other words, Joseph himself would be there on the day that Jacob breathed his last.

“⁵ Then Jacob set out from Beersheba. The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶ They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, ⁷ his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

⁸ Now these are the names of the descendants of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, ⁹ and the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. ¹⁰ The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. ¹¹ The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. ¹² The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but (you'll remember) Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan); (they were put to death by the Lord) and the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

¹³ The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Yob, and Shimron. ¹⁴ The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. ¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. ¹⁷ The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, with Serah their sister. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. ¹⁸ These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob—sixteen persons.

¹⁹ The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, (I love these next two) Muppim, Huppim, (good names, write those down if you have twins, just name them Muppim and Huppim) and Ard. ²² These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob—fourteen persons in all.

²³ The son of Dan: Hushim.” Isn't that interesting? He only had one son.

“²⁴ The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. ²⁵ These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob—seven persons in all.

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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.”

And then we finally come to the reuniting of Jacob and his son Joseph. “²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ Israel said to Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive.”

³¹ 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. ³² 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.'

³³ *When Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' ³⁴ 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."*

That's an interesting way of closing that out, isn't it? You'll notice that Joseph, obviously understood Egyptian culture now. And so he coached his brothers on what they were to say when they would appear before Pharaoh. And by saying that they were shepherds, actually communicated a lot to Pharaoh.

First of all, they were saying that they weren't looking for jobs or support. They, were to say, we are shepherds and we brought everything we owned. We've brought it all with us and that's a way of communicating to Pharaoh, we don't expect you to take care of us while we're here. All we really need is some grazing land.

And so Joseph wanted Pharaoh to know that they brought their own livestock, all they needed was grazing land and that would certainly be given to them. And it was a way of communicating that they would be self-sufficient. But more importantly, it was telling Pharaoh by saying that they were shepherds, that they were going to be keeping their two people separate and this is significant.

Because the Egyptians considered sheep to be unclean animals and so obviously they naturally thought the same of people who cared for sheep. They're grimy, dirty and they are, for those of you that have ever raised sheep. And so they considered a shepherd to essentially be the same so they would naturally isolate themselves from the Jewish people.

And so they would live in the land of Goshen and the rest of Israel, or Egypt rather, would live in the land there of Egypt. And it was God's way of preserving the nation of Israel in terms of their cultural distinction. Distinctiveness and preserving their Jewish ancestry during the time that they were going to be living there in the land of Egypt because you know God did not he didn't bring them into Egypt so that they would inter marry with the Egyptians and just get their culture and distinctiveness lost in the Egyptian culture, which was pagan.

He had no intention of that happening so He wanted them to maintain and preserve their unique Jewishness. And so that's this whole thing of claiming to

be shepherds was the start of that whole process of keeping the two peoples apart. That's where we're going to close for tonight with those 3 chapters.

I want to just remind you again of the attitude of Joseph. and we're going to see this, by the way in some other aspects as we finish out the Book of Genesis. We're going to see yet another statement made by Joseph about his attitude about where the Lord has brought him and how the Lord has used the things in his life to bring about His ultimate purpose, God's ultimate purpose.

And that's the promise that that we have as believers, that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28) That's something that the Bible tells you and me very clearly in the scripture. But we don't always believe it.

Let's just face it. There are times we just flat out don't believe it. It says it. We know it. Some of us even have memorized it and we still don't believe it. Because circumstances tell us otherwise.

And you've heard me say from this pulpit for many years, don't be a circumstantial Christian. And that means, essentially, that your understanding of God, your view of God, and your view of how He feels about you is predicated on your circumstances.

If you're going to be that kind of a Christian, you're going to be a rollercoaster Christian. You're going to be up one day and down the next because circumstances do that. They're good for a while and then they bottom out. Something happens in your life and you're left wondering what in the world is going on.

Well, if those things dictate your understanding of who God is, and whether or not you're going to believe His Word, you're going to constantly be wondering. You're going to be in this bitter cesspool of wondering. I don't think God loves me so I hear all the time, every week I hear somebody say, I don't, God, He is not hearing me. He's not hearing me. And of course their conclusion is based on their circumstances.

And so I have to start over with them and say, okay, well, what does the Bible say? Well, I know what the Bible says, but I'm telling you what's happening in my life. That's what I am believing and what we're doing there, people, is we are exalting our circumstances above the revelation of God's Word. It's either our circumstances or our feelings, one of the two. We're either going to be

feeling oriented Christians or circumstance oriented Christians or faith oriented Christians.

Faith is where I say, this is what God's Word says and this is what I choose to believe. Regardless of how I feel, regardless of my circumstances, I choose to put my faith in the promises of God.

That's where stability begins to take hold in your life. And the other two is where chaos rules and reigns so it's your choice. You can be a circumstantial Christian if you want to. You can be a feeling Christian if you want to. But I'm telling you, it's a miserable existence, flat out, but there's great joy in the midst of taking God at His word, trusting Him with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind and strength, and just, Lord, I trust you. I choose, I choose today to trust you. Because trust is a choice, amen? Let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for the Word that you have laid out for us here tonight. We thank you, Lord, for these 3 chapters and we thank you for the beauty of seeing your plan.

We don't often get to see your plan in our lives, I believe someday we will, but it's so cool to see it in other people's lives.

And we're encouraged by this Lord. We see this and we say, God has a plan and He's promised to work all things together for good. And I'm going to trust Him and Lord, that's our determination tonight to trust you no matter what, and just to hang on for dear life, to hang on to you and to your Word and to believe that your Word is true.

And that it's not going anywhere and you're not going anywhere and that you love us despite how we feel or despite our circumstances.

Father, help us just to keep feeding on the Word, to keep filling our hearts and our minds with the Scriptures. That the promises of God would be the first thing that comes into our heart and mind when difficulty arises.

We thank you and praise you for this study tonight, and we ask that it would be something that you would simmer in our hearts and speak to us about throughout the rest of the week.

We ask it in Jesus' name and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. Go home. Go to bed.

