

Genesis, pt3: Joseph's Dream: A Faithful Witness

Genesis 37

MPS The Christian confession "Jesus is Lord" shapes a God-centered worldview as we proclaim Him in faithful witness.

OBJ Every person can understand a God-centered perspective by three factors that form our witness and shape our worldview.

INTRO **What determines how you see the world?** Would you be surprised if I told you that how you see everything, your worldview or perspective, is NOT determined so much by "how it really is", but by "how you really are"? I am not saying you determine reality, but the way you understand, interpret and respond is determined by the way you see it. **In the age of information, artificial information, and disinformation, when data doubles every 13 months (+/-) and is predicted to become every 12 hours, this is THE war of our age.**¹ **When it is humanly impossible for a person to keep up, what does one do to form a perspective / worldview to remain faithful? And how will you teach and train your children to 40-70 years from now?**

Genesis, Part I surveyed the Question of Provenance; **"What is our Beginning / Origin?"** We learned from the beginning that life loses all lasting value when God is denied as Creator. But when we believe God is Creator, there is a divine purpose that points us to a Sovereign Redeemer in all things.

Genesis, Part II surveyed the Question of Purpose; **"Who am I and why am I here?"** We learned that life only has true meaning and purpose when reconciled and aligned with the design and intention of our Creator by Jesus Christ.

Genesis, Part III surveys the Question of Perspective, "How do I view the world to find meaning in understanding?" We will learn that a God-centered worldview forms the Christian's perspective as we bear a faithful witness to His work in and through us.

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TRANS We begin the journey of surveying a God-centered perspective today by tracking the life of Joseph.

READ Genesis 37:1-11

Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

²*These are the generations of Jacob.*

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. ⁴But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

⁵Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. ⁶He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: ⁷Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

*⁹Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" ¹¹And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. **Gen 37:1-11***

TRANS Genesis 37 records the final toledot, generational division, of Genesis. Joseph is now the central character of study.

Joseph is a little brother of ten older brothers and a sister, a boy trying to survive among men. But though late in the line of siblings, he is the first son of Rachel, and the oldest of her two, with Benjamin. This likely explains why he is the one Jacob loved and favored, and why the others did not like him. And though the youngest, he is not outwitted. He does what

¹ Lodestar Solutions. <https://lodestarsolutions.com/keeping-up-with-the-surge-of-information-and-human-knowledge/> Last Accessed February 17, 2021.



most younger siblings do, ensure that dad is well-informed of what the older ones are up to, especially what he knows dad will not be pleased with. Jacob's favoritism was inescapable as it adorned Joseph daily by his "eye-candy" coat. [This first paragraph introduces us to the siblings by setting the "relationship thermometer" on "high heat" as the narrative context.](#)

Joseph has a dream, two actually, and decides he will share it with his brothers. He recounts his dream with a naïve, lack of awareness of his brother's disdain, or an arrogant mocking of it. Which one exactly we do not know. In his dream his sheaf stood up and all other gathered around and bowed down to it. Needless to say, this did not sit well with the brothers. But they did understand the dream more than they knew as they asked, "Are you to reign / rule over us?" Their reaction was that they hated him even more because of this. That feeling would only be compounded when a second dream was shared. In this dream Joseph saw the sun, moon and eleven stars bow down to him. This time the older brothers return him to his father who rebukes him by restating the obvious, "Shall we bow down before you?" But while his brothers became more enraged at him, Jacob kept the saying in mind. At face value, no one would disagree with the family's response, far beyond what seems highly improbable, yeah even impossible, these dreams / words seem like little more than a child's fanciful fairy-tale imagination in overdrive. But there is one caveat – and I believe Jacob sensed it – God's promise and His work.

The remainder of the chapter tells of the brothers' response. The next time Joseph goes in the field to bring a report to his father, they conspire to kill him. But Reuben, the oldest, intercedes. They take his coat and throw him into a pit. A band of Ishmaelites pass by and they sell Joseph as a slave to them. They take the coat, tear it, and soak it in blood to take to their father to show that Joseph has been killed. This seems to be the end of "the pesky little brother". But the last verse records the Ishmaelites selling Joseph to Potiphar in Egypt, an officer of Pharaoh. [Jacob's mental note^{37:11} over Joseph's words echoes Mary's pondering over the shepherds' words about her baby^{Luke2:19}, and reminds us – everything we see going on is not all this IS going on; therefore, we must never forget what God's got going on, and look to Him!](#)

TRANS What is God doing and what did it have to do with what was Joseph was doing?

All we can really say about Joseph is that he was sharing his dream. We have no indication from the text that it was divinely inspired, other than we know our Creator is God who uses dreams to speak. And though it sounded absurd, Jacob "kept the saying in mind" because of his own dream that had so radically changed his life. For this reason, what we see here is Joseph bearing a faithful testimony. Though not in a manner we think of today, and maybe not even with all the right motivations, but none-the-less, Joseph recounts what God said to Him. He doesn't understand it all nor does he demand that everyone believe or accept it, he simply shares what he knows. This is Joseph's faithful testimony.

TRANS Now before you think I am telling you to recount your dreams as a faithful testimony, let me explain.

In redemptive history, Joseph is a "type" that points toward Jesus Christ. God sends Joseph to Egypt to use him to bless and save His people in a time of severe famine. But this will not be an easy path for Joseph. Joseph's journey to Egypt will occur under the cruelest of circumstances where he will be abused by his own family, unjustly enslaved, wrongly accused, forgotten, abused again and sentenced. But through all this God prepares and positions him to be raised up to the second most powerful man in the world. In this position, Joseph will be the agent through which God saves His people by bringing them to Egypt where they will know security, blessing, and exponential increase. The details may include pain, suffering, and injustice but because we know how the story's end, we can see the hand of God at work in Joseph's life now. [Joseph as a "type" pre-figures or foreshadows one who will come to save God's people ultimately, Jesus Christ.](#)

GSPL God sent His only begotten son, Jesus, born of a virgin, who lived a perfect life with no sin^{1Peter2:2}, who died by a cruel, unjust crucifixion^{Luke23:14-16}, was buried, and raised on the third day. And what no one saw or imagined, Jesus opened their eyes to understand God's work through Him as the Messiah, the Christ of God! Now, all who call on His Name in faith are saved because there is no other name by which we can be saved.^{Rom10:13;Acts4:12} [The Father who sent His Son reveals Him to the world from the very beginning^{John5:39}; Jesus is God's eternal plan to reconcile all things to Himself.^{2Cor5:19}](#)



Joseph also provides a model from which we see the value and potency of a faithful testimony. Joseph had no idea he would be sold into slavery by his family. He didn't know he would be subject to false accusation and thrown into jail. He didn't know he would have to interpret dreams. He didn't know he would have to manage food storage in years of abundance to feed people in years of famine. And he surely didn't know he would be confronted with the decision to forgive and reconcile or seek vengeance on his brothers. But what Joseph DID know was that he had a dream he couldn't get over because it wouldn't let him go. **Joseph was faithful to what he knew and trusted the Lord that what he knew was enough.**

We know how Joseph's crisis will turn out. This makes us confident as we walk through his life. But Joseph's crisis is not for us to be comforted by in knowing the end of His story from the beginning. **Rather, our comfort in knowing the "end" of Joseph's story should bring courage to our hearts to trust God for the direction and outcome of ours!** We don't know all God IS or WILL do IN or THROUGH us, but this we know: God IS working, and Jesus is Lord who has commanded and commissioned us to be His witnesses. We need to know nothing more to obey or advance!

We need not fear all that we do not know. We are called to trust and obey the Lord with all that He has revealed to us. And what we DO know is His truth in the gospel of Jesus Christ that both forms and fuels the Christian's perspective of the whole world for all of life.^{2Cor5:11-21} **The Christian worldview is shaped by the Christian's faithful witness to Jesus Christ.**

The Christian confession "Jesus is Lord" shapes a God-centered worldview as we proclaim Him in faithful witness.

OBJ Three Factors form a Christian's faithful witness to shape a distinctively God-centered worldview.

1. Source of Truth: Revelation of the living God

Joseph had a dream that held him; this was the revelation of his testimony. The Christian's faithful witness begins with this; God is Origin and Creator of all that is. He created man in His image and likeness; male and female He created them for Himself. Sin entered and separated people from God by death, who then came and cursed sin. And over the serpent He declared One who would be victorious. **God establishes a covenant that promises His salvation.** The whole of creation declares this One who defeats sin, death, hell and the grave. God came and revealed His salvation in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Christ of God, the Lord of all creation who died to become Savior for all who believe. The Bible is our record of God's living Word, Jesus Christ, who by, through and for Him all things were created, and in Him all things hold together.^{Col1:16-17} Jesus is the revelation of the living God, the center of all, our source of truth. The further Jesus is from the center of your reality or perspective, the less anything will make sense, will matter or have meaning because without Him you are dead in sin and separated from the living God. **The more Jesus is the center of your life, the more God's Word defines your perspective for all of life.**

2. Historical Context: Story for Meaning

Joseph lived in the covenant God made with his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The story of God's faithfulness defined his whole life, which though it was not without problems still held meaning because of God's redeeming work. And it was that meaning and purpose that held him through every wrongdoing done against him. For the Christian, the gospel defines our life. Through Jesus Christ, God rescues us from sin and death and gives us a new identity, which brings meaning and purpose to our lives. In Jesus, God takes our life, that is set within the context of family (relationships) and generation (historical era) and places us in the eternal context of His redemptive plan (God's family in an eternity); in Jesus Christ God takes a life in history and moves it into His story! When we live established in our new identity in Jesus, we are set free to see all the world as God sees it and serve with our whole life for His glory. Life in this world only makes sense to the extent that we live fully for God's glory! **The more Jesus is the center of your life, now hidden in Christ, the more you will hold an eternal perspective of and redemptive purpose for the whole world that brings meaning for all.**

3. Call to Action: Personal Participation "How do I live because of what, or WHO, I know?"

Jacob's dream established his life in a story, that others would come and bow down to him. While that was not gladly received by others, it did provide a call to action for his personal participation; He had to tell the world about his dream! Joseph bore a faithful witness of his dream because there was more overflow from God's work IN him than the fear of the



world's threat against him. And this is how Joseph viewed everything around him. IF Joseph had not been held by a God-centered perspective, the trauma, abuse, mistreatment, and injustice to which he was subjected would have disillusioned him with God, led him to become distraught, depressed, and destroyed by his circumstances, embittered towards his family by all the brokenness of relationship, and left him burning with anger at the world. But even after all that, Joseph wasn't any of this! [My hunch.] I guarantee you I know why the Ishmaelites sold Joseph in Egypt. By the time they arrived they were so tired of hearing his dreams they just wanted to get rid of him. And his fellow inmates thought he might be able to interpret dreams because that's all he talked about. **Joseph would not shut up about what God was doing in His life. And that faithful testimony positioned him to be used by God, and produced in Him a God-centered perspective on everything.**

Christians have this same call to action on our life. Job didn't let the stupid counsel of his friends cause him to lose hope or stop loving his friends. Abraham didn't let the ninety years of nothing cause him to get tired of waiting on God and walk away. Moses didn't let the incessant griping and complaining of the Israelites cause him to lose faith in God. Paul didn't let the threat of anarchy stop him, but he walked into the mobs that beat tried to kill him to preach Jesus to them. How many do we need before hear God's call to action for our personal participation. These men were not the reason things worked out; God works things out for His glory and our good, no matter how it turns out. Jesus is Lord who commands (power) and commissions (authority) every Christian to be His faithful witness to the whole world, to declare the excellencies of His praise with our whole life, and that is enough for us to obey. ^{Mat28:18-20;Mark16:15;Acts1:8;1Peter2:9-10} **The more Jesus is the center of your life, the more His Word commands your life to participate in His redemptive mission in the world.**

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CLOSE What fills you will overflow from you, and determine how you view everything around you, to see your place in it. Christ's love compels us because we know God and understand ourselves distinctively in light of His love, so that we view the world differently and live by the message and ministry we have been given to share with it. ^{2Cor5:11-14} **Christians exist for God's glory, and we show and share Jesus with all in order to view the world in the way God intends for us to see it.**

So ask yourself: **"what am I telling myself, about my life, my situation / circumstances, my hurts, my loneliness, my darkness and depression, bitterness, frustration, disappointments and wounds, and even my joys; is Jesus the center of my all?"** Jesus as Lord must be the center of your whole life if He is to center your whole world.

