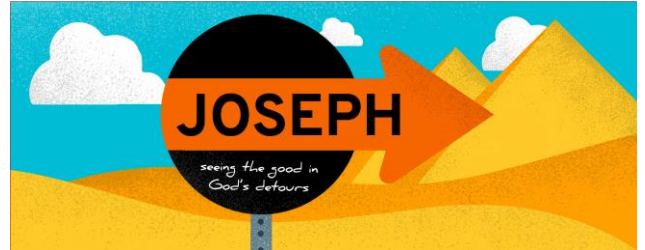




VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Joseph: Seeing the Good in God's Detours



Part 10: God-Centered Living
Tim Badal | December 4, 2016 | Genesis 46–47

Last week we came to the part of the story where Joseph identified himself, not only as prime minister, but as the long-lost brother whom his brothers had sold into slavery. He's also charged his brothers, "Go home, get Dad, and bring the whole family so I can see them once again. Then you can all settle in Egypt and not fall prey to the famine."

We'll first need to finish Genesis 45 today, then we'll cover a big section of Scripture: chapters 46 and 47. Let me read what we left off with last week:

²⁵ So [the brothers] 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 his heart became numb, for he did not believe them. 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."

What an amazing passage of Scripture!

If I were to ask you to give me one word to define your feeling right now, what would that be? Tired? Cranky? Crazy? Busy? Excited? Broken-hearted? Cursed? Lucky? Hopeful? What word would fit? Would it be cynical? Fearful? Proud? Ashamed? What defines you today? It might be a word that describes the past week you found yourself living through.

While those words may all be appropriate adjectives to describe you, the word I hope might come to mind—the word I want you to meditate on this week—is the word "centered." I believe that how you answer the question, "On what are you centered?" will determine those other adjectives that seem to come so easily into your mind. I might even say that if you're centered on the right thing, it could change those adjectives regarding yourself and your circumstances in the week to come.

Today we're going to look at the lives of two individuals. The first, of course, is Joseph. We've been looking at his life for many weeks. But I also want to look at his 130-year-old father Jacob, who now comes back into the story. I want you to see that both men were centered on God, and all the components of their lives—everything they did—revolved around God's plans, purposes and ways.

Many of us look at Joseph's life and think we would like to live it. Not the hardships or the struggles, but the reality that Joseph found a way to live through the hard times and then be exalted and used by God as the prime minister of Egypt. We want that kind of life. We want stability in the hard times. We want to exalt God in the good times.

But herein lies our problem. We want the life of Joseph while we're living like his brothers. We want the blessings and benefits of a close walk with God while we are holding onto our sin, unwilling to give an inch to God. In today's story, we're going to learn about what I'm calling "God-centered living." What I see in Jacob and Joseph are lives that are lived well for the glory of God. They lived with God in the middle.

So I ask the simple question: where is God in your life? Where is He in your relationships, in your decisions, in your dreams, in your family and finances and work? Is God at the center of these? We'll see today how Jacob and Joseph made God the center of these things. But usually for us, even though we say our lives are centered on God, more often it's about us. In my relationships, my health, my work, my finances, my family, my dreams and decisions—they all revolve around me. My thoughts and emotions are all centered on myself.

Even God is part of my life. God isn't absent in the me-centered life. But He goes from being the center to simply becoming a part. Sadly, many Christians have segmented God into only part of their lives, rather than making Him the hub around which everything else revolves. In fact, we have to battle against the me-centered life, or the self-centered life, and deliberately put God in the center.

But how do we do that? I want to highlight three things from this large passage of Scripture.

1. God-centered living involves seeking His direction at every crossroads.

For those of us who have lived life for any length of time, you and I know that life is not just a single pathway, but is filled with all kinds of forks and crossroads. These are moments in time when we have to decide whether we're going to go right or left, east or west, up or down. Our lives are filled with these kinds of decisions. Most of them are fairly small. Where will we go for lunch? What are we going to do today, or this week? Are we going to the concert or not? Are we going to the ladies' dinner or not? Are we going to church today or not? Most of these decisions are pretty small, and they probably won't change the trajectory of our lives.

But if you've lived long enough, you know we also encounter major crossroads. Will I go to that school? Will I date that certain person? Will I marry them? Will we have kids or not? Will we live in this place or that place? Will I take the job? These are big decisions that can change our trajectory.

The decision we see Jacob facing here is not a small one—it's a massive one. It's a great decision, yet not really even a hard one for him to make. In fact, it's quite easy. At the beginning of Genesis 46, Jacob finds himself having to decide something he's dreamed about for years. Not that he thought it would ever take place. But now his sons are standing before him, telling him the son he thought was dead was alive.

If anyone here has ever lost a loved one, you recognize the great hunger you have to see them again. You know that desire to believe that everything that happened was just a nightmare from which you'll be able to wake up. Can you imagine what it would be like to find out that the person you thought you'd lost was actually alive?

Jacob is living this. For over 20 years he's assumed Joseph was dead. The evidence was very credible. There were multiple witnesses saying they had found Joseph's multi-colored garment in tatters and bloody, so Jacob drew the conclusion that an animal had killed him. He had no reason to believe anything else. Plus no one had seen Joseph for those 20 years. After the first year or so, any lingering doubt as to the truth of the story would probably have been gone. For Jacob, it was a reality.

Now, after a couple visits to Egypt, these brothers come back with a different story. Talk about being a fly on the wall. I would love to have been in that tent that day. It would have been the proverbial good news/bad news, right? "Dad, we've got some good news. The son you thought was dead—he's alive. We've seen him in Egypt. Ah, and by the way, Dad, we sold him into slavery and lied to you." I mean, that's good news/bad news.

I wonder what Jacob's response was to the bad part of their news. Moses doesn't tell us that part as he's writing the book of Genesis. But he does tell us that upon hearing the news, Jacob's heart "became numb." Have you ever had a numb feeling after hearing news that takes your breath away? We read that at first Jacob doesn't believe them. Why would he? What a sick joke! "The son I've grieved for all these years, the son whom I sent off at 17, over 20 years ago—you tell me he's now alive, and has a wife and children?" But the text tells us what changed the heart of this father is that he saw wagons coming. They're not wagons like he's used to seeing. Maybe their steering wheels were on the opposite side. This gives the brothers' story some heft. He realizes, "Those aren't our wagons. Those aren't our provisions. And those Egyptian movers that came with it—I don't know those guys." His only plausible choice was to believe what the brothers have told him. So at the age of 130, Jacob's response was, "Let's load up! Let's head to Egypt."

Imagine for a moment, if you will, the video montage at the beginning of the Beverly Hillbillies. They brought Granny. They brought the rocking chair. They brought everything.

Can you imagine Jacob loading his stuff? It was probably the fastest packing job ever. "I want to go see my son! The son I thought was dead—he's alive. He's in Egypt, and he's successful. I want to put my arms around him. Let's load this stuff as quickly as possible, and let's head down to Egypt!" So that's exactly what they do. The text tells us nobody was left behind. As we'll see later, they do an entire head count—"Who's all with us?" And with haste they headed out.

But in verse one of chapter 46 we see that he stops. Why would a guy whose heart is set on seeing his son, who loaded his family as quickly as he could—why does he stop? I believe this text holds a lesson for all of us.

So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ² And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here am I." 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."

After all the rush, why does Jacob stop?

We seek direction because emotions have their proper place.

Lesson number one on why we must seek God's direction at every crossroads is because our emotions have to be put in their proper place. No parent would ever fault Jacob for doing what he's done. How many parents, after not having seen their kids for a time, come home with a longing just to take them up in their arms? Or how many of you who have packed up your children and sent them off to college look forward to the Parent Weekend in October? I know the kids probably don't look forward to that, but the parents enjoy it.

But imagine how those emotions would be compounded if the child they were about to see was one they had believed for 20 years was dead. We certainly can't fault Jacob for his urgent desires. "Let's go! Let's get to Egypt as quickly as possible!" He's hurrying—but then he stops, at a place called Beersheba, which is midway between where they had been in Canaan and where Joseph was in Egypt. Jacob's own father had built an altar in Beersheba.

But why would Jacob stop there? Because he understood that while his emotions were running high, he needed to put them second to God.

Many of us today make our decisions based on emotions. We go out Christmas shopping with an idea of what we need to buy, but we always come back with at least one extra thing, right? Why? Because emotions get the best of us. We look at that blouse or pair of jeans or piece of technology, and we feel that warm fuzzy feeling. I know you get it. I get it. And we say, "I've got to have it."

It happens when we tell ourselves we're just going to peruse the new car lot. "I'm just going to look to see what new gadgets are out there." Then we sit in that new car. We look in the little mirror and see that 20 years has been lifted off our faces. We feel 20 pounds lighter. We just feel so much better sitting in that new car. There's something about that smell that raises the pulse. We tell ourselves we have to have it.

Or, we think our days of having newborns are done, but then we hold that new baby. It makes those funny faces and quirky noises, and we say, "Maybe we're not so done." Our emotions get the best of us. That's when Amanda and I start talking about diaper regimens and all those things. Many of us, we make decisions based on our emotions. Sometimes that's okay. But emotions should always take the passenger's seat in decision making, because God should be in the driver's seat.

We seek direction because we need permission.

Now the emotions of a 130-year-old man are racing. Jacob wants to see his son. But he has the wherewithal to say, "God centers me, not my emotions. I'm going to stop here and wait." Wait for what? For God to give permission. We need permission. As kids, you are taught early on that you need to seek permission from your parents in all manner of things: what you eat, what you drink, what you wear, where you go, who you're going with, what time you're going to be home.

I remember as a newly married couple, Amanda and I had come straight from our parents' homes into our marriage. Neither of us had ever lived on our own. I remember on our honeymoon and in the weeks afterward, we always had a sense we needed to ask for permission. Then late one night after we had been out with some friends, we were driving home. I looked at Amanda and said, "Hey, are you tired?" She said, "No, I'm not tired." I said, "Let's go catch a movie." It was nearly 1:00 a.m., and I remember feeling as though we still needed to ask for permission. Then it dawned on me. We didn't have to ask. We were

adults. We could watch movies all night if we wanted to. We didn't have to ask anybody for anything! What a glorious feeling that was. We were in charge!

But herein lies the problem. As Christ-followers, no matter how old you are, 20 or 130, you still need the permission of God. Many of us live the me-centered life, and we forget that with every decision we make and every direction we start to go, we need to stop and ask, "God, is this okay?"

Now, we have to be sensible people. Do we need to say, "God, do you want me to eat today? Do you want me to have Burger King or McDonalds? Do I go to Jewel or Aldi?" There are decisions we'll make that are going to be quick and obvious. But I'm talking about more major decisions, the ones that impact our lives. What about my job? What about raising my kids? What about the church we attend? What about how we spend our money? What about how we use our time? What about these things that have a real effect on our lives? Do you seek the permission of God?

Jacob had every right in his freedom to head down to Egypt. He was 130 years old. The prime minister, for Pete's sake, is his son. He hasn't seen him in over 20 years. But instead, Jacob stops and seeks God's permission. He offers sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

I see three important things in this passage. First, notice that he offered sacrifices. When we want God to do something, our tendency is just to give Him a list. "God, I want a new car. God, I want a new house. God, I want this new job." We have to make a decision: "Do I keep my car and my house and my job, or do I get new ones?" So we pray, "Lord Jesus, lead me in this decision, and I pray that You'll make me successful in all that I do. Amen." Then we go ahead and make our decision. One prayer. We haven't heard from God, but we think, "Hey, I prayed about it."

What Jacob does here is make sacrifices. Not one, probably not two, probably not three. The Hebrew expression implies that many sacrifices are made. He stays there for a while. He doesn't move. His patience is based on his prayer, "God, You tell me what to do."

Many of us will say, "God, I'll worship You if You allow me to buy the new car...if You'll allow me to buy the new house...if You'll allow me the new job..." But Jacob says, "I'm going to wait for Your direction, and if You say 'Go to Egypt,' I'll go." But if God told him to stay, I believe with all my heart that Jacob would have stayed right where he was. If God didn't want him in Egypt, he wasn't going to go.

Why would this cause him to pause? Because Jacob knew his father and his grandfather had run into trouble in Egypt before. He also knew that he was leaving Canaan for uncharted territory. While that might not seem important to us, Jacob's grandfather Abraham had left northern Iraq to go to Canaan, which is where God had promised to make him a great nation. Jacob believed God wanted him to stay in Canaan, and in fact God had confirmed it to him along the way. While he knew his emotions were pulling him to Egypt—where his father and grandfather had had problems—he wanted to keep God in the center of his life. "I'm staying here until You say go."

Can I tell you how many bad decisions I've made because my emotions drove me to those choices? Can I tell you how many good decisions I've made because I've waited on God?

Notice what God says. "You can go. Not only that, I'm going to go with you. You're going to be there for the rest of your life. Joseph's hand shall close your eyes." Jacob would die in Egypt, but Joseph would be right by his side.

We seek direction because God has a plan.

God then went on to tell Jacob what would transpire in the future: "While you may see this as a detour, Jacob, it's all part of My plan." The reason we need to check with God at every crossroad is because He has a plan. We see in verses five through seven that Jacob sets out from Beersheba with everyone and everything.

Then in verse eight we read, "*These are the names of the descendants of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons.*" This is followed by verse upon verse, listing all the family names. So for those of you who are with child, here are some great name suggestions for you. Our nursery needs a Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron, Carmi or Zohar. What a great name. Zohar. A little blonde girl. "What's your name?" "I'm Zohar." That would be great. Or maybe Puvah, Zebulon, Sered, Elon or Jahleel. I mean, there are some great names in there, right? Names that scare the daylight out of every preacher who has to read them.

Why all these names? Number one, these names are here because everybody matters to God. God doesn't leave anybody behind. Maybe today you've been left behind by your family and friends. Maybe you've been told you're insignificant. Every

time you run into a genealogy, it should affirm to you that you're important—just as those people were. We know nothing about most of them, but God did. He had a plan and a purpose for each one of them. Jacob took 70 of his descendants with him, and his decision had a bearing on their lives for years to come.

Some of you know that my family on my father's side comes from Iraq. I want you to know that his choice to come to America was not a late-in-the-game decision. My two great-great-grandparents met at the Chicago World's Fair at the turn of the last century. They saw electricity light up the fairgrounds for the first time. They had never seen anything like that before. The two sets of parents who had pre-arranged my grandparents' marriage said, "We will tell our children and grandchildren from a young age that America is their home." It took from 1900 to 1960 for that vision to become reality. You are here also because of decisions that were made which God has used to bring you to this place at this time. God is also using you in your decisions to direct the futures of your children and grandchildren. So be careful. I don't want to take God on a detour. I don't want to tell God I'm not going His way, but I'm going to go another way. That will have an impact on the lives of those who are to come. So, Dads, your decisions have bearing on the lives of your children, and your children's children. My father made decisions that would have massive effects on the lives of generations to come. So we'd better get them right. We'd better follow God.

Here's proof. Let's look at some of the names in Jacob's genealogy. We see Perez and Zarah and Hezron. These might not seem important to you, but they're the sons and grandson of Judah. Two of Judah's sons would die in the land of Canaan, but there would be sons who would go on. In Matthew 1 we see these names in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Our decisions and actions have huge implications. Are you going to make them and live them with a self-centered, me-centered approach, or are you going to seek God? That's the question today.

2. God-centered living involves stopping our desire to get too comfortable in this world.

The second thing we need to consider when seeking a God-centered life is whether our desires are leading us to become too comfortable in this world. Let's fast-forward in our story. Jacob and his family arrive in Egypt and are part of this grand reunion that takes place. Oh, my goodness, how awesome that must have been. Joseph running to his father, who's now aged. And the young teenager that Jacob last saw now is a strapping young man with a wife and two kids. He's dressed in all the royal Egyptian regalia.

Joseph tells his dad all the stories. "Dad, I was faithful to things you taught. I did what was right, even when it was hard. Even when a pretty lady came my way and tried to tempt me, I ran away from it. But what you taught me about serving with integrity and character—I did that. I was in prison, but I honored you and I honored our God. Dad, you would have been so proud of me when I stood before Pharaoh and spoke on behalf of our God to a Pharaoh who had many gods. I told him of his dream. Dad, you would have been so proud. Look at my two boys. They take after us. I didn't give them Egyptian names; they've got Hebrew names."

Then tears of joy flowed to the point that Jacob says, "I can die now. My heart is so full that if I died today, I'd die a content man." But don't the tests of life come in prosperity? Jacob's entire family leaves Canaan, a place of famine—where they're as good as dead, because there is nothing to eat there—and they come to a land where there is grain flowing, where there is plenty of food and water, because Joseph has accomplished his tasks well, following the plans of God. Now they're not just shepherds; they're also family members of the prime minister of Egypt. They have "friends in high places."

I wonder if the theme song of the Jeffersons was playing as they headed into Egypt. "We're moving on up, to an Egyptian apartment in the sky." (Some of you have no idea what I'm talking about.)

Things were going to get comfortable for these Canaanites, for these Hebrew people. They were coming into the largest and most sophisticated city in the known world, and there would be all sorts of temptations and allurements. They would have all kinds of opportunities to live totally different from how they'd lived before. There were gods they could worship. There were pursuits that had never before been available to them back in Canaan.

I wonder if, as they looked around, they thought, "Wow. Now we're going to enjoy the good life. We don't have to worry about anything. Joseph will take care of us. We have all we need."

This means being honest about who we are.

But Joseph makes a decision. We read in the text that he speaks to his brothers. Genesis 46, beginning with verse 31:

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."

So Joseph tells them, "Listen, I'm going to go talk to the boss. I'm going to bring you to him, and here's what you must tell him. Don't lie. Don't tell Pharaoh you're something that you're not, because I'm going to tell him exactly what you are. You're a bunch of shepherds. You're lowly people. In fact, you're coming into a culture where you're an abomination." Joseph tells the brothers they must be honest about who they are when they stand before Pharaoh.

Why is this so important? Joseph explains this means they will live in the land of Goshen. This region was set apart from Egyptian culture. It was a place with great agriculture, but because shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians, they had their own territory. Jacob's family would be set apart from the city culture. Being honest about who they were would be their protection from all the attractions and entrapments the Egyptian world could bring.

Now, what does this have to do with our desire to get too comfortable in this world? As Christians, we are sojourning, as Jacob said, in this world. This is not our home. We need to not let ourselves get comfortable in a place that's not our home. We must stop setting down foundations where we should be putting in tent stakes.

So as they move into Goshen, they are reminded that Egypt isn't their home. How does that work for us as Christians today? This isn't our home either. In order to not get too comfortable or cozy here, what do we do? We need to be honest about who we are. How many people in your workplace or school or neighborhood know you're a Christian? How many people in your family know that? Let's be honest about who we are, but not in a self-righteous way. If being followers of Christ is going to be an issue in a friendship, we need to get it out on the table up front. We're going to talk about Jesus. We're going to live our lives for Him. The things of the world aren't going to be a priority to us because it's about Jesus.

Some time ago Amanda and I decided that we would reveal in many of our conversations in a humble yet honest way that we are Christ-followers. We've had all sorts of conversations with coaches, teachers, school administrators, neighbors, family members, friends, and we've let them know that Jesus is number one in the Badal household. Everybody around us is aware of this. But here's the risk when you do this. Someone will say, "You're an abomination." "Well, wonderful. Thanks for letting me know. I would rather be an abomination in this world and be loved by the God of the universe than vice versa."

God has given us the ability to articulate this for our protection. Why? Because when I lead with that in a conversation, people are going to expect something different from me. So not only has it put them on alert, it's also put me on alert. Now that I've said I'm a Christian, I have to live up to it. Now I can't advertise one thing and live another. So the protection is this: now that I've put it out there, I can't go incognito. I can't fake my way.

Second, this protects us because the world will stop sending its offerings our way. You might not get invited to that drinking party. Nobody's making moves on us with sinful desires or thoughts, because they realize we don't want that. "Steer clear of the Badals. They're more in love with Jesus than the things of this world." We've got to lead with this. We've got to be honest about this. Far too many of us are struggling with a me-centered life because we've never articulated to anybody else that we're followers of Jesus Christ.

But that's what Jacob does. He stands before Pharaoh, before this pagan leader who's leading a pagan country, a man who has all kinds of gods and lots of sensuality around. The pharaohs were known to have multiple wives and multiple concubines and manifest debauchery. You name it—they had it. Then Jacob walks in. He's an aged man who has seen the error of his ways. He now has an opportunity to call out Pharaoh. "You're a group of sinners. You're evil. You're an abomination." What an opportunity!

I've heard some say, "If I could just be in the Oval Office, I would tell our President a thing or two. I'd let him have it. I'd tell him how angry God is with him." What does Jacob do? He blesses Pharaoh—twice. Oh, if we would just understand that sometimes God doesn't give us the job of cursing, but the job of blessing.

This means being honorable to those around us.

We need to be honest about who we are, and we need to be honorable to everyone around us. We have been called to give a reason for the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15). Jacob gets that opportunity in verses seven through nine.

“Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.” He doesn’t call him out. He doesn’t try to convict him of his sin. He doesn’t try to do anything. He says, “May God bless you, Pharaoh, and give you long life. May He be good to you and care for you. May God unload His blessings on you, and I want to do the same.”

As Christians, we have the opportunity to do one of two things: to bring blessings into people’s lives or to bring curses. You can disagree with me—and that’s okay. Good people disagree all the time. But can I just say that the year 2016 wasn’t very good for evangelical Christianity? We had an opportunity this past year, during all the hub-bub of the election, to demonstrate compassion and mercy and love and unity and peace and all of those virtues we preach on Sunday mornings. But what did we do? Instead of virtue, we brought vitriol. Instead of radical love, we brought more rhetoric. That doesn’t mean we can’t disagree with one another. I can assure you Jacob disagreed with Pharaoh. But isn’t there a time with unbelievers around us when we just bless them and love them and care for them? And when we do speak the truth, we do so in a respectful and honorable way. But we missed it. Now, the good of God is He’s going to give us new opportunities. We have opportunities to display the mercies of God every day. But we need to be honest about who we are and honorable, as Jacob was, to those around us.

3. God-centered living involves serving with diligence and compassion.

The rest of chapter 47 is all about Joseph’s work during the famine. The seven years of plenty are over, and they are a couple years into the famine. This is where the going gets tough. From verse 13 almost to the end of the chapter is a description of Joseph living through the most difficult times of the famine. He’s the prime minister and it’s his job to make sure everyone has what they need.

Think about it this way: If you think you have a lot of pressure in your job, imagine an entire nation leaning on you in every decision you make. I just finished watching the Netflix documentary on Hank Paulson, who was the Treasury Secretary under George W. Bush. In the interview, they ask him how he felt having to make decisions during one of the nation’s greatest economic downturns. At one point, he was in a meeting with the President and the senators, and he got so worked up and nervous he started to dry heave (which of course made everybody in the room nervous as well). His wife said he was so preoccupied with the tasks he faced that when they were out on a bike ride, he did not see a tall metal fence in front of him and ran his bike right into it. You think you have pressure?

I mean, I just flip pork chops for a living. The economic world doesn’t rise or fall based on decisions I make. But they did for Joseph. People would live or die based on his choices. What does he show us? Complete diligence. Joseph did the job and he did it well.

It occurs to me today that that’s what our work is all about. Work is important, because it’s where we spend the greatest amount of our time. Work is important, because it has a way of pushing us to our limits. Work is important, because it forces us to face reality and figure things out. Shortcuts won’t make it at work. So ask yourself: in your work environment—whether in the home or the school or the workplace—do people see diligence in you? When they see you do something well, do you respond, “I’m working not only for you, but for the glory of God”? That’s what Joseph did.

Beyond diligence, however, Joseph also worked with compassion. He was surrounded by a needy world, and he continually ministered to it. We read how the people came to him and he ministered to them. But I want to talk about ministry in a very specific way. We read in Genesis 47:12 that his brothers, his father and all his relatives received what they needed from Joseph. Wait a minute. Aren’t these the guys who betrayed him? Aren’t these the guys who threw him into slavery? Yes, but he showed compassion. This is speculation, but allow me to float this by you: I don’t see anywhere in Scripture when Joseph was prime minister that an arrest was issued for Mr. and Mrs. Potiphar. I don’t see anywhere that the cupbearer was put back in prison because he forgot Joseph. It says that “all of Egypt came.” It’s an all-inclusive statement. “All of Egypt came.” Joseph served them, honored them and provided for them, including the Potiphar household and the cupbearer’s family.

Because diligence alone isn’t enough. Just to get the job done isn’t enough. It’s how you treat people in the process. If you want to live a God-centered life, if you want that to be a description of your life, ask yourself: “How does my faith show at work? Do I serve with diligence? Do I serve with compassion?”

So we have this question before us: Is it about me, or is it about God? Ask yourself: am I seeking His direction at every crossroad, or is it about me? Am I stopping my desire to get too comfortable in this world, understanding that this world is not my home? Is it about God, or is it about me? Am I serving at work with diligence and compassion?

You're sensible people. You've got to ask yourselves these questions, and you've got to allow the Spirit to do the convicting work—as He's doing in my life. My hope and prayer is that you will see some of your errors, as I have mine, and put God front and center, so that in every decision you make, everywhere you go, God will be the One driving, not you.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.net).