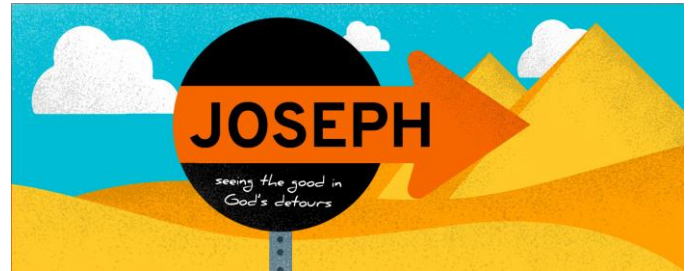




VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Joseph: Seeing the Good in God's Detours



Part 11: What Will Be Your Eulogy?

Tim Badal | December 11, 2016 | Genesis 47–50

We're now in the next to the last week in our series called "Joseph: Seeing the Good in God's Detours." Next week we'll pull everything together after going through this roller coaster that was Joseph's life. What we've learned through all the ups and downs in Joseph's adventures is that God was actively involved in his life—and He is in our lives as well. God is uniquely concerned about the minute details of everyday life. He's with us in both the good times and the bad—even in the ugly times when we may feel isolated and alone.

Through this story we're learning something the Apostle Paul would say many years later to the church in Rome—that God works all things together for good (Romans 8:28). But in order to see that, we often need to look from God's perspective rather than our own. Only then can we understand that God uses the difficult times in life to orchestrate His beautiful goals, which we see in Joseph's life over and over again.

Today we'll be in Genesis 47–50. We'll take the spotlight off Joseph and put it on his father Jacob. We sometimes see that on TV shows. After a long season, they sometimes move the story off the main character to one of the supporting cast members, so we can get to know something about their life as well. Today we're looking at the last days of Jacob's life. I've never preached any message like this before in my almost 15 years of pastoring, but I believe it's an important one. I'm excited to see what God has to say to us, even though the subject can be both delicate and somber.

Today we'll be answering the question: What will be in your eulogy? We'll begin in Genesis 47:27 and go to the beginning of Genesis 48.

²⁷ Thus Israel [Jacob] settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. ²⁸ And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years. ²⁹ And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰ but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place." He answered, "I will do as you have said." ³¹ And he said, "Swear to me"; and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed.

48 After this, Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is ill." So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ² And it was told to Jacob, "Your son Joseph has come to you." Then Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed.

About a year ago—almost to the day—I got a call that one of my long-time customers named Jim had passed away. I had done a lot of catering for Jim over the years. I catered his daughter's wedding, his retirement party, plus a couple anniversary parties along the way. Jim was the type of guy who would just throw a party for partying's sake. He loved enjoying festive times with his neighbors and friends. And his parties were always big to-do's. There were always hundreds of people there. As a caterer, I've been to lots of

events and I know there are some you really don't want to attend. But Jim's parties were the kind you wanted to hang out at for quite a while. They were all-American country barbecues, the kind almost everyone really enjoys.

So when Jim passed away, they told me they wanted to have another party just like always and they knew a lot of people would be there. They planned for about 500 and reserved a huge auditorium for the event in the town where Jim lived. As soon as I walked in, I could tell it was a "Jim party." Unlike most funeral lunches, there were kegs of beer on tap for everyone to enjoy. The crowd was more raucous than anything I'd ever seen at a funeral reception.

But as we were preparing the meal, and as people were gathering, there was an eerie sense that something had changed. Over the P.A. system we started hearing Jim's voice. And then we looked at the screens they had set up—and there was Jim. He was talking to us.

That was weird, but it got even weirder. As I was setting up one of the food lines, I heard Jim say, "Hey, you're going to enjoy a great meal from Tim Badal and 5-B's Catering. Tim, cook those pork chops well." It was like a dead man had just told me to cook pork chops well. Something was wrong with that. Then he kept highlighting different people in the crowd. It was crazy. He would say, "Charlie, you're out there. Go ahead, Charlie, stand up!" So Charlie stood up.

I watched as this dead guy summoned lots of people to do things. It was the craziest thing I'd ever seen—but this was Jim. This is how he operated. He was larger than life. So for seven minutes he had the rapt attention of everybody in the room. Never had anyone heard a dead man speaking before, especially at his own funeral. He told jokes and spoke of all sorts of things, reminding us of the big heart he had. He was a big farmer with an even bigger heart, as was evident in the video before us.

But then his conversation got more serious. Jim began to talk about two of his friends who had quarreled for a long time. He spoke to them directly. He had one of them stand up, and then he said to the other one, "I want you to stand up, too. For the last few years of my life I've tried to get you guys together. Would you grant a dying man's last wish and make things right? Will you be friends again?" It was a powerful moment.

Then Jim had his children stand up, and in front of these 500 people he gave them his final words. "Take care of your mom. Be good to one another. Have lots of parties. Don't stop doing what we did as a family just because I'm gone. I want you to enjoy life and live it to the fullest."

You might say this is crazy. That was just Jim. But after you get over the eeriness of him being dead and still talking to you, you realize that this was really the natural thing for him to do. Here was a man giving his final directions, his final words to the people he had come to love so very much. They were words of fun, words of encouragement, and even words of admonition. They were words that told us about who Jim was, which is a common practice at funeral events.

Today we're going to learn about the life and death of Jacob. We'll look at what happened in the twilight of his life as he prepared himself to die. As a pastor, I've performed a lot of funerals, and one thing they always contain is a eulogy. It might be given by me as the presiding pastor, or one of the loved ones may be asked to come up and read what is, in essence, a snapshot of the person's life. They might mention where the person was born, who their parents and siblings were, and details about their early life. They might mention their school or college, their occupation, who they married and who their children were. Then they would go on to give some of the person's accomplishments, what they were best known for or which they would be long remembered for.

Of course, in addition to the funeral eulogy, there is usually an obituary written for the general public. First, this announces that the person has died, but also it's a record that this person was someone of significance who will be missed by the people closest to him.

As I preside over each funeral, I always ask myself, "What will people say about me when I'm the one in the casket? What will they say when I'm the center of attention at a funeral?" What will they say of you? Have you ever thought about that? Have you ever taken time to ask, "What will my friends and family say on that day? What might my enemies say? Will they speak of me as being a great business man or woman? Will they say I kept the cleanest of homes? Will they talk about my sports accolades and my classroom accomplishments? Will they learn that I was mean to not just one person, but to a whole lot of people, that I was hard to live with?" What will you be remembered for? Will it be good? Will it be bad? Or will it be downright ugly?

I've actually done a funeral for an ugly individual. I don't mean ugly to look at. I mean this person lived a pretty mean life. And those are tough funerals to do. You always want to say something nice about the dead—but when there's not much nice to say, it can get pretty complicated.

But what will people say about you? My hope and prayer is that people would say, “They were someone who loved those closest to them. They served and honored their family and friends. They were pillars in their community.” Hopefully the neighbors and friends who had the most contact with you will say, “That was a good person—they lived life well.” Maybe it will be said, “They were studious and dependable in their workplaces.”

But setting all that aside, my greatest hope is that the focus will not be on what I have said from the pulpit or did in the church or did in the catering company, but that everything would center on the idea that this man, Tim Badal—who has now departed from us—loved the Lord Jesus with all his heart and sought to serve Him with all his heart. Whether he was in the workplace or in the church or in the community or at that ballgame—wherever he found himself—the love of Jesus exuded from every part of his being. And because he loved the Lord Jesus, he started well, he finished well, and he did his best every single day.

I hope that will be what your eulogy will be like as well. I hope that’s what your obituary will contain. But sadly, many of us are ill-prepared for the time of our dying. I’m not saying you need to do what Jim did and put a whole presentation together. That was unique to Jim. But one of the things I know to be true is you cannot wait to prepare for dying when you’re dying. It should begin while you’re living.

In fact, every day of our lives we should become a little better prepared for our death date. From the moment we come out of the womb, we get closer and closer to our death date. So this morning, let me ask you the uncomfortable question: what will be in your eulogy? What will others say when talking about you? How will they define or describe your life?

Today we come to a passage about the death of a great man—Jacob the patriarch. He was a man who would be known throughout all generations. Even though millennia have passed, we still know God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob passed away at the age of a 147. So if you’re feeling old, how do you think you would feel at his age? That’s an old man.

We might notice that the Bible doesn’t spend a lot of time talking about the final days of a person’s life. In fact the New Testament doesn’t describe anybody’s death other than Christ Himself. But here in the Old Testament we get a picture of what death and dying looks like, and I want to draw three things from this picture. My first point will be my longest, my second point will be a little shorter, and then my third point will be very quick. Which is good, because by that time you’ll have some smoke coming from your pens as you write.

1. Death and dying are going to happen.

This text reminds us that even though we are separated by millennia from these events, and there’s half a planet that separates us from Egypt and Canaan, amazingly we see that death and dying were the same then as they are now. As we get older our bodies begin to weaken. As our bodies begin to weaken, we become more frail and sick. As we become more frail and sick, our children and grandchildren, our friends and family, gather around to check in on us.

At some point, because of some illness or frailty, our life will finally leave us. But before it does, we do everything in our power to make sure everything is set in place; that we’ve had those final conversations; that we’ve done all we need to do to ensure that our estates are in order. We tell those closest to us that we love them. We speak words of importance to them and words about things we want them to do after we’re gone.

Then we pass away. Our family and friends gather together. They prepare the body. There’s a viewing where there’s a period of time for those who know us to come and mourn our passing. Then there’s a burial. What is true in 21st-century America was true in the ancient world of Canaan and Egypt. Nothing is different. Nothing has changed. And that makes this passage all the more applicable to us.

Here’s the number-one truth I want you to know: death and dying are going to happen. At 14 years of age, I learned that I cannot presume tomorrow will come. You know the story. My brother passed away in a car accident at the ripe old age of, not 147, but 16. And it’s been engrained in my being that I cannot assume that I will have a whole bunch of tomorrows in this world. People die all the time at all different ages. Now, I hope and pray I’ll make it to 147. God help you people if I’m around that long, but I would like that to be the case. I’d like to see my children’s children and their grandchildren.

But I can’t presume that will happen. Jesus told us no man should presume upon tomorrow, because no man knows what the day will bring. So the most foolish thing a Christ-follower can do is assume that they’re going to have a whole bunch of tomorrows, and therefore be ill-prepared for the day of their death. Even Jacob did not know the hour when his passing would come. None of us do.

Even though Jacob had the opportunity to prepare does not mean we will. So we need to consider a couple things. Jacob knew these truths, and he capitalized on them before it was too late.

Death and dying call us to focus on our family.

We are told that Joseph received word that his father was sick, which was probably nothing uncommon for a man who was 147 years old. Jacob had been in Egypt for 17 years—and what great years those had been. Jacob was told early in his life that his 17-year-old son had died. It wasn't until Joseph was 40 that Jacob found out he was alive and in fact thriving and prospering in Egypt as prime minister. So they were reunited when Joseph was around 40 years old.

Remember, one of the first questions Joseph asked his brothers was, "Is Dad alive?" He knew Jacob was old and could have died by that time. But he was told that Jacob was indeed alive, and last week we read about the great reunion that took place between father and son. And now 17 more years have passed, and something has brought the family together—maybe a birthday or anniversary or graduation. Someone told Joseph his father wanted to talk with him. We can read the conversation in chapter 47. Jacob says, "You're my son, and I'm going to ask something of you. I'm even going to ask you to swear by it." There was a significant covenantal sign of putting a hand by the thigh, which in that culture meant the promise was sealed. Jacob told Joseph, "I don't want you to bury me in Egypt. I want you to bury me in Canaan, my homeland. Would you promise and testify that you will do that?" Joseph responds, "Yes, I'll do that." Then later, after this covenant promise was made between son and father, we are told that Joseph heard that his father was sick. Apparently Jacob is about to die. So in chapter 48 we read that Joseph brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to be with their grandfather.

Moments like these are always special times. These are times we should not insulate our children from, if they're old enough, but instead we should embrace dying as a testimony to lives lived well.

Consider a couple things about Joseph's circumstances. First, Joseph was a busy man. He was the prime minister of Egypt. But when he heard that his dad needed him, he stopped what he was doing and made his father his priority. He didn't send a courier to tell Jacob, "Dad, we're at the end of the quarter and these sales are really important." Or, "I'm in the middle of a project, and I'll see you in a couple weeks." His dad said, "I'm sick," and the son dropped what he was doing and headed off to be with his father. I want to remind you that work should never trump your family priorities. When family calls, they are our priority as Christ-followers.

Second, we're never told in the text that Joseph complained. "The old man is sick again. Every week it's another thing. I am so burdened, having to run out to Goshen, leaving my work and family, taking all my vacation time to see him. This is such a burden." We don't see any of that. He loves his father and wants to be with him.

Far too many of us have viewed the care of our aging parents or grandparents as a burden, a load we don't want to bear. Might I remind you that you're where you are today—and I'm where I am today—because they believed the load and burden of raising us wasn't too large to bear? We're cared for as children so when we get older, we can care for those who are dying. It is part of that circle of life we're called into.

We should never wait for the government to carry that load for us, but rather we should strive to serve if we can. I understand how difficult this can be. I remember watching this first-hand when my grandmother was dying. Her mind was beginning to leave her. I remember the hard conversations we had to have with her when we needed to reduce her responsibilities, when we had to watch her become forgetful, as we had to make decisions for her. Those weren't easy days. But never did I hear my mom, who was an only child, say, "Why am I burdened with this? This is too hard." I know it's hard. But God wants you to honor those who have come before you. So do it well, for His glory. Joseph was living up to the example of the responsibility of caring for and ministering to older parents—and we should as well.

Death and dying call us to focus on our faith.

When Joseph gets to his father, after he hears that Jacob is ill, he brings his sons. Notice what Jacob talks about in verses 3–16:

³ And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.' ⁵ And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are.

Jacob was adopting Joseph's sons into his covenantal family. Later on, in Genesis 48:15–16, we read:

And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

What does Jacob talk about in the final moments of his life? He doesn't talk about football. He doesn't talk about the affairs of life. He doesn't talk about how great it was to live in Egypt, or how awesome it was to have such wonderful children and grandchildren. He doesn't talk about politics. He talks about his relationship with God—his faith. Write that down. He talks about his faith.

"Look how good my God has been to me. My God has lived with me through the ups and downs. He has been faithful to me from point A to point B. He has loved me. He has shown mercy. He has shown grace to me all this time. I am a living testimony to the goodness and greatness of the God Whom I serve, the God Whom my father served, the God Whom my grandfather served. God proved Himself to be faithful every single day."

Jacob continues, "Here's the reminder for you kids. Joseph, God will honor and bless you, if you honor and bless Him. And my grandchildren Ephraim and Manasseh, when you honor and obey God He will bless you all the days of your life." Jacob just cannot say enough about his relationship with God.

As fathers and grandfathers, we have to ask ourselves, "What have our children and grandchildren heard about our God from our own lips?" "Oh, that's Grandma's job. That's Mom's job." No, this isn't a grandma. This isn't a mom. This is a grandfather and father who says, "The most important thing in my life is my relationship with God."

I have a wonderful father, and I know he was a great dad. What I'm learning—and don't tell him I said this—is that he is an even greater grandfather. He's great. I love watching my father with his grandchildren. He will sit down in a room, and his grandchildren of all ages will rally around him. He'll ask how they're doing. Dad has these massive hands, and I watch him use those hands to caress the backs of the heads of his little granddaughters and grandsons. He pours out his love on them. I love when he uses names in his native Assyrian tongue. "I love you, Buni and Buna and Brata." It's a joy to see a grandfather loving his grandchildren.

He always has more money for them now than he ever had for me. He's always more lenient with them than he was with me. But every time my father gathers the kids around, he always speaks about his relationship with Jesus. He always tells them how good God has been to him and how good God has been to our family. I see him say in the most gentle way to the youngest grandchild, my little niece Clia, "Love Jesus. Jesus loves you. Jesus cares about you." He tells his older grandsons, "Make wise decisions, because unwise decisions bring unwise consequences. Don't do evil things, because that's unbecoming of a family that loves God, and unbecoming of children who say they love God." He brings them back to the importance of God's faithfulness and our call to obedience.

My dad is not a perfect man, but like Jacob, he's a wonderful model to follow. Be people of faith. Don't let your children only hear about politics from your mouth. Don't let them hear about how bad things are going at church. Don't let them hear about you striving with that idiot grandmother that they have. Don't let them hear such garbage. Don't let them see you striving. Don't let them see you become calloused and crotchety.

My father, bless his heart, is nearing 70 years of age. He came to me a couple years ago and said, "Son, I'm seeing a tendency in my life." I said, "What's that, Dad?" He said, "I'm getting cold. The things I say, the things that come out of my mouth..." Remember, at 60 the filter leaves, right? Some of you know what I'm talking about. He says, "I'm being cold with people. My heart doesn't want to do that, but as I get older, I get more angry. I become more bitter. I don't like the way the things I see are going and I start talking about the good old days and the good old kids, and all that."

He said, "Son, will you hold me accountable? I want to finish strong. I want my heart to be sensitive and warm toward my children and grandchildren. If you see me growing cold, you tell me to cut it out." I said, "Dad, that's going to be hard. You'll spank me." But he promised he wouldn't and that it would be okay. I love that my father, nearing 70, has the wherewithal to say, "I want to finish well. I want to do it right." He's demonstrating the importance of faith for our family, for another generation. That's what Jacob did and that's what we're called to do as well.

Death and dying call us to focus on our funeral.

Fast forward to chapter 50 for a moment. We'll get back to chapters 48 and 49, but now let's look at the end of 49, picking up at verse 28:

²⁸ All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him. ²⁹ Then he commanded them and said to them, "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite."

Jacob tells them exactly where he wants to be buried. Then verse 33 says, "*When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people.*" Jacob died right then. Let's take pause and remember a great man who has passed, a great man who had walked with God, who had wrestled with God, who had massive engagements with the God of the universe. He lifted up his feet and breathed his last.

Then in chapter 50 we read, "*Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him.*" This is what happens even today with the sons who are left alive.

² And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. ³ Forty days were required for it, for that is how many are required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days. ⁴ And when the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, ⁵ My father made me swear, saying, 'I am about to die: in my tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me.' Now therefore, let me please go up and bury my father."

Pharaoh said, "Go, and I'm going to send a great entourage with you." We all know that when people die, there's a funeral. Let me draw out a few implications with regard to the funeral.

First, Joseph—the living—did everything in his power to respect the last wishes of the dying. I think that's important for us to note. After Jacob had died, Joseph could have said, "You know what? Dad's not going to know where we buried him. He's dead. So I'll just bury him here, because I'm a busy man and it's way too expensive and difficult to get from here to Canaan, find the cave where Grandma and Grandpa, Great-Grandma and Great-Grandpa are buried. I'd rather just do it here. And quite honestly, I can bury him here a whole lot better than I can do it there."

But that's not what he did. Joseph said, "My father, whom I love, has made a specific request. He doesn't want to be buried here. This isn't his land. As difficult as the process will be, he wants his body to be taken where he's asked to be buried." So Joseph did just that. This is a practical reminder that we as Christ-followers should do everything in our power to live up to the last wishes of our dying loved ones.

I counseled a family recently who are nominal attenders at Village. The mom was more regular here than most of the family. She was an aged woman who lived in an elderly care facility, and she was dying. She said, "Pastor Tim, I'm so scared. I'm dying." We had visited her a couple times and I knew her days were numbered. She was all worked up and said, "I've told my children when I die to not cremate me. I believe God wants my body to remain intact."

[By the way, that's a personal preference. The Lord doesn't speak emphatically on whether the body needs to be kept in place or cremated. That's a different sermon for a different time.]

She said, "My kids say a funeral is too expensive. They said they're going to go ahead and cremate me. Would you talk to them? Would you tell them that I am scared that I'm sinning against my God? I want my body to be kept as is. I'll give as much money as I can. I know it's expensive, but there's money there for it. They're able to do that."

So I had that conversation with her children and I've got to be honest with you, I was pretty mad during that meeting. Instead of caring about their mom's requests, they kept talking about the inconvenience, the money.

I don't want to be overly harsh, but I want us to recognize the importance of caring about, respecting and honoring the life of those around us who have lived well. We should do so even in their death. We need to make wise decisions, right decisions. Money means nothing if we can't honor our parents and grandparents in a way that is pleasing.

Let me tell you one very easy way to honor them. No parent wants to die and think that their children are going to fight over their possessions. I trust that whenever we find ourselves in those situations—those times when we think we deserve something, when that inheritance is forthcoming—that you will honor God and others by being a peacemaker, not looking to get a piece of the property yourself.

I can't tell you how many times the biggest family arguments occur after the death of a family member. It's terrible. That's not what the family wants. The last thing I would want anybody to do is fight over my stuff. If I knew that was going to happen, I'd get a big

box, put all my stuff in it, and tell them, "I'm taking it with me." I don't want people fighting over it. God wants us to honor those who go before us.

So Joseph does exactly what his father had asked. What a great testimony!

Second, notice that Jacob had a reason to be buried in Canaan instead of Egypt. A couple chapters ago when Jacob was speaking with Pharaoh, he told him, "I am living in tents because I am sojourning in your land." And he sojourned for 17 years. He didn't build a house and buy a burial plot there. He said, "I'm visiting here. This isn't my home. I've got a home in Canaan. God promised me that home. He prepared that place for me. So while it's been great to be here, I want to make sure I'm buried where my home is, because home is where the heart is and Canaan is where my heart is. That's what God promised me."

It's a reminder to us that this world is not our home. It's a reminder that this life is a pilgrimage. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:11 that we are aliens and strangers just passing through. Sadly, some of us have not followed the example of Jacob. We've continued to put our roots deeper and deeper into the soil of this world, so we can enjoy what we believe to be our home for 70 years. But God's Word tells us we're just passing through. So don't build a foundation. Put up a tent, not a house. Make it so you're able to move. God says, "Remember, I've promised that I'm preparing you a place for eternity" (John 14:3).

This principle is very close to my heart. A couple weeks ago I told you that my great-grandparents on my father's side were from Iraq in the Middle East. They met each other here in Chicago, of all places. As merchants at the turn of the century, they came to the 1893 Chicago World's Columbia Exposition. Being in a city where everybody spoke English and looked the same, they somehow found each other and a relationship began. It was at that time that Thomas Edison had just developed electric light bulbs and he was the one who lit up the Chicago skyline with electricity. It was the first time my great-grandparents—and most people—had ever seen lights like this after dark. It changed my great-grandparents' view of America. After they went back to what was essentially ancient Iraq, they married, then later they arranged the marriage of my grandparents.

As time went on, they told their children, "America is our home." They had been so changed by what they saw here that they determined to make it their goal to get back to America. The story is told that my great-grandmother, who was the last child in her family to live, was at a party in Baghdad with our family. The men of the family were doing what men there did—they were sitting around, drinking coffee and tea. It was a good time in Baghdad in that day, probably the early '60s. There was still protection from the British government at the time. As they reclined in their chairs, the men started saying, "This is the life. Isn't it good to be in Baghdad?" But my Nana Marta, my great-grandmother—who I'm told by multiple witnesses was a frail woman—banged on the counter and said, "This is not your home. Stop talking about this place as being your home. I have seen our home. Our home is in America."

The more we enjoy and rely on this temporal place, the more we will miss out on the blessings of a greater place and a greater home. Nana Marta was the only woman of her generation who made it to America. Because of her calling (she was considered to be a prophetess), she knew Iraq was about to go down the toilet. She knew her family needed to get to America where they could prosper and grow. The last 50 years in Iraq have been a toilet. She knew there was a new home for them, and she pointed to that home. The men in that house said, "Ah, no, it's great here. Everything is wonderful here." But all hell has broken loose now in that country. She was wise enough to say, "Put your focus on a new land."

Can I tell you that the men of Jacob's family no doubt thought Egypt was the greatest place in the world to live? They had lived in Canaan, a place where people existed from year to year. Subsistence farming was a struggle, never knowing whether they would make it or not. Then they came to Egypt where they had everything they needed. Joseph had a high position in the land. Everything was abundant. But Jacob said, "Listen, God didn't promise us Egypt. He promised us Canaan. So don't put your roots in too deep here. Don't think this is going to be your home, because God has promised us a home."

Let me bring it to today. I know, because human experience tells me, that when the church elders get up and talk about "All In," some of you roll your eyes and go, "Here we go again. The elders are talking about money. Every December we've got to hear about being "All In." I wonder why they have to do this? It just doesn't make any sense." Let me be very clear and tell you why we do this. Every year Village Bible Church does an "All In" because we want to remind ourselves as a people that this is not our home. We get this idea every Christmas that we're going to dig in our roots. We're going to buy all this stuff and fill our homes with all these good things. It fills us with joy. "Oh, this is so wonderful!" "This is so great—it's going to change my life!" But then by January everything is broken. All these things say to us, "This is our home."

Your elders are trying to honor God by reminding you: "This isn't our home. God is preparing a home for us; let's live with that in sight. Our goal is to get as many people into that Kingdom as possible before we die." If our giving to this community, to those

outside ourselves, keeps resulting in changed lives, it shows why we give to Village Bible Church. Our goal is not to build nice things or to keep nice things. Our goal is to change lives with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So let me ask: Are you “all in” to that? Are you sold out for that? Or is this your home? When you look at your credit card statement this Christmas, will it say you’re digging in roots, or are you preparing for another place? Jacob says, “This isn’t my home. God has promised me something better.” When you sacrifice and give to a program like “All In,” you’re saying, “The temporary is nice, but heaven is far greater.” We should look with great anticipation to the place that will be our home.

One more thing I might add to this matter of funerals is the example Jacob gives regarding unbelievers in his community. It’s pretty amazing what Egypt did. Now, when Jacob first met Pharaoh, what did Joseph tell his family to tell Pharaoh? “You’re shepherds. They’re going to put you up in Goshen. Why? Because in Egypt, shepherds are an abomination.”

I want you to know that abomination in English is a bad word. Abomination in the Egyptian world is a bad word. It’s not nice. You’re the worst of the worst. Why in the world, when the worst of the worst dies in a land full of paganism—a land that did not share Jacob’s theology or morals or priorities or even his language—why would they care about Jacob when he died?

What are we told? When he died, he was embalmed. Then after the 40-day embalming period, 70 days of mourning were decreed. In Egyptian culture, 75 days were given to the Pharaohs. This “abomination” of a shepherd, Jacob, was given 70 days! Then halfway through the funeral journey back to Canaan, they stop for another seven days. So Jacob actually got 77 days of mourning by the Egyptian army and court. Pharaoh got two days less.

Why in the world would they show such reverence? I believe it was because Jacob and Joseph’s family lived such good lives among the Egyptians that they knew someone special had passed on, that a great man had died. This is a great reminder for you and me to hope that our funerals are not just filled with believers. Now, I do hope you all can make it to my funeral, but I hope it is not just church people saying, “What a great pastor he was.” I hope my community, my work associates and my customers will also come.

As you guys are in the visitation line to share your condolences with Amanda and the boys beside my casket, I hope you’ll ask others, “How did you know Tim? Were you at Village?” “No. He catered an event for me,” or “He served on the school board with me,” or “I sat next to him at the boys’ basketball games.” Then you can say, “What a man of God he was.” And my unbelieving friends will ask, “Man of God? What are you talking about? He seemed normal, just like every other guy.”

No. Rather I hope my neighbors, friends and work associates will say, “You know what? I didn’t buy into what he said. I didn’t have the priorities he had. But what you saw on Sunday, we saw on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. That guy exuded Jesus. He exclaimed Jesus. Everything he did pointed to Jesus.” I pray that my friends in the church and my friends outside in the world would know the same thing about me, that my life is wrapped around Jesus.

Can your work people say that of you? Can your family say that of you? Can your community, your neighborhood, say that? Or does your neighbor think you just get dressed up to go grocery shopping on Sundays? “Wow, they’re gone in the morning, and they get all dressed up just to head to Jewel or Aldi. I don’t get it.” Do they know that you love Jesus? I would hope that’s the case. I pray that’s the case for me.

I don’t know if it’s completely true yet, because I know that there are times I’m ashamed when I shouldn’t be. I know there are times when I’m more preoccupied with the world than I should be. So when I’m asking these questions, it doesn’t mean I’ve finalized my answer. The proof will be in the pudding. What will they say in my eulogy? That’s the title of this message. It’s the question I have to ask, and it’s the question you as a sensible person have to ask of yourself.

Death and dying call us to focus on our feelings of grief.

Jacob died, and notice finally that there were feelings of grief. I would be remiss not to remind you that grief is a natural reaction. We see in Genesis 50:1 that *“Joseph fell on his father’s face and wept over him and kissed him.”* He cried. This is the second time we’ve seen Joseph cry. The first time was when he was undone by all he had seen with his brothers, when they still didn’t recognize him but thought he was just the prime minister. Here he simply fell on his father’s face. His father’s lifeless body was there, and Joseph fell upon it, as some of you have done with loved ones.

I watched my parents do just that in the morgue at Mercy Center Hospital with my brother, touching and embracing the one who was just with them, who is now gone. It can be a sweet time when tears fall and all kinds of emotions are felt. It is altogether good and right for us to grieve. It doesn’t mean we’re unspiritual. In fact, it says that we are spiritual, that we have a heart that grieves. Joseph was gripped by his grief. No longer would he ever hear another “Atta-boy” from his dad. No more conversations with Dad.

No more of the traditions of which Dad was the centerpiece. No more hugs. No more embraces. No more running to Dad for advice.

Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. You've buried your parents, or brothers or sisters. Maybe you've even buried children. The pain that comes when you are told they are no longer living is excruciating. I know many of you are gripped with this issue of grief. Christmas is a tough time when you remember traditions in which they were a key part. As a pastor, I have to tell you I don't think I've done—nor do I think we as leadership have done—a good job in helping you know how to face the grief before you, how to find hope and peace. Part of it is that we're an American church, and in America we don't like grief. We push it away. We shut it down. We try to conceal it.

I remember sitting in the back during his funeral when our brother Thomas Fatorma passed away. The pastor who was officiating made the rest of us pastors look bad. I told him that. He hit it out of the park. Jassa was here, crying and weeping. It was uncomfortable, because all of us were grieving at the Fatormas' loss. It was unexpected. But the pastor said, "Let her grieve. This is good. She's crying out to her God. Let her God deal with her tears."

In America, we say, "Quiet down, lady. Enough is enough. You're making us feel uneasy." No, we need to realize grieving is okay. It's good. It's God's outlet for us to express our love for the ones we've lost.

Grief is a reminder of a couple things. First, grief should compel us to do all we can while our family is living to build our relationships with them. If you're coming to a family celebration this Christmas, let me tell you what you, as Christ-followers, should not do. You should not sit in a room with close family members looking at the TV and watching football, with no words spoken. My children have a limited amount of time with their grandparents. They don't need to be playing video games. Clash of Clans can wait. Snapchat, Instagram—all that can wait. Unless you're taking a picture of your Grandpa.

Spend time with grandpas and grandmas. Gather your family around and talk about the good old days. Talk about what you did as a family. Tell your children how you courted one another. Talk about what it was like to be a teenager. Talk about what it was like to be an early married couple. Share these memories like jewels with your children and grandchildren. Love on them. Ask them, "What's God doing in your life? What are you learning at church? What are you learning at school?" Make them talk to you. Please know that I'm not speaking as one who's perfect. I'm speaking as one who is utterly convicted by what I'm preaching to you right now. We don't have a lot of time; we need to share it with family and spend it in quality time.

Third, grief should remind us that we should be sharing the gospel, especially with those who are closest to us. What good is it to live 70 years in a close, familiar relationship, but never to have talked to people about Jesus Christ and the place He has in our lives? I get it. I've got family members who say, "I don't want to talk about it." And you've got to figure out, as the book of 1 Peter says, to do so with gentleness and respect. Pray for opportunities. I'm amazed that when I pray for opportunities, the opportunities come. We need to share the gospel with them. What good is it to spend 70 years on this earth with loved one, only to be divided by the great chasm that divides heaven and hell?

Death and dying is going to happen. Are you ready? What will they say on that day about you and the life you've lived?

2. In times of death and dying blessings can be bestowed.

I want to draw four applications from chapter 49 where we see how Jacob gathered his family before he died. He brought his children together and spoke to them. In the Middle East, this is called a blessing. It's still true today in my Middle Eastern family. But this is not true in America. We don't talk about blessing. We high-five or fist bump, and call that a blessing. That's not a blessing. That's keeping germs away from you.

Jacob gathered his family together and he blessed them. I want you to see the correlation between Jacob's blessing and our role as parents. What you see in this blessing is a microcosm of what we should be doing as parents and grandparents with the next generation.

Blessings provide an acknowledgement of who is in the family.

In chapter 49, how many names are listed? How many sons did Jacob have? Twelve. How many names are listed in the group? Twelve. Not eleven, not ten, not the handful that were good sons. Each one of them. It's an acknowledgment and a reminder that no matter if your kids are good, bad or ugly, whether they're believers or unbelievers, whether they've rebelled against you or they've been obedient all the days of their lives—no matter who they are, they're your children and they're family. Don't ever forget that.

Some of Jacob's sons did some horrific things. At the time of his death, he didn't say, "Gather my good sons," or "Gather my smart sons," or "Gather my successful sons." But he says, "Gather my twelve sons unto me. They're part of this family." And the twelve gathered. He spoke to every one of them. Each of them had a place.

We need to tell our children that each one of them has a special place in our families. My older brother and I used to tell our younger brother that he was found on the side of the road after the circus had left town, so we just felt sorry for him and took him in. Now, we laugh and think that's funny—an older brother doing that to a younger brother—but we sometimes do that as families, right? We start thinking that one child is more connected to us. Maybe they like more of the same things so we acknowledge their part in the family, but not the other ones. We do this in subtle ways, because we spend time with one and not the other.

Don't fall prey to what Jacob did as a young man. Follow his lead as an older man. There's an acknowledgement of who's in the family.

Blessings provide accountability for sinful actions.

In verses three through seven, three sons—Reuben, Levi and Simeon—are spoken to rather abruptly but truthfully. They're reminded of some of the sins they've committed. Now, I don't believe this is a rehashing of their sins to beat them up again, but a reminder of their tendency to do things that they need to be accountable to avoid. Reuben had allowed his passion and his lust for authority and position to cause him to sin against one of the wives of his father. Jacob brought it up. Simeon and Levi were the ones who annihilated an entire city filled with people. They needed to be held accountable.

As parents, we are called to hold our children accountable for the wrong things they do and to speak truthfully about it. In parenting, you don't always give out trophies. Sometimes you have to tell your children, "You're wrong." You sometimes have to tell your children, "That's unbecoming of a Christian." And to put the heft behind it, you bring godly and loving discipline to them that says, "I will not allow you to continue going in the error of your ways."

Blessings provide affirmation of good deeds.

In verses 22 through 26, we see this specifically given to Joseph, but Jacob does this with some of the other sons as well. He affirms the good. He encourages. He gives props and accolades.

Some of the greatest moments that I've experienced in my 40 years is my father putting his arm around me and saying, "I'm proud of you, son." No amount of money will give me that. No amount of accomplishments will give me that. But having my father put his arm around me and say, "Man, I'm proud of you. It's good to be your dad. I go to bed rejoicing that you're my son." I love hearing those words of affirmation.

I can tell you right now that's exactly how I feel about my three boys. I've got no greater job in the world than to be the father of those three boys. They make me proud. But here's the problem. I don't tell them that enough. I'm too busy. I'm too critical. I'm too caught up in my own stuff.

We need to affirm the good in our kids. Not all the time. Sometimes we've got to hold them accountable. But we've got to affirm the good.

Blessings provide an announcement of the future.

The final thing we need to do for our children is announce to them that there is a future. This brings us to focus on the blessing of Judah in verses 8–12. Judah is fourth in the list. He has middle-child syndrome. "What about me? Do you even know I exist?" I was a middle child. I made sure they knew I existed. Judah gets affirmations that are better than Joseph's, even though Joseph had done all this incredible stuff.

Notice the blessing we get a glimpse of: "You shall be the object of praise. You shall be victorious. You shall be like a lion, which is the king of all creatures. You'll be the ruler of all the ages. You'll receive a tribute of tributes. You'll be the one who wears garments that have been washed clean by a substance that only stains" (meaning blood). And while Jacob was describing Judah, what he's looking forward to and foreshadowing is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Lion of Judah, the Lamb Who was slain.

We need to remind our children that they're in the family. We need to hold them accountable when they do wrong things. We need to affirm them when they do right things. And at all times we need to tell people about Jesus. Deuteronomy tells us whether we stand up, sit down, whether we're eating or sleeping or whatever we're doing, that we need to tell others about God and His Word.

We need them to know that whatever we do—the good, the bad, the ugly—we have grace and mercy because the Messiah has come.

On this side of the story, we know that His name is Jesus Who takes away the sins of the world. He takes away the sins of Mom and Dad. He takes way the sins of daughters and sons and grandsons and granddaughters. And on and on and on. Make sure your parenting is centered on the story of Jesus.

My years from 14 to 18 were turbulent years. If you were to ask my Mom and Dad about that time—and this will be solace for some of you who are dealing with difficult kids—my parents weren't sure if I'd ever get married. They weren't sure I'd ever hold a job. They weren't sure I'd have the social skills to make it as an adult. And that is not an exaggeration. They had no confidence that I would successfully become an adult.

I remember when I graduated—barely—from high school that we had a graduation party. Some of you were there. Some of you are old enough to remember my graduation party. Just before that graduation party we had one of the most severe storms I can ever remember. The tent we had up outside was annihilated. Everything was a mess. Everything was utter chaos—apropos for a Tim Badal party. It was chaos. I was disappointed because of course people didn't show up. I was disappointed that the storm had destroyed my party. And I pretty much said, "You know what? This is my life—one big chaotic mess that I'm not going to get out of."

At the end of that storm, my father called me outside. As most storms do in Illinois, the storm had passed to the east, and in the west we saw the most beautiful double rainbow. My dad brought me outside, put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Listen. What you've just seen during your party is a wonderful microcosm of what your life has been like. It's been a mess." Talk about being held accountable. I felt really small. "Wow, Dad. Has it really been that bad?"

My life had been a storm—one rocky thunder and lightning upon another. But then he turned me around and showed me the rainbows, saying, "I know a lot of it's because you live in the shadow of your older brother who is now dead. But I want you to know Chris got a single rainbow; you got a double. God is going to do great things through you. If you're faithful and obedient and if you walk with Him every step of the way, God will be faithful to get you through the storms of life so you can see the rainbow."

Let me tell you something very clearly. At 40 years of age, I have seen the double rainbow. My heart is completely filled. God has blessed me with a wonderful wife and three wonderful sons. God has blessed me not only with one job, but two. He's given me the opportunity to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I am a fulfilled man, because God has blessed me—and He spoke through my father to give me the confidence and courage I needed.

3. Some lessons to be learned.

Let me close with this. This message gets pointed to the dads and grandfathers. It doesn't mean moms and grandmas can't hear it. It doesn't mean kids can't hear it. But dads and grandpas, here's my word for you. Life is short. Live it well. We don't know what tomorrow will bring. So start living your life in the obedience of Christ and His Word. Do it well.

Second, rough starts don't have to define you. Maybe you had a lousy dad. Maybe you say, "Tim, it sure is nice you had a great dad." I did have a great dad. But I know that God uses sons of not-so-great dads. And God gives not-so-great dads second chances. So understand that how you start doesn't define you, but how you finish does, and having the right priorities pays off in the end.

So today is a new day of grace. God's grace and mercy are new every morning (Lamentations 3:23). Great is the faithfulness of God. So utilize that. As long as you have breath, you can change the direction of your life.