



As we step onto the scene of Scripture, we find ourselves in the land of Canaan standing just outside of a sealed cave with a group of men who have spent the last several days remembering and life of a man and rejoicing over some major milestones. You see, the last 17-years had given these brothers the opportunity to reconnect. Joseph had been able to spend time with his father and these brothers had been able to get to know each other.

Today, has been a rather difficult day for them because they have gathered here to say goodbye to their father. Jacob had made Joseph give him a promise that he would not bury him in the land of Egypt, but in the land of his father in a grave that he had dug for himself. After obtaining permission of Pharaoh to carry out his father's wishes, a huge procession – including Egyptian dignitaries, a true military escort, the elders of Israel, his family and his brethren – all made the nearly 300-mile journey to offer Jacob a proper burial.

Genesis 50:14-26 says, *“And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father. And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And*

he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

If you're in the habit of marking things in the Word of God, I want to draw your attention to a statement that is found twice in the passage that we just read:

Verse 24 where the Bible says, "...God will surely visit you..."

Verse 25 where the Bible says, "...God will surely visit you..."

For a few moments, I want to consider this thought: **ESSENTIALS OF MOVING FORWARD.**

When you come to Genesis chapter 50, a lot has changed in Joseph's life. For 76 years, Joseph, though not alone, had essentially stood alone.

Genesis 39:2-3 says, "And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand."

But now, 93-years after he had been sold into slavery, Joseph is no longer alone, he has a family that has joined with him.

Genesis 50:8 says, "*And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house..."*

There is an old phrase that has been used down through the years to describe the church and that phrase is this: "WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER."

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

The phrase better together carries with it the idea that we are safer, that we are stronger, and that life is sweeter when it is made up of healthy relationships.

As Christians, we are called to pursue and to enjoy a personal and passionate relationship with God, but we are also to develop significant relationships with other individuals who make up the body of Christ – the church. In the Bible, the church is often referred to as a family, or as a body that is made up of many different members and yet one.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 says, *“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.”*

Ephesians 4:15-16 says, *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”*

In other words, God doesn't just call us to advance in this life as His child, but He desires and has designed that we would move forward together as His church.

Matthew 16:18 says, *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

Luke 22:31-32 says, *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”*

1) In order for us to go forward, we will need to learn to **EMBRACE TRIALS** together (Genesis 50:1-13)

Joseph would have never fulfilled God's will for his life if he didn't trust God and embrace the trials during his life.

We're all familiar with how Joseph was first thrown into the pit and then sold into slavery by his own brothers (c.f. - Genesis 37:23-28).

Most of us are familiar with how Joseph was thrown into prison, for doing the right thing, and then forgotten for many years by those who had given him their word (c.f. - Genesis 39:20-40-23).

When we turn to Genesis chapter 50, we find that while the troubles and trials of life had not changed, or gotten any easier, he now didn't have to go through them alone – he had his family to support him and to stand with him.

Genesis 50:7-8 says, *“And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph, **and his brethren, and his father's house**: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.”*

Genesis 50:12-14 says, *“And **his sons** did unto him according as he commanded them: For **his sons** carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, **and his brethren**, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.”*

As a Christians, we will face troubles and trials individually and collectively, but we must determine to embrace them together.

2) In order for us to go forward, we will need to **ENGAGE** the **TOUGH** together (Genesis 50:14-21)

17-years had passed since the marvelous day when the brothers were reconciled with Joseph, but “the elephant was still in the room.” The brothers were concerned how Joseph would treat them now that their father had died. They had allowed shame and fear to grip their hearts and they feared that Joseph would allow pride or a desire for vengeance to grip his heart.

A) Sin will hinder **PARTNERSHIPS** (Genesis 50:15-17)

One of Jesus’s final earthly prayers for us was that we would be one, that we would be unified.

*John 17:20-22 says, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; **that they all may be one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, **that they also may be one** in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; **that they may be one**, even as we are one.”*

What the Devil fears the most is a unified church and that’s why he does everything that he can to cause separation, distance, or division within it.

Ephesians 4:30-31 says, “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

B) Sin will hinder **POWER** (Genesis 50:19-20)

1 Thessalonians 5:15-23 says, “See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Matthew 18:20 says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

C) Sin will hinder **PROGRESS** (Genesis 50:22)

Now, here's the reality, for many of us verse 18 would have been the end of our journey together. For many, when things get tough, they simply hit the trail. Instead of working through the tough issues of life together, they run from the issues all together. That's not who we, the church, is supposed to be. We are to be peacemakers and problem-solvers, overcomers.

Hebrews 12:1 says, *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."*

- 3) In order for us to go forward, we will need to **ENJOY TIME** together
(Genesis 50:22-23)

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*

- 4) In order for us to go forward, we will need to **EXTEND TRUST** together`
(Genesis 50:24-26)

Hebrews 11:22 says, *"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."*

- 5) In order for us to go forward, we will need to **ENDURE TRAINING** together
(Exodus 1:6-7)

Exodus 1:6-7 says, *"And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them."*

Luke 1:17 says, *"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*