

*Where we start . . .*

Everybody has memorable moments in life, things you look back on and those decisions or actions that helped define the way you see life. Share a defining moment in your own journey.

*What we read . . .*

As you think back on our study of the lives of Jacob and Joseph, identify some of the defining moments in their lives.

Genesis closes with the deaths of these two men. Read the account in Genesis 49:28-50:23.

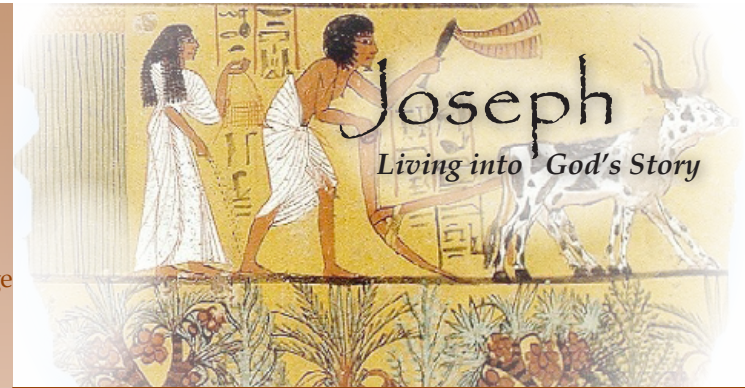
What is common about the details of their deaths? Why do you think it matters that the author of Genesis told us such details?

Turn to Hebrews 11:17-22, where we get a short commentary on the lives of the patriarchs. What does the author focus on? What defining moments does the author select from the lives of Jacob and Joseph?

Why would the author of Hebrews select those moments in the lives of these two men as *the* example of their faith?

*Why this matters . . .*

How can you appropriate the kind of perspective that Jacob and Joseph modeled and that was commended in the letter to the Hebrews?



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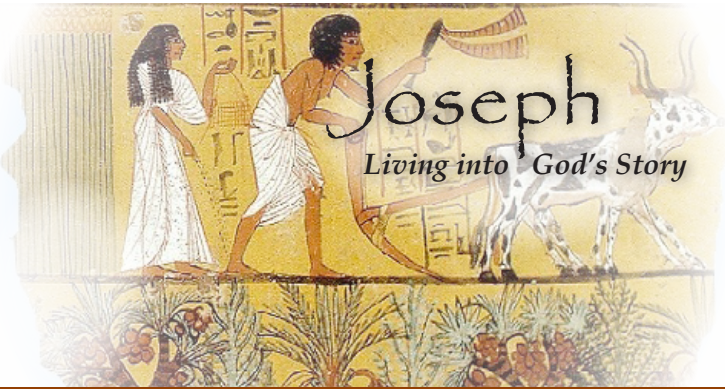
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*What are we focusing on?*

Final words and final moments can often be critical, memorable. The last refrain of the choir is what those in attendance take away. The final scene in the play or movie tends to capture what the director intends to be remembered. And the last words you say to your kids before you leave them off at college their freshman year is what you want them to really “get.”

So when we come to the end of the lives of both Jacob and Joseph, what the author of Genesis tells us about their final moments is undoubtedly significant. And, interestingly enough, there are some notable parallels in the accounts of their passing, captured in their own words.

Both Jacob and Joseph insist on their family vowing to return their bodies to Canaan. Both identify themselves with the land God promised to Abraham. And, in so doing, they tell us how they were viewing their own lives.

*What will we be discussing?*

We begin by simply talking about “defining moments” in life. You don’t have to press for the most provocative life moments, but think with your group about those determinative times and decisions in life that tend to refine and define what our lives are all about. That kind of thinking will help us reflect well on what the author of Genesis has to tell us as he draws the account of the lives of Jacob and Joseph to a close.

When you turn to read out of Genesis 49 and 50, remind your group that these are “final moments.” Underscore the

way such final moments, final words, final scenes, can carry significant weight in making sense of a story or a life. Both Jacob’s and Joseph’s final moments and words with their families are times when they will stress what matters most to them. And, it is important to note what is common in both sets of final words.

Both Jacob and Joseph want their families to vow, to promise or pledge, to do a certain thing. This really matters. This is not a light wishful hope. This is “deadly serious”; the request matters.

And both Jacob and Joseph insist on the same thing. They want to “go back” to the land that was promised to Abraham. What kind of thinking would give rise to such a request?

There are lots of ways you might talk about that. Things like:

They saw their lives as part of the greater story God was writing.

They understood that their lives were tied up with God’s plan for the nation that was given that land.

They were sure and certain that God would be good to His promise and were anticipating the promise’s fulfillment.

They wanted their final moments to point and guide their families to see life from God’s vantage point.

When you turn to Hebrews and read what is written there, you will see that the author of that letter selects Joseph’s and Jacob’s dying thoughts as examples of their faith. Not the visions they saw, not the challenges they faced, not Joseph’s amazing ministry in Egypt, not Jacob’s wrestling with God.

What the author of Hebrews highlights is both Jacob’s and Joseph’s perspective on life that looked to God’s promises and anticipated what He was doing. And, that is at the core of faith. And that is what came through in the closing moments of their lives:

We are living in God’s story.

He is catching us up in what He is doing.

He has made us promises about where things are heading.

We are living (even to our dying days!) in light of that!

As you think through and discuss these ideas, the goal is not to be morbid or turn attention to our own (inevitable) deaths. But we want to grasp the kind of perspective that is found in these closing words. We want to see life from the vantage point of these two great patriarchs.