

BRIDGING

Church "Business" - part 5

The Life of Joseph

February 2, 2014

DAY 1: Bridging Starts with Caring in Action

1. Witnessing is building a **bridge** of friendship to someone so Jesus can walk across it and into their life. **Bridging** is *reflecting* the purpose and character of God to the people around you. Bridging occurs on a big scale and on a daily scale. Think of bridging as "living on mission."

2. We'll complete our study of Joseph as we look at three big pieces in which he was **bridging**.

3. We love emotional reunions! You've seen them on TV. A soldier returns from Iraq surprising his wife and kids during halftime of a football game. In Joseph's case, there have been twenty years of separation between he and his father. It is especially moving because Jacob believed Joseph to be dead.

Genesis 45:9 "Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰ You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty. ¹² And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³ You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here."

4. What was Joseph working to arrange?

5. What kind of planning is required?

6. How is he looking out for others?

7. His father, Jacob may not want to come to Egypt, let alone *move the entire extended family*, which was about seventy people. What other reasons might Jacob be reluctant to move?

8. How does Joseph address these fears?

9. Bridging starts with caring for others in practical ways. What can you do today to show someone you care about them?

DAY 2. Bridging is a Lifetime's Experience.

1. At last, Joseph and his father Jacob, also known as Israel will finally meet. Twenty years had passed since Joseph's "disappearance."

Genesis 46:28 Jacob had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to show the way before him in Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen. ²⁹ Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel (Jacob) his father in Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

2. What words or pictures come to mind in this reunion scene?

3. Have you had a similar scene in your life? What words described it?

4. Think of what Joseph had to do over the last twenty years to make this possible. From your study these last five weeks, what stands out to you?

a. What trials?

b. What sacrifices? What loss?

c. What shame?

5. The effect on Israel, the father is riveting. Listen to what flows out of his heart...

Genesis 46:30 Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."

6. Jacob, the father, had lived for twenty years with the supposed loss of his son. He now gets to see his adult son! What strikes you about Israel's statement?

7. Bridging involves initiative, care and sacrifice. Oftentimes, *you* are the one who has to take the initiative, perform the sacrifice and demonstrate that you care.

a. With whom should you take some initiative to demonstrate you care?

b. Is there some sacrifice needed?

c. Finish today with a personal prayer. Ask God to make you someone with initiative, care and a willingness to sacrifice for others.

DAY 3: Bridging May Involve Some Big Challenges

1. An international crisis hits at least Egypt and Canaan.

*Genesis 47:13 Now there was **no food** in all the land, for **the famine was very severe**, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan **languished** by reason of the famine. ¹⁴ And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁵ And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone." ¹⁶ And Joseph answered, "Give your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone." ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. He supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. ¹⁸ And when that year was ended, they came to him the following year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent. The herds of livestock are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land. ¹⁹ Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate." ²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh's. ²¹ As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other. ²² Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land. ²³ Then Joseph said to the people, "Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. ²⁴ And at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones." ²⁵ And they said, "You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh." ²⁶ So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; the land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh's.*

2. These are years where life and death hang in the balance. For the seven *previous* years, Joseph had been stockpiling grain.

3. What strikes you most from today's passage?

4. What risks did Joseph have to take?

5. What was the response of the people?

6. Joseph's good will, wise planning, thinking ahead and fair treatment won the day. Through his work, he "bridged" to all the people of Egypt.

7. Think about your work. Creating good will, using wisdom, planning ahead, etc. give you doors of opportunity to influence people. What would you like to do in your work week?

DAY 4. We're Never Done Bridging...

1. We jump ahead, as Jacob brings his entire family and household with him to Egypt. He lived about seventeen more years before dying. Joseph promises to bury his father back in Canaan in the family plot.

Genesis 50:15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him."

2. What did the brothers fear from Joseph?

3. What did their fear reveal about:

a. Themselves?

b. What they thought of Joseph, and his character?

¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

4. Do you think their father Jacob really "gave this command before he died?"

5. At least eighteen years have passed between Joseph revealing himself to his brothers and this moment. If you had been Joseph, what would you have thought about their fears of you? Would they have:

___ Depressed you? "Will they *ever* be honest men?"

___ Discouraged you? "What else should I expect?"

___ Made you angry? "... after all I've done for *them*?!"

___ Felt sorry for your brothers? "Without a meaningful relationship with God, of course they'd think this was a "good idea."

___ Wanted to give up every having a satisfying relationship built on mutual trust and respect?

___ Other: _____

6. Considering all the good will and good things Joseph had done for them, how should he think about this? How would you think about this?

DAY 5: Bridging Occurs thru How We Relate, How We Act, and our Attitude.

1. Yesterday we saw the foolishness of the ten brothers. They finished their little soliloquy with some melodrama!

Genesis 50:18 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants."

2. How would Joseph respond to his brothers?

¹⁹ *But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?"*

3. What does he address first? Their _____.

4. What reason does he give as to why they need not fear?

Genesis 50:20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

5. This last verse is one of the greatest verses in Christian theology!

a. What truth does he understand about human nature?

b. What truth does he understand about God?

c. What truth does he see about his life with God?

6. In spite of their foolishness, Joseph shines brightly, right to the end. He finishes his answer to his brothers...

²¹ *So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

7. He is "bridging!" It's happening through his:

a. Relationships; and how he relates to people. (He addresses their fear, and comforts them).

b. Actions: he will continue to provide for them.

c. Attitude: he spoke *kindly* to them!

8. What is the biggest take away from the life of Joseph? _____

9. Which "B" is your greatest challenge and cause for prayer?

Broken? Beloved? Belonging? Building? Bridging?

10. Is there an action step for you?