

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS

Genesis 47:27-48:22

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There are three points to today's sermon:

1. Jacob's Final Wishes.
2. Joseph's Family Ties.
3. Jacob's Final Acts of Favoritism.

As a reminder, we are studying the life of Joseph. Joseph's parents were Jacob and Rachel. Joseph's grandparents were Isaac and Rebekah, and Joseph's great-grandparents were Abraham and Sarah. Joseph had eleven brothers, the youngest named Benjamin. He also had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

In our series on the life of Joseph, we've covered:

- Some of his family lineage and sins that passed from one generation to the next, such as deception, jealousy, and extreme favoritism.
- Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery in Egypt.
- Joseph was a trusted servant in Egypt but went to jail for something he did not do.
- He was freed and became Pharaoh's second-in-command.
- Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to secure grain during the famine but Joseph did not reveal himself to his brothers.
- Instead, he devised an elaborate scheme to determine if their hearts had softened.
- When Joseph's brothers returned a second time with their youngest brother, Benjamin, Joseph honored them with a dinner but still did not reveal himself.
- He tested them again to see how they would treat Benjamin.
- After they passed all the tests, Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers.
- Jacob learns that Joseph is alive and, at the request of Joseph and with the blessing of God, moves the family to Egypt.

- Joseph introduces his family to Pharaoh and relocates them to the land of Goshen.
- The Egyptian people traded everything they had, including their freedom, in order to obtain grain from Joseph.

## 1-JACOB'S FINAL WISHES

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 47:28-31

*Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.<sup>28</sup> Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven.<sup>29</sup> When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, “If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt,<sup>30</sup> but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried.” “I will do as you say,” he said.<sup>31</sup> “Swear to me,” he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.*

**EXPLANATION:** Jacob and the rest of Joseph’s family lived and prospered in Egypt, but Egypt was never their home. As Jacob’s health failed, he made his burial wishes known to Joseph. There are several reasons why Jacob wanted to be buried with his forefathers:

- Jacob believed God’s promise that one day his family would be a great nation that owned and occupied the land of Canaan.
- Jacob, like many of us, wanted to be buried with the people he loved.
- The Egyptian land where Jacob and his family lived was borrowed from the Pharaoh. The family burial plot had been purchased by Abraham many years before and rightfully belonged to Jacob and his family.

So, we have Jacob’s final wishes. Let’s look at:

## 2-JOSEPH'S FAMILY TIES

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 48:1-11

*Some time later Joseph was told, “Your father is ill.” So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him.<sup>2</sup> When Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph*

*has come to you,” Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed. <sup>3</sup> Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me <sup>4</sup> and said to me, ‘I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.’*

That’s what God told Jacob many years prior. Now Jacob tells his son Joseph: <sup>5</sup>*“Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. <sup>6</sup> Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers.*

And then Jacob talks about the death of his wife, Rachel. Jacob had been in Egypt for 17 years and no doubt he had already seen Joseph’s sons. I believe what we have here is Joseph’s failing memory.

<sup>8</sup> *When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, “Who are these?” <sup>9</sup> “They are the sons God has given me here,” Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, “Bring them to me so I may bless them.” <sup>10</sup> Now Israel’s eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them. <sup>11</sup> Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too.”*

**EXPLANATION:** As Jacob’s health continued to decrease, Joseph wanted to make sure that he and his sons saw his father one last time. Ephraim and Manasseh had been born in Egypt before Jacob’s arrival. So at this time, they were young men, not children.

During Old Testament times, it was customary for a father to pass blessings upon his children. In many cases, only the oldest son was blessed. However, Jacob would go on to bless all his children. Sometimes a father or mother took their grandchildren as their own in order to replace children who died or to include them in the blessing or inheritance they would give. We see this in the story of Ruth and Naomi. When Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed, the Bible tells us that Naomi cared for him like her own.

Jacob grafted Ephraim and Manasseh into his family, giving them the full benefit of sons—not grandsons. In this way, he once again showed his favoritism to Joseph, because he was in essence giving Joseph a double blessing and a double portion of the inheritance.

Interestingly, this passage also gives us a glimpse into Jacob’s state of mind during his last days on earth. As is often the case with old age, Jacob seemed to have difficulty maintaining his train of thought. One minute, he talked about Ephraim and Manasseh. Then he started thinking and talking about Rachel’s death, and then he looked up and asked who the two young men were in front of him.

## **Jacob’s Final Wishes Joseph’s Family Ties**

### **3-JACOB’S FINAL ACTS OF FAVORITISM**

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 48:12-22

*Then Joseph removed them from Israel’s knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. <sup>13</sup> And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel’s left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them close to him. <sup>14</sup> But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim’s head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh’s head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. <sup>15</sup> Then he blessed Joseph and said, “May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, <sup>16</sup> the Angel who has delivered me from all harm—may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly on the earth.” <sup>17</sup> When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim’s head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. <sup>18</sup> Joseph said to him, “No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.” <sup>19</sup> But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.” <sup>20</sup> He blessed them that day and said, “In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.’” So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. <sup>21</sup> Then Israel said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to*

*the land of your fathers. <sup>22</sup> And to you I give one more ridge of land than to your brothers, the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.”*

**EXPLANATION:** Now there are a lot of cultural things going on here that are foreign to us. Joseph recognized his father’s failing sight and frailty of mind. Therefore, when Jacob placed the wrong hands on the wrong sons, he assumed it was a mistake. He did not want to embarrass his father. So, he simply tried to move the hands into the correct position. However, in this case, Jacob knew exactly what he wanted to do.

Much of Jacob’s life experiences resulted from being the youngest son. Jacob lived in his brother Esau’s shadow and had, by bribery and deceit, stolen the birthright and blessing that belonged to him. Then Jacob had to run away from his brother’s wrath. So, when it came to this particular custom, Jacob was not interested in following the rules. While both sons were blessed, Jacob intentionally gave the younger son, Ephraim, the greater blessing.

Just as our lives are undeniably intertwined with those we love, Joseph’s life was influenced and connected to his father’s.

Jacob, the man whose very name means deceiver, spent a lifetime doing things his own way.

- He bribed his brother and deceived his father to get what he wanted.
- He wrestled with God to obtain a blessing even though God’s blessing had already been promised through his forefathers.
- His cunning business practices produced results but drove a wedge between him and his father-in-law, and his favoritism toward his sons caused dissension and heartache within his family.

**ILLUSTRATION:** A forty-something-year-old woman named Teresa was spending time in Bible study and prayer when she got into one of those mental conversations with God. Have you ever had one of those? The thought crossed her mind that she and her husband would have another baby, and it would be a good thing for them in their older age. She felt the thought was from the Lord but she dismissed it.

A week later she was giving a person a ride to the airport, and they were having a random discussion. The person in the car said, “Why would anyone refuse a blessing from God?” Teresa wholeheartedly agreed. “Yes! That’s crazy,” she said. “Why *would* anyone refuse a blessing from God?” It did not occur to her until much later that her response to God had been just that—a refusal. So she said, “Whatever you want, God, but you will have to make it happen.” Only a few months later, she and her husband discovered they were expecting another child.

**APPLICATION:** What is the lesson here? Like Jacob, Teresa wanted God’s blessing but was not initially concerned with God’s plans or will. She was more interested in her own wishes than what God wanted—even if it was something good. In the same way, Jacob often made decisions based on his own wisdom. Sometimes, those decisions worked out for his own good or the good of those he loved. Sometimes, his decisions caused pain and heartache. God blessed Jacob in many ways, but Jacob was not a good example to his sons or to us regarding decision-making.

Proverbs 14:12 says, “*There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.*”

Proverbs 16: 9 says, “*In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.*”

Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “*‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’*”

**CONCLUSION:** The title of this message is “God’s Ways Are Not Our Ways”. We should never act or react out of our own wisdom. When we do, we are actually robbing ourselves of blessings. We cannot expect God’s blessing if we never ask for his advice. I say “advice” because he never forces us. Our best-laid plans are worthless if we fail to consult the Lord for guidance. Even if God wants us to do things that make absolutely no sense humanly speaking, who are we to argue? He’ll never want you to do something that is contrary to scripture, but it’s possible he’ll want you to do something that’s contrary to your well-thought-out plans. Our job is to seek God’s will, to listen to his word, and to obey his commands.

**INVITATION:** Do you regularly seek God’s will for your life, or do you rely upon your own wisdom and strength? Maybe you need to repent and ask him to forgive you.

Maybe you need to admit that your ways have not worked out so well and ask him to lead and guide you in the way you should go. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*” If you haven’t given your heart to the Lord, that’s the first step.

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