

## I. Intro

A. Thirty some years ago, when I was a college pastor, one of our leaders graduated and took a job with a small startup in Bellevue, Washington – named Microsoft. And during the ten years he worked there (before he retired) he got me set up with a computer.

B. He called one day and said he had one that he wanted to give to me. I said, “Not interested. I took some programming classes in college, but I’ve forgotten all of it and can’t imagine what I would ever use a computer for. He said, “things have changed.” I said, “Really, thanks but no thanks. I am not interested in carrying around stacks of punch cards everywhere I go.” He said, “things have changed.”

C. And he set me up with a desk top computer – and, well, I never looked back.

D. But those were the old days, and computers not only frequently crashed, they also slowed down. One day I called him and said, “This thing is getting slower and slower. What do I do?” He asked, “When did you last defrag it?” I said, “I have no idea what you are talking about. I’ve never heard the word, so, never.”

E. He explained that periodically I needed to run a program that cleaned up the computer. It filed things that were related in the same cell; it repaired damaged cells; it threw away duplicate and bad stuff. And it allowed the computer to run faster. So, I set it up and watched it work. It took about an hour and it ran this display of what it was doing.

F. Now some of you have no idea what I am talking about, because today, our computers defrag on their own. But as I watched it work, and thought about what it was doing – cleaning up files, combining related things, repairing broken cells, getting rid of bad data – I thought, “I want to defrag my life. I want to defrag my mind!”

G. Well, there is an app for that. It’s called the Sabbath, and we’re supposed to run it every seven days. But it requires something we often lack.

H. Now, you probably think the what we lack in order to defrag our life – to run the Sabbath app – is the time to do it.

1. I understand if you think that. I think that. With all that needs to be done, I can’t imagine not working.

2. But as I have worked on this – and I have for a long time. This has been a long-standing challenge for me. And I am taking some ground. But as I have worked on it. Prayed about it. Read about it, I have come to realize that my problem isn’t a lack of time. My problem is a lack of faith.

I. I share that because today’s topic is faith. My contention is that a lot of people “believe” in God, say they believe in Christ and the Gospel, but live like they do not.

II. This is the last week in this series. The premise has been that although most of us say that we want to get better, one of the problems we have is seeing ourselves accurately. We have blind spots.

A. Jacob has been our example. We’ve looked at a few others – Saul and Esau – but mostly Jacob, noting the problems he had with his dad, his inability to deal with conflict, the issues of unresolved anger.

B. And in addition to focusing on these blind spots, each week I have tried to hammer home the Gospel. I have argued that it is the blind spot antidote. Over and over, I have said that, as our identity rests more fully and finally in Christ – as we settle more fully into the Gospel - we are able to lower our defenses, drop our guard, and see ourselves more honestly. We are able to see some blind spots.

C. The premise here is that we're far worse than we ever imagined, and far more loved than we could ever dream.

D. Early on we tend to think of sin as things we have done (or not done) and the delta between God and us as small. The gap that grace needs to fill is small. Later we come to realize that we are far more broken than we realized – that the issue isn't sins we do it is who we are. We are not called sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners. And the delta between who we are and who we need to be is impossibly large.

E. Today I want us to look at the daylight that exists between what we claim to be believe – and how we live.

F. My contention is that lots of people believe that God exists, but behave as if he doesn't.

III. And once again, Jacob is our example. By now you should be familiar with the basic outline of his story.

A. Abraham and Sarah had Isaac. Isaac and Rebecca had twin sons – Jacob and Esau. This means, Jacob is: Abraham's grandson. He is also a bit of a physically weak, momma's boy and a cheat - who deceives his father and cheats his brother in order to get his brother's share of the family inheritance.

B. He then flees to a relative's home – having a profound encounter with God along the way. (This is Genesis 28 and Jacob's ladder).

C. He marries, starts a family and gains a lot of money – with lots of soap-opera worthy moments along the way – such as waking up to discover that you married the wrong sister. But he can't get along with his father-in-law, so he flees from there.

D. On his way home he has another profound encounter with God – he wrestles with God, as reported in Genesis 32, and prevails and so God changes his name.

IV. Today's insight comes as we contrast the lives of Jacob and his son Joseph – aka, Donny Osmond in *Joseph and the Technicolor Dream Coat*.

A. Jacob has ten sons with his wife Leah – the first sister who he did not want to marry. Meanwhile, Rachel – his favorite wife – does not have any children. Then finally Rachel gets pregnant and gives birth to a son, Joseph, who becomes Jacob's favorite (with all of the soap-opera level drama that grows out of that).

B. The older ten brothers do not like Joseph – especially when he reports special dreams in which they are all bowing down to him, and after his father gives him the “coat of many colors.”

C. One day – this is Genesis 37 - when Joseph is 17, Jacob sends him to take a message to his older boys. They capture him and throw him in a pit, while they figure out whether to kill him. They end up selling him to a slave trader who happens to be traveling by, telling Jacob he was killed by a wild animal.

D. Joseph is taken into Egypt where he works as a servant for an Egyptian administrator named Potiphar. He gains favor in Potiphar's home until he is falsely accused of harassment by Potiphar's wife and sent to prison. He gains stature in prison – in part by being a good guy, but also by interpreting dreams. He languishes there for about 20 years, when his super-natural ability to interpret dreams comes to the attention of the Pharaoh, and he interprets the Pharaoh's dreams.

1. This was the dream about seven bountiful harvests and seven lean harvests. Seven fat cows and seven skinny cows.
2. As a result, Pharaoh promotes him.

E. Meanwhile, back at home, Jacob is miserable, because not only has Rachel died, but he lost Joseph. And then a famine hits and they have no food. So the brothers decide to journey to Egypt to buy some.

F. In Genesis 42 – 50, we read as this leads the ten sons to make an appeal to Joseph – who they do not recognize. If you do not know how that turns out, you have to read it. High drama. But eventually Joseph finds out Jacob is still alive and has everyone move to Egypt and live there – which they will do for a long time. (A Pharaoh arises that doesn't know Joseph and will enslave the Jews. They serve as slaves for 400 years until Moses is called to free them.

G. My reason for stopping here for a moment is the great line in Genesis 50: 20, where – after Jacob dies and the ten brothers are worried that Joseph will now have them killed, he says, “What you meant for evil, God intended for good.”

V. Now, as an aside, Joseph is important in God's unfolding plan for reasons beyond the way his life contrasts to Jacob's.

A. For starters, Joseph is important because he is part of God's plan to protect and sustain and continue the Jews. You need to realize that the Old Testament is not a bunch of morality lessons, good advice and inspirational stories. Those are there, and they have some value. Sometimes we need some inspirational stories. But the Old Testament is principally an arrow that leads to Christ. It is the story of the lengths to which God will go to protect and preserve the Jews – to honor the promise he made to Abraham that through his blood line the promised Messiah will be delivered.

B. Secondly, Joseph is important because he is a forerunner of Jesus. Think about it – there are about twenty things we can point to, but the gist of it is that they are: favored sons who are rejected by others and yet, through faithfulness and suffering ascend to the highest throne in the land and become a blessing to the nations. This is just another of the many ways things are setting up Christ. (Remember, Jacob's ladder – which in John 1, Jesus said, was him. Remember, Jesus is the new and better Israel, the new and better Jonah, the new and better Temple, the new and better Passover Lamb. Well, he is also the new and better Joseph.

1. There is a lot more: they are both sold for silver coins, people bow before them, for a time their true identity is hidden.

VI. There is a lot going on here. For today, I want to note that Joseph is important as a contrast with Jacob.

A. When you set them side by side you see that they had a fair bit in common:

1. Both of their moms struggled with infertility
2. Both are younger brothers who become the leader of the family.
3. Both of them have trouble getting along with their brothers
4. Both end up living – and dying - in Egypt.

B. But what stands out are the differences. Jacob arguably has more interactions with God – big, personal, defining interactions with God, such as special dreams and wrestling matches. But he remains anxious. He is unhappy. He lacks faith. He acts as though he has to do it all himself and he lives like a conniving, self-serving jerk.

C. Meanwhile, Joseph – who has a harder life - is trusting and honest. And appears to have a sense of joy and settledness that is amazing. (It certainly got the Pharaoh's attention).

1. Jacob has an amazing life – one in which God does so much for him and guides him, but he feels like everything is against him and he cannot see God's hand. As a result, he is anxious and fearful; and He lies and deceives.
2. Joseph, who arguably has a much more difficult time, learns to wait and trust. He does not lie and deceive. And he arguably has a much better life.

VII. So here is the question. Who are you – Jacob or Joseph?

A. Have you learned to trust God or do you say you believe that He exists, but you behave as if he doesn't? Do you have a vital faith? Or is this a blind spot. As some of you know, when I speak on faith, I often work to get us on the same page, because the word is used in a variety of ways:

1. Some use it to refer to all of Christianity. The Christian Faith.
2. Some use it to refer to a gift of belief from the Holy Spirit – a way it often is used in Romans.
3. Some use it in a derogatory way – to refer to believing in things we know are not really true.
4. I am using it here as a synonym of trust – and I am claiming that it is measured by our actions. The faith you have is the faith you show. We get a glimpse of our heart by looking at a handful of things – last week we talked about what makes us mad. Well there is another thing that shows us our heart: how do you live your life. How do you spend your time and money?
5. Let me further qualify this to say, I am not suggesting that our faith has merit based on our passion. That our strong faith is what makes things happen. Christian faith (though perhaps emotionally a bit weak) is trust in a God who is strong.

B. When I first came to faith, one of the questions I was asked was, “If it was illegal to be a Christ-follower, would they have enough evidence to arrest you? And it was generally understood that the questions were:

1. How do you spend your time? What do you do?
2. And how to you spend your money?

C. I think the calendar test is a good one. It does show what we value. And so when I teach Doctorate of Ministry classes I require students to keep a time log of their two weeks.

1. But, I get a bit nervous about the assumption that church things – Bible Studies and time at church – are what is counted as religious. That is a sacred and secular divide I do not want to make
- D. I actually think the check book issue is a bit easier. If you say you are generous, but your check book says otherwise, you are not generous.
    1. If your habits do not line up with what you say are your priorities, then what you think are your priorities are not really your priorities.
  - E. And I say all of that because you may have some big blind spots around faith.
- VIII. Video: I want us to watch a brief video of someone who has been attending this series and listen to him reflect on his own blind spots.
- A. Many people believe God exists but behave as if he does not.
  - B. Many people say they believe in God, but live like Jacob not like Joseph.
  - C. When it comes down to it, there is little trust in God. And this is a big issue.
- IX. This week I happened upon a passage in a Bible study on Jesus that jumped out at me for another reason. It's Matthew 13:54, we read this account where a group of people are marveling about Jesus.
- A. *Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"*
  - B. And then they say this: And they took offense at him... And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.
  - C. Wouldn't that be an awful thing to have said about your home, about your family, about you? Jesus couldn't do much in or through you because of you just didn't believe Him. "Lord, why don't You do more in our church?" Could it be because of people's unbelief?
- X. Is a lack of faith a blind spot for you? Are you more like Jacob or Joseph?
- A. Now, if you think, “uh, there is a bit more Jacob in me than I would like to admit,” you might want to ask the question: how do I grow my faith?
  - B. Not rocket science. You know what to do.
    1. Cultivate your soul by reading the Bible and attending church.
    2. Be intentional about having time with God.
    3. Be generous with your money.
  - C. Let me also offer a helpful little tool. I ran across this a couple years ago in a book on obedience. It is called the Ten Second Rule. Which just says, do the next thing you are reasonably certain God would have you do. And do it for the next ten seconds.