

Go Big and Don't Go Home

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Date: 08 June 2025

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[0:00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. If you'd like to learn a little bit more about us, you can always go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today to the preaching of God's Word. I am excited to get into the Word, but most importantly, let the Word of God just get into us and transform these hearts. Now, it's pretty common in a rural community like Greensburg, like Decatur County, to walk by someone and say, how are you? And occasionally, you'll hear someone say, live in the dream. Now, they might say it kind of sarcastically. You know, live in the dream, which can often mean, man, I'm tired. Life's a grind. I'm just going to pretend like everything's okay when it's really not, but I just got to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Or you may find someone kind of downcast who says in a sad tone, live in the dream. And what they mean is, I just don't understand God's plan because this feels too much like a nightmare.

[1:10] I just don't get why I have to go through all this. But here I am. Or on a brighter note, you may even come across someone who says very sincerely and joyfully, man, I'm living the dream. Life is good. I'm too blessed to be stressed.

And listen, I don't know which living the dream scenario you can relate to. But in this series, starting today, we're jumping into the story of Joseph and discovering that he could relate to all three as he lived out the literal dreams that God had shown him.

Now, for those who may be newer to the Bible, when I say Joseph, I'm not talking Joseph and Mary, New Testament Joseph, you know, Jesus's earthly father, kind of.

Now, we're talking all the way back to the year 1914. 1914 B.C. to Joseph, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham.

We're talking Genesis, Joseph. So if you'd like to follow along today, you can go to the first book of the Bible, so easy to find, Genesis chapter 37.

[2:20] And you can even go to the sermon notes that we have. If you go to the YouVersion Bible app, go under events and under First Christian Church of Greensburg. Now, I have to tell you, today's message is going to be fast.

It's going to cover a lot of ground. And we're going to go big as I simply want to paint the greater picture of Joseph's life. And then for the rest of the nine-week series, we'll slow down a little bit and we'll study the scriptures a little more closely to see how awesome our God really is and how he is still working in every part of our lives today, showing us how to live the dream of walking with Jesus daily.

Now, before we start this series, let me just pray that God will do an incredible work. Father, we just come before you and we just ask that right now, as we humbly bow our hearts before your word, that you will just have your way, that you will do an incredible work in us, that we may truly seek your heart and realize that everything that happens in life, you can work in it, and you can accomplish great things.

Father, do an incredible work in our hearts during this series. We pray all this in Jesus' holy name. Amen. Well, at the end of May, Bethany and I had the chance to get away for three days in Gatlinburg with no kids.

A family in our church had blessed us with their timeshare, which was so kind, and we got to see some beautiful scenery of God's creation. But one thing Bethany wanted to do was the Smoky Mountain Alpine Coaster.

[4:03] She even found a Groupon for it, which made me feel like I couldn't say no. So we went, and I have to tell you, my body has just changed. I feel kind of sissified saying this because I'm only

41, but where I used to go on every single roller coaster at Kings Island, no problem.

Man, I now get a little queasy just driving around the turns between Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg. And I was suspicious that this Alpine Coaster might not sit well.

Now, the good news was that I got to control the speed. They had a saying with the levers on the side of your individual little cart that you're in, and it said push to go or pull to slow.

And no, I didn't throw up. I just felt a little yucky at the end. But I tell you that story to simply say, listen, now's the time to put on your seatbelt because we're going to go full speed for the rest of this message, and you're not going to be able to pull back on the levers to slow down.

So let's talk first about the big picture. The big picture, and it's simply the Messiah, Jesus. It's all about Jesus, the main character of all Scripture.

[5 : 11] In roughly 1,900 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Joseph appears on the scene. But even long before Joseph, in Genesis 1-1, we learn about Elohim.

In the beginning, God, it's the Hebrew word Elohim. In the beginning, Elohim created the heavens and the earth. In six days, he spoke creation into being.

And after he had made man in his image, he looked over all his creation, and he said, what? It was very good. And then he rested on the seventh day.

As Adam and Eve come into the picture, they are blessed to live in the Garden of Eden, enjoying the perfection of God's creation with only one rule. Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And yet, with all this amazing food around them, living in perfect intimacy with God, with one another, with his creation, Satan gets to work. And he deceives them into eating from that tree.

[6 : 15] Sin enters the world. It changes everything. And yet, even in this grim moment, there's hope in Genesis 3-15 that the seed of the woman, we know later that that's Jesus, right?

The seed of the woman would crush Satan's head. It's not long before murder and every kind of wickedness take over the world. In fact, Genesis 6-5 puts it like this.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

You think our world today is bad? And in a lot of ways, it is. But it doesn't even compare to this time. But there was one exception in this tenth generation of mankind.

It was Noah and his family. God led Noah to build the ark. The flood came upon the earth. And God spared this man, his family, and two of every kind of animal.

[7 : 12] And he even made a covenant to never destroy the earth again by water. And he gave the rainbow as the sign of his faithfulness. But even through Noah's family, wickedness would continue for generations as we come to a man named Abram.

You may recognize him better by the name he was given later, Abraham. And that's when God makes him a promise in Genesis 12, starting in verse 1.

The Lord said to Abram, Go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you.

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. Now, can you see it here? Is this starting to come into focus a little bit? See, starting in Genesis 3, after sin came into this world, God had a redemption plan to bring us back to intimacy with him.

To crush Satan's head through a coming Messiah. To preserve the line of the Savior through Noah. To build a great nation through Abraham.

[8 : 20] That through his line would come the greatest king that Israel ever knew, King David. And through the line of David would come the Messiah Jesus to set his people free.

So to understand the story of Joseph, we have to grasp the big picture. That Joseph's life was not about Joseph getting a high status, or proving his dream right, or getting revenge on his brothers, or even just saving a lot of people.

His life was all about preserving the line that Jesus would come through so that you and I could have our sins washed away. So that we could walk on this earth in a peace that passes all understanding, being used by the Lord to build his kingdom.

So that we, when our days come to an end, or if Jesus comes back first, so that we will fly away into his presence for all eternity. And in the words of Albert E. Brumley, I know you've probably sung this before, some glad morning.

When this life is over, I'll fly away. To a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away. So the big picture of Joseph's life, of all of scripture, of your life, of my life, is simply to make Jesus known. [9 : 39] To shine the Messiah's love and grace wherever we go. Because listen, if your sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus, if his grace covers you, if his spirit fills you, if his favor rests upon your life, and his salvation is being worked out day by day as you walk in his joy, then listen, you have something to celebrate.

You have something to share. And like our vision statement here at FCC says, Jesus first in everything. Because when Jesus is first, everything else falls into place.

So the big picture of our lives must be Jesus first before being famous, before people knowing who I am, before power and control over things, before money or houses or cars or RVs or fancy toys, before notoriety, before position.

Because the big picture is the Messiah Jesus. And when he has first place in your life, when he is the treasure that you seek, you will walk in the joy of your salvation.

How did Jesus say this in John 10, 9 and 10? He said, I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture.

[11 : 02] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. But I have come that you may have life and have it to the full. So even though Joseph couldn't understand in that moment, all that God was really doing, he was a faithful vessel that helped usher in the Savior of the world.

So church, listen to me for a second. Let's make our Messiah Jesus the big picture. And I'm telling you, you will never, ever regret it.

So I just painted a very quick view of Genesis leading up to Joseph's great grandpappy, Abraham. And with every generation came an heir, the family line by which the Messiah would one day enter. And as we come to Jacob, we see at first he has 11 sons between his two wives and their two handmaidens. Benjamin would come later, so we're not counting him right now.

And I'm telling you guys, this has Jerry Springer written all over it. You can almost hear as we start in Genesis 37, you can almost hear them chanting, Jerry, Jerry, Jerry.

[12 : 13] And yet here's the amazing thing about our God. When we jack everything up, and here's your second point here, the big point, the Lord can turn messes into mission.

When our lives are complete chaos, when we have screwed everything up, the Lord can turn messes into a mission. Now, before we go judging Jacob's tribe, how many of you can be honest here that our families have their own dysfunction, right?

You're not alone. Every one of us can point to different areas of our family that need Jesus to come into it. Areas that cause heartache or anger, bitterness, confusion, separation, grudges, and shame. Joseph understood this very well. When we're first introduced to him in Genesis 37, we learn that he is 17 years old, so just a kid, baby of the family, and clearly daddy's favorite among the sons in this sheep herding family.

And Genesis 37, starting in verse 3, puts it like this. Now Israel, so that's another name for Jacob that God gives him. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made him an ornate robe for him.

[13 : 37] When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. So right off the top, we have favoritism, envy, jealousy, hatred, and division.

And listen, Joseph isn't innocent. He is a tattletale running to daddy about his older brothers. And you know the saying that will prove to be true for Joseph. Snitches get stitches and they end up in ditches, right?

Or in Joseph's case, they end up in a cistern. And on top of being a narc to his brothers, Joseph is arrogant and flaunting that coat, that robe of many colors, and his high status with his daddy.

He also has a couple dreams that show him ruling over his brothers. And instead of keeping those dreams to himself, what's he do? He runs to his brothers, bragging all the way.

See, with my siblings, I was the youngest of three until I was 10. Then my parents got guardianship of my second cousin.

[14 : 43] And listen, my brother was almost five years older than me. And then my sister was about three and a half years older than me. And if I felt the need to strut around asserting myself over my brother, man, I ended up with a swirly, an atomic wedge, or crying to my mom in pain.

Not a good idea, Joseph, okay? In fact, his punishment would be worse than mine. See, Joseph's dad sent the brothers off to graze the flocks a little ways from home and check them. And one day, he sends Joseph to go check on his brothers and then report back how everything's going. Well, when his brothers see him coming, they devise a plan to kill him. But one of his brothers, Reuben, steps in, and he convinces them to just rough him up and hurl him into a cistern. By the way, he was planning on rescuing him later. But before he can do that, they see a Midianite merchant. They see this Midianite merchant group coming, and they decide to sell him into slavery. Knowing that they had to explain this to Jacob, they take his fancy robe, they rub some goat blood on it, and they tell their father that they found it, and Joseph must have been killed by a ferocious animal. [15:59] And so begins Joseph's journey. And before you think Joseph is just a spoiled little brat, destined for a life of servitude and sulking, yes, he's made mistakes.

He was a product of his father's favoritism for sure. But there was still a godly foundation that had been laid. As he found himself now, going from the favorite in the family, now to a lowly servant in the house of Potiphar, the captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the most powerful man in all of Egypt. But watch what happens when we trust God in the hard moments of our lives. Genesis 39, starting in verse 2, the Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.

When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant.

Potiphar put him in charge of his household and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. We even see this passage go on to say that everything flourished with Joseph over the household.

[17:13] See, when life smacks you in the face, it is so easy to give up, to crawl into our hole and to pout about it. Man, I've done it too. But Joseph didn't.

Instead, he chose to believe because it was true that God was with him and that his story was far from over. Listen, I wonder who listening to this today needs to hear that.

When bad things happen that you can't control. When terrible things happen that you could control, but you made a bad choice and now you have consequences. When a relationship seems too far gone.

When a child seems too prodigal. Regardless, when you cry out to Jesus sincerely, surrendering all of you to all of him, he is so full of power and grace and divine wisdom that he can jump right into our mess and do exactly what Romans 8.28 teaches.

It says, And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Listen, just because you messed up doesn't mean God's quit on you.

[18:21] It doesn't mean that his purpose isn't still right there for you. And don't let your mess make you quit on God either. Wow. Things are really looking up for Joseph, aren't they?

And then Potiphar's wife comes into the story. Of course, she's been there all along. Flirting with Joseph is the rich wife of a powerful man who's probably attractive and never been told no a day in her life.

And we learn from Genesis 39.6 that Joseph and I have something in common. It says he was well built and handsome. Maybe not for me.

But anyways, for him it was true. And Potiphar's wife finally gives up the flirtation and she gets much more friendly as we keep this G-rated for family listening.

And Joseph, when he could have easily given in to the flesh, given in to the temptation, he says, no way. I'm not going to betray Potiphar who has entrusted all of this to me.

[19:19] But most importantly, I'm not going to betray my God who's been with me every step of the way. And you may know the next part. She claims Joseph came after her.

Her husband believes the lie and off Joseph goes to a prison without trial. And remember, this as we keep going, he's in a prison specifically for the king's prisoners because of Potiphar's high position.

See, God knows exactly what he's doing even when it doesn't make sense to us in the moment. How many of you have ever looked back on your life, let's say years later, and you can just see God's hand and his guidance and his wisdom all over it, right?

Absolutely. But we couldn't always see it in the moment, could we? No, because we're human. And in Genesis 39, starting in the second part of verse 20, it says, but while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him.

He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison and he made responsible for all that was done there.

[20 : 29] So here the prison is running better than it ever has while God is leading Joseph. I think we see a pattern here. Everywhere Joseph goes, things go well.

And one day in comes Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. They had obviously offended the most powerful man in the world. And after a little while, both men have a dream on the same night that disturbed them.

To make a long story short, God gives Joseph the ability to interpret those dreams. It all happens exactly as he says. The chief cupbearer was restored to his position.

The baker was executed. But all that Joseph asked for in return, he asked the cupbearer, when you get back to your position, remember me and mention me to Pharaoh.

But Genesis 40, 23 tells us he forgot him. He didn't say a word, at least at first. But listen, God was still moving.

[21 : 29] And two years later, so Joseph has been in prison for years now. Two years later, when Pharaoh has a dream that none of his magicians, none of his wise men could interpret, suddenly the light bulb goes off and the cupbearer says, Eureka, there's a Hebrew man in prison that interpreted my dream and it came true just as he said it would.

And so they sent for Joseph. And only through God's power, he interprets Pharaoh's dream that seven years of abundance are coming on the land that will then be followed by seven years of severe famine.

And then Joseph even gives a plan of how they should go about the next 14 years to save the people from starvation. And it says that Pharaoh and his officials are so impressed by the plan that Pharaoh takes Joseph, puts him in charge, makes him the number two man over all of Egypt behind only Pharaoh himself.

Listen, only God can do that. And as if that wasn't enough, taking a servant and then a prisoner and then making him one of the most powerful men in the world, there's more.

See, through Joseph's leadership, he's able to put together a plan to stockpile all this food and they were prepared when the famine came. And as it intensified, Jacob, so Joseph's dad, he heard that, wow, there's grain in Egypt and they're desperate.

[22 : 57] So he sends his sons. And to make a long story short, Joseph supplied the grain, saved his father and brothers from starvation, and that's the part that Joseph could actually see.

But what he didn't understand is that he was preserving the line through his brother Judah that the Messiah would one day enter the world to save us from our sins.

Now, can you imagine the look on Joseph's brother's faces? They never expected him to be this powerful guy in Egypt. And as they learned that he's alive, that he's actually in charge of their fate, when they thought he was dead, they couldn't see that God had been working in all these circumstances to bring about his perfect plans.

And when he could have gotten revenge, Joseph could have gotten revenge. When he could have thrown them all in prison to experience what he had faced for years, there was no bitterness and there was no rage, there was no revenge, because of Joseph says to his brothers in Genesis 50.

And a lot of people call this the theme verse for the whole story. Here's what he says, when their father had passed away, and now they're afraid that he's now gonna seek revenge.

[24 : 15] Here's what Joseph says. He says, don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? He says, you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Church, we just covered a lot for one Sunday, but let's slow down for a moment here. There may be people that you have encountered in this life that intended to harm you.

There may be storms that have left you reeling and in rebuild mode. There might even be a fight with addiction, whether it's alcohol or drugs or porn or screen time or shopping or a thousand other things.

But guess what? But you're still standing. You're still breathing. There's still air in your lungs and God is able to do more than you can imagine.

He's able to come into the rest of your story and accomplish what Ephesians 3.20 tells us. It says, now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power, that is at work within us.

[25 : 23] Now, going into my sabbatical that I was able to take in the month of May, I wasn't sure what to expect. Yes, I had a vacation planned to relax, a conference for renewal, and some Bethany and I time planned.

I had two mentors I met with for wisdom. I read a really good book called The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry. But you know what I needed more than the beach, more than the mountains, more than encouragement from a friend, or time with my sweetie, or a book to read.

I needed time with Jesus through his word, the one who has saved my soul. See, entering May, if I can just be real honest, I was tired.

The check engine light was on. And if you know cars, it had about four different codes attached to it. I'd been running full steam ahead for years, doing it all for the Lord, with the right heart, I believe, yes.

But oftentimes, I was doing it in my own strength. And guys, that's a recipe for burnout. And one thing I learned is that before the title, pastor or husband or dad, I am a child of the King.

[26 : 33] And I am made in the image of God. And I need to sit at His feet every day as much as I need air to breathe. I need His word, His truth, to immerse my mind.

I need His grace to flood my heart. And I need the Holy Spirit to direct my steps, doing a fresh work in me. And the same is true for you. And so as we embark on this nine-week journey called living the dream, I need you to understand that the dream may sometimes feel like a nightmare, not always going the way that maybe we had envisioned.

But like Joseph, I'd rather take that wild ride, ending up in the center of His will, than the comforts that I would always choose. And when the Lord has all of us, our messes will turn into a mission. Here's the challenge for you this week. I want you to spend some time in prayer. I want you to look back over your life. And I want you to really start to see, even verbalize, how God has taken every twist and every turn and used it for His glory.

And maybe you are in the middle of that mess right now and you just need to stop and say, God, will you take every twist and turn, take my heart and use it for your glory?

[27 : 49] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, I just want to thank you for your word today. Thank you for how you have just spoken this truth and this wisdom over us.

I know today we just covered a lot of ground through Genesis and through the whole story of Joseph. But Lord, as we slow down and we just start to break this down over the next eight weeks, will you just speak to our hearts?

Will you just draw us closer to you and help us to see how you are working out, even the bad things that people intend for us, you are working it all out for good because you are awesome.

So God, have your way. Take our lives, make us more like Jesus, and use us for your glory. We pray all of this in Jesus' holy and precious name. And God's people said, amen and amen.

Hey, real quick, invitation for you. If you do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior and you would like to have that conversation, maybe just got some faith questions you want to ask, reach out to us.

[28 : 57] My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. You can reach us by calling 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at FCCgreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you. I hope you have a fantastic week.