

## Choosing Obedience

Israel said to Joseph, “As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them.” “Very well,” he replied (Genesis 37:13).

**Scripture:** Genesis 37:12-17

**Song:** “Good, Good Father”

Summer was fading away, and sixth grade was around the corner. It was time to remove the air conditioner from my bedroom window. I should have listened and waited for my father, as he had asked. Instead, I decided to handle it myself. It nearly fell onto the driveway. As I yelled for help, my father came to the rescue. I understood why I should have listened and obeyed.

When Joseph’s father asked him to go to his brothers, he could have disobeyed. But he listened, replied “Very well,” and then went. Our heavenly Father asks the same of us. He wants us to listen and act in obedience.

Our God is a good Father. He is familiar with all our needs and knows the best way to meet them. When the Lord tugs on our hearts to obey Him, let’s lay down our plans in favor of His instructions. When choosing to listen is hard, let us ask Him for the strength to reply, “Very well.”

**Heavenly Father**, please refresh us with a heart that desires obedience and delights in Your ways. Remind us that we need You in every moment. Let Your will be done. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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## When Comfort Doesn't Come

**All [Jacob's] sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted** (Genesis 37:35).

**Scripture:** Genesis 37:29-36

**Song:** “Broken Vessels”

I could not believe my ears. For years, I'd reassured myself that my parents' marriage was unshakable—but I was mistaken. Instead of choosing each other, one of them had chosen someone else. After I heard the news, I sank into the couch and wept. Tissues and hugs did not bandage my heart. The comfort of seeing them reunited never came.

In today's passage, Jacob's heart was wounded to a point beyond mending. The love he had for Joseph was so great that his grief was inconsolable. There are wounds in this world that we do not have the tools to repair. When we crave a change in circumstances, God sometimes does not change our situation—but does transform our hearts. When our circumstances seem dire, the Lord is faithful to deliver hope.

My grandma said, “God is in the business of figuring things out.” So whether the situation is a failing marriage, the loss of a family member, or a crippling illness, we can always put our hope in God. Our good Lord is always moving and restoring broken situations. We can surrender our hurt into the hands of the Almighty. He will be our peace even when comfort doesn't come.

**Father,** thank You for using hard circumstances to transform our hearts. When we cannot find comfort, You are still faithful. Help us to surrender our broken hearts to You. Fill us with Your peace that surpasses understanding. In Jesus' name, amen.

## The Gift of Thankfulness

**Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise?** (Psalm 106:1-2).

**Scripture:** Psalm 106:1-6, 16-22

**Song:** “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

I was caught off guard in the nicest way. My husband shared how thankful he was for me and all that I do. Two words deeply touched my heart: “Thank you.” It’s amazing how being thankful can bless both ourselves and others. Approaching the people we care about with gratitude radically changes our perspective. Gratitude strengthens relationships and especially our relationship with the Lord.

The opening of Psalm 106 is a beautiful example of approaching God with thankfulness. More often than not, I find myself coming to Him focused on my needs instead of on His presence in my life and His goodness to me. I lay down a grocery list of problems instead of lifting my hands and voice in praise. Our almighty Father deserves our utmost gratitude. He gave us our Savior, and He holds all our lives in His powerful hands.

When we go to the Father in prayer, let’s lift up our hearts in gratitude. Our good God has showered us with grace and love. He has everything in His hands, and we really hold nothing in our own. Every good thing is a gift from Him (James 1:17). Thank You, Lord.

**Father,** we are so thankful for all the good You have brought to our lives. Through Jesus, You have saved us from death and have given us new life. Hallelujah! You are good. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## When Jealousy Attacks

**“Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him” (Acts 7:9).**

**Scripture:** Acts 7:9-15a

**Song:** “God With Us”

I could feel the tears in my eyes. After collecting myself in the restroom, I rejoined the class. Although I was only in preschool, jealousy had attacked. During show-and-tell, a girl with curly red hair brought in a seashell that made a sound like the ocean. I was so jealous of her that I didn't even want to be in the same room, let alone to be her friend or be happy for her. Jealousy is a powerful emotion. When we let it into our hearts, our relationships usually suffer.

Joseph's brothers compared their father's perspective of them with the favoritism he showed for Joseph. Then they let their emotions control their thoughts, which led to harmful actions. And then separation followed. But God remained with Joseph in Egypt and also with the rest of the family back in Canaan.

God does not separate himself from us. He stands by us in every moment. When we remind ourselves that He is still with us, even in the most difficult times, we gain help to turn to Him. And like Joseph in Egypt, we wait for God to redeem the mess of our lives for His purposes and our good.

**Father**, thank You for never leaving us when we make a mess of our lives because of our jealousy. Please remind us daily of Your everlasting love and of our hope in Your power to redeem and restore us. In Jesus' name, amen.

## The Blessing of Submission

**Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you** (James 4:7).

**Scripture:** James 4:1-7

**Song:** “I Surrender”

I didn't want to give up control. Unexpectedly, I had lost my job and was fighting with everything I had to find another. I applied for an absurd number of jobs in the span of a few weeks, and I went to countless interviews. I grew impatient as each potential employer turned me down. *How could God let this happen?* I wondered. As I struggled to submit to His will, the Lord was patient with me. And in His goodness, after I eventually learned, He blessed me with a job that I love. Now I understand the blessing of submission.

I used to have a problem with the word submission. It would bring up images of a dictatorship or just complete loss of control. I now understand it to be the choice of yielding to another person's will. However, we are not submitting to just any person but, instead, to almighty God. When we choose to follow God, our lives move from chaos to clarity, from pain to peace. We gain strength as we learn to trust God enough to walk behind Him.

When hard circumstances come, fight the urge to take the lead. In submitting to the Lord, we gain His protection in His perfect plan. The devil flees when we say yes to the Father. Praise the Lord, for He will never lead us astray.

**Father**, thank You for being our protector. Your will is better than our own. Help us to bravely trust You and submit to Your sovereignty. In Jesus' name, amen.

## A Father's Love

**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 an ornate robe for him** (Genesis 37:3).

**Scripture:** Genesis 37:2-11, 23-24a, 28

**Song:** “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us”

One afternoon my dad was driving me back to college. My weekend visit had come and gone. Peaceful music was playing quietly. Then as I turned to look at the vast array of trees, I heard it: “I love you, Jasmine.” I was completely baffled. My father was more apt to use light-heartedness and humor to show affection. So whenever he verbalized his feelings, it mattered.

Israel expressed his love in a different manner. Instead of using spoken words, he put his hands to work. Through the gift of a beautiful robe for his son, we can hear the words of his heart.

Our heavenly Father displays His perfect love in countless ways. Therefore, there are many ways that we can experience His affection. However, the fullness of His love was made complete through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Can you imagine giving up your only child or staying quiet as your accusers sentenced you to death? What an astounding example of sacrifice!

Although Jesus said “It is finished” (John 19:30), the story doesn’t end there. He actively pursues us in the present. He desires a working relationship with us. Let’s take a moment and reflect on our Savior’s unmatched love.

**Dear Father,** thank You for loving us. Alleluia! Your love is perfect. Remind us that where earthly love falters, Your love is steadfast. In Jesus’ name, amen.