



BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

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Joseph

Genesis 37 & 45

~ Brent Russell ~

- **Let me test you to see how bright you are**
- I used to be an **engineer** so I am going to stick mostly with numbers since I know them best
- I am to give you a **series of things** and you get to guess the next item in the series (chocolate for the person who guesses right)

❖ <i>a, b, c, d, X</i>	<i>E (Alphabet)</i>
❖ <i>1, 2, 3, 4, X</i>	<i>5 (Counting numbers)</i>
❖ <i>Green, yellow, X</i>	<i>Red (Traffic lights)</i>
❖ <i>1, 3, 5, 7, X</i>	<i>11 (Prime numbers)</i>
❖ <i>1, 1, 2, 3, 5, X</i>	<i>8 (Fibonacci sequence)</i>

- You recognize the next items in the sequence because your brain has been **programmed to recognize patterns**
- You can drive a **car** or ride a **bike** or **knit** a jersey simply because our brains are wired to understand, remember and create patterns
- **Music** as you have heard Mandy and Tony play are complex patterns
- If you go to the **library** you can find a book because you understand patterns
- **There are all sorts of patterns that we understand without having to think about them**
- We understand them sometimes **because of our nature**
- Sometime because we have been **taught to recognize them**

- **I want to teach you to recognize some patterns today**
- **There are patterns in our lives that have to do with God and in the story of Joseph there are two that I want to share with you**
- Now this **sounds complicated** – I hope it is not complicated when I have explained myself fully
- **I believe it is important to help you understand yourselves and God better**
- **And will make reading the OT much more fun**
- I preached some weeks back on Jacob and Esau and in the sermon I made two points: Here is what I wrote about reading the OT

Firstly in the characters look for yourself

- These **characters are human** like us
- They are all **tempted**, they all **sin**
- **They are reflections of our own lives**
- They are people **interacting with those around them and with God**
- And so their stories often reflect our own **struggles with our faith**
- **And so we learn from their mistakes and their successes**

Secondly seek Christ

- **If you had to write a book your personality would be part of it**
 - You would find your **character reproduced** in the book
 - **Mannerisms, styles of language** that are common to you would somehow find themselves in the book
 - **And so too in the texts of the Bible – They contain the very fingerprints of Christ**
 - Every story of the Old testament contains the **mark of Jesus** and so you will often find stories reflecting Jesus relationship with us
 - **The story of Christ is hidden behind the stories of the Old Testament**
- Both of these have to do with patterns of behaviour that God has placed in the world
 - So let me split immediately into two parts which are at one level related but at others are quite separate

Firstly patterns of Christ

- All over the Bible there are people whom theologians call "**types**" of Christ
- **Patterns of Christ if you like**
- **People who because of their belief in God and their obedience to God produce patterns of behaviour that are Christ-like**
- Even though they had no knowledge of Him

- **But not only behaviour, as God writes the events of their lives he patterns those events on the coming life of Jesus**
- **As God sets in action the events of their lives he does so according to His eternal pattern**

- **Because these people where following God they produced God-like patterns in their lives**
- **Not perfectly** of course – because they where only **human**
- But Jesus himself is the perfection of God's pattern for Humanity

- **Its like a seamstress making a dress from a pattern**
- Every dress looks **very similar** to the pattern
- **Some are closer** than others
- **But the only perfect one is the pattern itself and that pattern is Jesus**
- OK let me explain this further
- **Some people reflect Christ life and character because through God's action and their obedience they are conforming to the pattern of Christ, not only character but even events**

- **Joseph of all the Old Testament Characters is one of the most Christ like in so many, many ways**
- One of **Alan Cameron's favourite writers is A.W. Pink** and he recognized 100 patterns of Christ and the Christ story in the life of Joseph
- **As Joseph faces the realities of life**
- **As he experiences and reacts to some of the mishaps in his life he patterns Christ's future life**

<i>Joseph</i>	<i>Jesus</i>
<i>Loved dearly by His father</i>	<i>So too Jesus loved by God the father</i>
<i>Brothers hate him and reject him</i>	<i>Jews hate him and reject Him</i>
<i>Brothers plot to kill him</i>	<i>All the time Jewish leaders plot to kill</i>
<i>Sold to his enemies (Ishmaelites)</i>	<i>Jesus sold by Judas to the Jews</i>
<i>Torn coat symbolized his death</i>	<i>Torn curtain symbolised His death</i>
<i>Imprisoned because of false accusations</i>	<i>Imprisoned because of lies told about Him</i>
<i>Finally he is greatly exalted</i>	<i>Jesus too raised to God's right hand</i>
<i>Becomes the saviour of the world with food</i>	<i>Jesus becomes the saviour of the world</i>
<i>Took a gentile bride when whilst in Egypt</i>	<i>Jesus takes the gentile church not Jews</i>

- These events work in these patterns because what we are seeing is the **fingerprints of God in the story of human faith seeking understanding in the world**
- We see in Joseph's life patterns of Christ like behaviour and events because **God is in control**
- **I tried hard to teach the confirmation class on last Sunday the passage of scripture found in Romans 8:28 "all things work for the good of those who love the Lord"**
- **It is the eternal pattern of God that he will work all things to bless those who trust Him with their lives**
- And so as you read these OT stories you can see pattern of how God uses people and how He makes events happen
- **And you can trust Him, because what we see is His unchanging nature**
- **You trust that God will make all things work for the good of those who love Him**
- Because he has **always been like that**
- Every story of the OT from **Adam through the patriarchs** are stories of the **faithfulness of God** and how he always delivers His people from evil and oppression

- **And so learn to trust God because the patterns of His interaction with humanity across History have proven his faithfulness**
- In what is a **disastrous story** of assault, attempted murder, human trafficking and oppressive injustice, God has worked to make Joseph's life an overwhelming success in all ways
- **The patterns of God acting in our lives if we love Him and trust Him will stay the same**
- **Heb 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
- So God will always be:
 - **helping** those who love Him
 - **guiding** those who love Him
 - **protecting** those who love Him
 - **blessing** those who love Him
 - **exalting** those who love Him
 - **saving** those who love Him
- These are constants because they are **based on patterns of love based in the person of Christ who is unchanging**

Secondly Human patterns

- **The story of Joseph too is about the human patterns our lives follow**
- We all learn patterns of behaviour from those around us
- Think for a moment about some of the behaviour or habits that you have **learned from your parents**
- We learn how to manage our **finances**
- We are trained on how to **treat our spouses** from how our parents treated each other
- We learn how to **talk** by watching our families talk
- We learn patterns of behaviour that find themselves repeating generation after generation
- Sometimes for good and sometimes for bad
- **Generosity** is passed on from generation to generation as is **faith** and **humility**
- Sometimes too though we pass on **anger, bitterness and greed** to our children
- **We learn patterns of behaviour too from other people around us**
- **I drive just like all the other maniacs on road most of the time**
- We find at times the **language we use** comes from those around us
- We **handle and experience situations** around us based upon patterns of behaviour

- It is these patterns of behaviour that **entrenched racism** into most white households
- And if you don't believe me just watch how your words, body language and tone of voice change when you talk to someone of a different culture/colour/language
- **It is these human sinful patterns that get Josephs brothers to sell him as a slave because of jealousy**
- **Despite the fact that both their dad, granddad and great granddad where men of deep faith**
- **They have chosen to follow the sinful patterns of the world around them**
- **The amazing thing about Joseph is that he somehow manages to overcome the obstacles around Him**
- **He does not pattern himself on those around him**
- **Put your self in the situation of Joseph for a moment and look at how you would react in His situation if you worked within the worldly patterns of thinking**
- **in a worst case scenario would end up like this:**
 - Once you realize you are more important than your brothers you ridicule them and lord your authority over them
 - When your brothers plot to kill you and dump you in a well and leave you for dead you would abuse them verbally cursing them
 - When hours later they drag you out of the well and sell you to some Islamic traders you would soon learn to hate them and already begin to plot your revenge
 - You finally find yourself in Egypt and you believe that God has abandoned you In a moment absolute rage you decide maybe God is a lie and you had better look after yourself because God isn't going to look after you
 - When Potiphar's wife tries to seduce you, you jump straight into bed with her.
 - God doesn't care about me, no one here knows me so why not!
 - When your brothers finally find there way into your sphere of power you have them imprisoned and sold as slaves to get revenge for all they have done for you
- Joseph has patterned himself so on the character of God that His behaviour has **copied that of Christ** without Him ever having known Christ
- If we are honest with ourselves we will see that too much of our behaviour is based on worldly patterns and thinking
- **We think like the world**
- **We act like the world**
- **In 1 Corinthians chapter 3 Paul says to the church I couldn't address you as spiritual but rather as worldly because you are still infants because you quarrel and fight**

- Paul berates them because they are still caught up in **old patterns** of thinking
- Again to the **church in Ephesus** Paul stop living like the **pagans** in the futility of their thinking

Conclusion

- **Pattern yourselves on the mind of Christ**
- **Ro 12:2** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- No matter what life throws at Him, Joseph does not fall into these patterns of worldly thinking
- He does not get bitter
- He does not harbour resentment
- He forgives deeply, sincerely and openly
- He is generous, wise and compassionate because he has patterned his life on God
- He has not let his past pattern his life as so many people do
- He has not let horrific experiences pattern his life
- He has not allowed a foreign culture to pattern his life
- He has understood that God is faithful and true and will be there for Him
- Without knowing the scripture he has trusted that all things work for the good of those who love the Lord
- God has proven himself to be faithful over hundreds of generations of those who love Him
- He will never change so trust Him
- Pattern your life on Him
- And all things will work for your good