



Take5 for the Week of June 8-12, 2015

Strength in Success

By Pastor Nate Travis

MONDAY

Get out of your seat

Genesis 42:1-2

When I finally decided I wanted to go to seminary, it almost didn't happen. I decided about 5 days before the fall session, and two of those days were a weekend. I was sitting around thinking it was too late and feeling like I had missed out. My father-in-law was in the room at the time. He said, "Why can't you get in? What would it hurt if you tried?" Long story short, I made a few phone calls, drove around town and got 4 reference letters, sent 5 faxes, got my transcripts expedited (which *never* happens), and got conditionally accepted and registered all in two days. Over time, this has clearly been God's plan for me.

Jacob does the same thing to his sons. They are hungry and need food. There is food in Egypt. However, they are just "sitting around looking at each other." God's provision was clear. Sitting still kept them from having the food they needed. God was providing, but they were not willing to search for His provision. God *always* reveals His will, but sometime we just don't leave our seat to look for it.

FOR TODAY: Thank God for His provision in your life. What is God trying to reveal to you?

TUESDAY

Without bitterness

Genesis 42, Genesis 45:5

Lately, my wife and I have been watching a few of the singing contest shows on the major networks. The contestants seem to need to play up the drama that they are doing this "to prove all of their doubters wrong." They use that chip on their shoulder as motivation for success. Those memories and feelings seem like such a burden.

It would seem that Joseph has every justifiable right to handle his brothers any way he pleases. However, as we look at the complete context of the story, we know that Joseph did not harbor bitterness against them. He saw God's hand in all the negatives that happened to him. His success came from God. We live in a broken fallen world of injustices; thankfully, we have a God who gives us strength to be successful in spite of the sin surrounding us. We can release the burdens of bitterness and look for God's leading as we follow Him.

FOR TODAY: Ask God to expose any bitterness in your heart that is keeping you from experiencing Him today.

WEDNESDAY

Remembering God's vision

Genesis 42:8

I have been following God faithfully for the better part of two decades. As I look back on that time period, and even further back, I can see how God has connected things in my life with experiences, people of influence, teachings I have heard, and personal time with Him. There are things that I felt God wanted me to be a part of, or involved in, that I have now done and been blessed through them. From time to time, I lose sight of the vision God has placed on my life as a believer. When I take the time to think about those moments, it reinforces the strength of God being in control of my life.

Joseph does this when he remembers his dreams as a child. It was all coming true. God was in control and had been with him through it all.

FOR TODAY: Ask God to reinforce His plan for you as you follow Him. Ask Him to remind you where you should serve, what you should give, and how He can use you.

THURSDAY

Shaking the guilt

Genesis 42:18-25; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10

I have memories of things I have done in my life that I would love to shake. Even though apologies and reconciliation have taken place, I still cringe at my own attitudes and behavior. The brothers are experiencing those kinds of things, and they have to live with their guilt and lies. By their statement, they feel cursed.

Guilt is a powerful and crippling thing. Something so powerful God had to send Jesus so that our sins could be forgiven, as well as our guilt and shame. Sometimes the memory lingers. Paul calls this "a godly grief that leads to repentance." While the brothers' guilt, or worldly grief, was crippling them to the point of no action, a godly grief can stir us to pursue God and the plan He has for us. We are moved by His love and forgiveness and it strengthens us as we follow Him.

FOR TODAY: Take the time to repent of any sin and guilt that has been haunting you and keeping you from growing in Christ

FRIDAY

What is your hope holding onto?

Genesis 42:36, Job 23:12

At this point in Jacob's life he is grieving and things are out of control. First he loses Joseph, and now he is in danger of losing his family and his household due to the famine. When the brothers come back and tell him that they must take Benjamin to Egypt, he loses it. Jacob holds Benjamin so close because his greatest fear would be to lose him.

Tim Keller said, "If you want to look at someone's idol, don't look at their dreams, look at their nightmares." What...if you lost it...would make you lose the will to go on. These idols keep us from achieving what God has for us. We hold onto things of this world; some of these things are blessings, like our kids, work, etc. They can become our hope rather than looking to God and putting our complete hope in Him. If He is our strength, then He should be what we hold onto the tightest.

FOR TODAY: Ask God to be your strength. Find your hope in Him and Him alone.