
Hey everyone, welcome. We are in this series *Resilient*. And what these talks have all been about is: how can we do hard things? Because we're in this season right now where that's pretty much a demand that is being put on us every single day.

Before we get rolling, can we just take a moment, pause, and celebrate? Celebrate yourself. You are doing hard things. You are doing things that you did not think you would be doing a few months ago. So can we just, right now, in the chat throw it in there—I can do hard things. Believe it. Because you can and you are.

And in this series, what we've been doing to see how we can be resilient and stay resilient is to study the life of a man named, Joseph. And Joseph, from what I can tell is about as resilient as they come. He went through life and was pretty much betrayed by everyone he ever knew. He took a lot of shots.

From the time he was a teenager he was sold into slavery by his own brothers—he was betrayed. Then he starts working for this guy named Potiphar and Potiphar's wife actually falsely accuses him of a crime that he didn't commit—he's betrayed. And he's thrown into prison where he sits and sits for years. But we see that he remains resilient.

And as he's in the prison cell, he's talking with other people. And he gets this opportunity to get in front of Pharaoh. See, God had given Joseph the ability to interpret dreams and the word gets out. And Pharaoh comes to Joseph and says, "Hey, tell me what this dream means." And in a moment, through everything that he's gone through, Joseph still remains resilient. He prevails.

He interprets the Pharaoh's dream and Pharaoh loves this so much that he takes him out of prison that day, he takes him out, he puts a gold chain around his neck, like he just got signed for The Rock, takes him out of that puts a ring on his finger and says, "Hey, listen. You are now over all of Egypt." It is a real rags-to-riches story. I'm telling you; this guy deserves his own Netflix documentary.

But, when we pick up with Joseph today, it's where his two worlds are colliding. His old world, with his family who betrayed him, and now his new world as being responsible for everything in Egypt. You see, when we pick up with him today, as life has been going on, this famine has hit the land. And it not only affects Egypt, but it affects all of the surrounding land, including Joseph's family.

And the brothers have to go to Egypt because it's the only place in all of the land that has some food. So that's where we pick up. These brothers they come in and they walk right in and Joseph is the one who is in charge. Joseph is the one who decides who

gets food and who doesn't. And in a big way, their lives are in Joseph's hands. How is he going to respond? What is he going to do?

I just want to pause for a second. Just imagine yourself in that spot. Maybe you've been there, where you came face to face with someone who really hurt you, who did something that you couldn't believe, who reshaped a lot of your life. And now you're face to face with him and he is asking you for a favor. What would you do? How would you respond?

And the wild thing about this is just like the cherry on top here, Joseph recognizes his brothers, but his brothers don't recognize him. It's been over 20 years. They haven't seen him since he was a boy. And never in a million years would they think that this guy, their brother, is now in charge of all of Egypt.

But Joseph recognizes them. There is no way that he could forget them in a million years. It's like that episode of *Friends* where they don't know that we know that they know. And that's where Joseph is. And his response is almost confusing at first. It almost doesn't make any sense, because you would think that maybe he's going to meet him just like they met him. He's going to be harsh. He's going to find just vengeance with them. He's going to throw them into prison, or he's going to put them into slavery.

But he doesn't do any of that. He just asks a lot of questions. He starts talking to the brothers and he asks them about their dad. And then about their brothers, are there any other brothers? And they start talking about their youngest brother, Benjamin. And we see that Joseph really kinds of points in on that. He starts asking a lot of questions.

And then, kind of out of nowhere, he's like, "Hey, I don't even know if I believe you guys right now. I think you're actually all spies, that you came here to do something that you shouldn't be doing." And he takes all of the brothers and he throws them into jail for three days. Trying to process what is going on here? What is Joseph up to?

But then after three days Joseph brings them out of jail, and he makes a deal with them. Look at what he says to them. He says, "*If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die.*"

I love this. "*To this they agreed.*" Yeah, what option did they have?

Like I said, I know maybe there are some dots here that are not connected. I'm telling you; everything will make sense as this story develops. This is what happens. He sends the rest of the brothers back home to get Benjamin, their youngest brother—but he keeps one. And he says, "Bring him back and I will know that you are telling the truth."

So the brothers go back, and they go straight to their dad and they say, "Hey, it was really weird, we don't know what's going on but this guy, he said that we might be spies. He didn't believe our story. He said the only way he would believe us is if we take our youngest brother, Benjamin, back with us."

And their dad, he hears this and immediately responds with, “No, there’s no way.” You see, their dad has already lost so much. He lost Joseph. There is no way that he could even imagine losing Benjamin too. So he says, “No, it’s not going to happen.”

But time goes by and the food just gets lower and lower and their back is against the corner, and it’s looking really bad. So, in all of this the brothers take another run at it. And specifically one of the brothers, Judah. Judah steps up and he goes to his dad and he gives him this speech, which is just incredible. Look at this language that he uses.

It says, *“Judah said to his father, ‘Send the boy with me,’”* he’s talking about the youngest brother, Benjamin, *“and we will be on our way. Otherwise we will all die of starvation—and not only we, but you and our little ones.”* Look at this, *“I personally guarantee his safety. You may hold me responsible if I don’t bring him back to you. Then let me bear the blame forever.”*

This is a really, really big deal with some strong language. Basically, what Judah did here is he just offered up his life for his brother. He said, “Hey, you can trust me and here me out.” He said, “I will put my life on the line for Benjamin.” Meaning, “If it comes down to it, you can know without a doubt that I will die for that man.”

And his speech is so convincing that Jacob, their dad, actually changes his mind and says, “Okay, if that’s what it has to be then you go, but you make sure that you protect my son.”

And then the brothers are off again. They go back to Egypt, they go back into the palace, and remember, they still don’t know that this is Joseph. And they walk back in and they have everyone with them. Benjamin is there this time. And everything seems to be going pretty okay. But there is something strange. Joseph keeps pointing out Benjamin. He keeps singling out Benjamin, their youngest brother.

And it says that when they sit down to eat that Joseph, he sits them all down at the same table, but he gives Benjamin five times the amount of food that he gives all of the other brothers. What is this about? What has this all been about? Why did he send them back for Benjamin? Why is he treating him this way?

At times, it may seem like... Was this cruel? Was this some kind of punishment? But it’s not. In order to see here in a second what really Joseph is pushing in on, what he’s trying to do with all of this...

They have this big meal, they finish off the night, and then the next day all of the brothers are prepared to leave. They have all of their food. They are ready to go home. They are together and it seems like it’s going to work out, but look at what Joseph does next.

It says, *“When his brothers were ready to leave, Joseph gave these instructions to his palace manager: ‘Fill each of their sacks with as much grain as they can carry, and put each man’s money back into his sack.’”* He’s not even going to charge them for the food. But look at this, *“Then put my personal silver cup at the top of the youngest*

brother's sack, along with his money for his grain.' So the manager did as Joseph instructed him."

So, what's going on here? It's a set up. Joseph is planting this silver cup in Benjamin's bag to make it look like he stole from him. What is going on? But the brothers get up that day and they don't know anything about what's going on. They grab their bags and they leave.

And as soon as they get outside of Egypt, Joseph's manager runs up, pulls them over and says, "Hey, we just got word that there is something missing from the palace and we believe one of you guys stole it." And the brothers are like, "You are crazy. There is no way that one of us would steal. Why would we do that? That doesn't even make any sense."

And they start checking everyone's bag. And as they get to Benjamin, they open up the bag and there it is, Joseph's silver cup. And the manager is really clear with all of the brothers. He says, "Hey, the rest of you can go back home. This does not hurt you in any way. Still take the food and go. Benjamin is the only one who has to come back to the palace."

Technically, he's the only one. The rest of them can go free. But Judah made a promise. Judah put his life on the line. He said, "I will make sure that I do everything I can." So there's no way that he can just let Benjamin go back. So they all follow Benjamin back to the palace.

And now we're going to see the promise that Judah gave to his dad is going to be tested. But now, more clarity has come through, because we see that Judah's promise isn't the only one being tested.

Through all of this, what Joseph is doing is he's testing the brothers. He's trying to see has anything really changed over the last 20 years. And that is what all of this has been about. This is why he demanded that they bring Benjamin with them.

This is why when they came into the palace, he treated Benjamin differently than the rest of the brothers. That's why he gave him five times the amount of food. This is why he put the silver cup in his bag. It was to get the brothers to a place where he could test them. He had to know, "Have they really changed from that day when they sold me into slavery?"

What Joseph has done is recreate the exact scene but instead of him being put into slavery, now Benjamin is the one who is on the chopping block. What Joseph has done is he has given them the opportunity to say, "Yes, we have changed. Our hearts have changed. We're different people than we were back then."

That's why he has singled out Benjamin and he's led them there, because after Joseph left Benjamin would have been the next favorite. Benjamin would have been treated so much differently by their dad than the rest of the brothers. That's why Joseph has been treating Benjamin differently this whole time.

And the brothers get back and they look for Joseph and they find him in the palace, and they go up to him and they say, “Listen. We’re not leaving without our brother. We will all stay here with him.” And look at what Joseph does. He has one more card to play. One more test to really see what they are all about.

*“No,” Joseph said. ‘I would never do such a thing!’” He said, “I would never keep all of you here.” *“Only the man who stole the cup...will be my slave. The rest of you may go back to your father in peace.”**

This is it. All of Joseph’s cards are on the table. Now, what will they do? Will they let Benjamin be sold into slavery just like they let Joseph be sold? And in this moment, they’re all free to leave.

All of the brothers can leave with everything and they can take food back and they can survive, and they can have a good life. They just won’t have Benjamin there with them.

The only thing that would keep them there, the only thing that would continue the fight is love. It’s their love for their brother and their love for their father. That is the only thing that is going to keep them committed at this time. What would they do? And it’s silence until one of the brothers speaks up.

One of the brother’s goes directly to Joseph and gives an incredible speech. And out of all of the brothers, it’s Judah. Look at what Judah says again.

He says, *“My lord, I guaranteed to my father that I would take care of the boy. I told him, ‘If I don’t bring him back to you, I will bear the blame forever.’ So please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy,”* let me take his place, *“and let the boy return with his brothers. For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I couldn’t bear to see the anguish this would cause my father!”*

Now, this is nothing short of a miracle. If maybe you’re just catching up or you don’t know, Judah was the ring leader who sold Joseph into slavery. It was Judah’s idea to sell Joseph into slavery in the first place and now Judah is on the other side.

Judah has been completely restored. God has changed his heart. That he would go from selling one of his brothers into slavery, to on the other side of this now being willing to be a slave for his brother. He truly meant it. He said, “I will lay my life down on the line. I will give my life for his.” He’s willing to do anything and everything for his brother because God has changed him.

And I just want to pause and say, “Is there anyone here today who has been changed? Anyone here today who God has done a work in your heart? That God has moved you from who you once were to who you are now. Where you are today—that 10 years ago, five years ago, six months from now you wouldn’t be able to do the things that you’re able to do?”

“You wouldn’t have the mindset. You wouldn’t have the health, you wouldn’t have the courage, you wouldn’t have the warmth to do what you are doing right now. But, because of God restoring you, your life is completely different.”

And if that's you, could we just celebrate right now. Throw it in the chat. Just say how thankful you are that God restored you. That God changed your heart. That now your life looks so much better and so much different than you ever thought it would.

That's Judah. That's the power of God in his life, changing everything about him. Moving him from one extreme to the other. And Judah's response—this is exactly what Joseph was looking for. And this response of Judah, of being willing to sacrifice himself, is what would later go on to restore his family. It was what would bring everyone back together. Even after all of this stuff that had happened, this moment, this sacrifice, it restored the relationship.

And maybe you are watching today and you're thinking, "What does this mean for me? And why is this so significant? And what does it mean for me practically?"

And I just want to point to what happened here, this life, this story of Joseph is meant to show us what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus. What Judah does here, the words that he uses, the actions that he backs them up with, like, this is the crux of what it means to follow Jesus day in and day out.

He said, "I will be responsible for my brother. I will do whatever it takes to help and to care for and to serve him." That's the same call that has been put on my life and your life today. What Jesus has called us to is for us to raise our hand and to say, "I will be responsible for all people. I will care for you. I will put my life on the line for you. I will do anything for you."

You see, the mark of Christians isn't just to walk around and to have mirrors look better, it's not just to fill Instagram with quotes that are inspiring, it's to live in such a way that the world literally changes. We don't follow Jesus for some life hacks or to make life easier. Seriously, what we are doing here is so big and so powerful and so crazy that we are literally bringing heaven to earth by the way that we love one another. And it's the exact same kind of love that Judah shows right here toward his brother.

Caring for people beyond what is humanly possible, that is what we are called to do. Supernaturally—that is why we have been given the gift of the Spirit and that is our focus. To look at everyone and to let them know we are here for them and we are here to love them.

This was the primary teaching of Jesus. When he got down to it, he boiled it down to two things. He said, "I'm going to take it all and give it to you in two sentences. And look at what Jesus said.

He said, I want you to *"Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength."* And look at this, *"The second is equally important. 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

And the only way we will ever lay our lives on the line for other people is if we love God with everything that we have, and we love our neighbors as ourselves. And the word here *neighbor* is not just like the few people that you share a property line with, the word *neighbor* here is better described as:

anyone who is in need.

That's all of us. All of us have needs. All of us don't have this thing figured out. All of us need someone to help us from time to time. So what Jesus is saying here is to love all people like you love yourself.

This is where we are. And this is the opportunity. This is the command that has been laid on our lives, to love people like this. And here's what that does. Just at a base level, here's the shift that happens with that.

It moves us from going through life and seeing you and to see things as your problems and my problems. That your problems are over here, and my problems are over there—no, no, no. It says if I love you like I love myself, then your problems are my problems. That you don't have problems, we have problems.

But as long as we live, like your problem is something that I'm helping you out with, things will never get better and we won't live out what Jesus is truly saying here, because my response, my help will always be optional when Jesus never made it optional.

But if I see you as myself, if I love you like I love myself, it means that I'm all in. It means that I see myself in you, which switches everything. It says it's no longer your problem, your problem is my problem. Your pain is my pain. Your injustice is my injustice. Your poverty is my poverty. Your empty stomach is my empty stomach because my life is bound up in yours. And I'm going to love you with everything that I have. And I'm going to lay my life on the line for you.

See, that's the kind of love the world is desperate to see. We need to live in such a way that people want Christianity to be true. And that doesn't happen unless we show love and compassion for all people. We love people like we love ourselves.

Some of you know this and others of you don't, but I didn't grow up in the church. I didn't grow up following Jesus. It was much later in life until I came to know and start following Jesus. But I'll tell you what helped me to get there. What allowed me to believe that Jesus was real. It was people loving people really, really well. People stepping up and saying, "I'll be responsible," when they didn't have to be.

My grandparents are at the top of that list. In my life, I have flashbacks of them seeing them love with a love that was just out of this world. That's the only way I can put it.

I remember being young and staying the night at my grandparents' house and my grandma, every single night, would go over and stay with my great grandma. She was a widow. So my grandma would go over there every night and make sure she had everything she needed and stay with her until the morning. I can still picture her, in her nightgown holding a Diet Pepsi. I was like, "That is incredible."

I remember my grandparents taking in a young boy who was in need. And they took him in, and they adopted him. And they gave him their name. And they were responsible for

him. And they loved him in a way that completely changed the course of his life—gave him things that he never would have had otherwise. And I thought, “That is incredible.”

And it reminds me of what is going on right now in the midst of this pandemic. When everyone else is sheltering in, there are people in our church, in our Foster and Adoption Ministry who still have their hands open. There are people in our church right now who are bringing vulnerable children into their home, caring for them, saying, “I will be responsible for you. I will love you like you’re my own. I will love you like myself.” Can we celebrate that right now?

Can we celebrate everyone who is stepping out and extending their hand, everyone who is loving people even in this difficult situation? What you’re doing matters, so incredibly much. When you do this, your act of love, you loving strangers like you love yourself, you being responsible for someone else when you don’t have to be—just know that that is the spark, that’s the spark that could allow the light, that allows people to come to see and to know Jesus.

This is the call for all of us, to put it all on the line. Put it all on the line. To look out into this world and to say that I am here, I’m here to love, I’m here to care—everyone who I come across, any need that I see, I’m going to step into it, because I see myself in it. That I have empathy for it. That I have love for it. And that actually calls me to action.

Maybe right now you’re thinking, “That’s not me. I’m sure that that call is for some other people, but my life right now is really, really hard. I don’t have anything to give. And I don’t even know where I would start.”

And can I just say that this is something very unique about what God calls us to do? And I know that it may not seem logical right now, but his upside-down kingdom says so much about this. It would say that even if it doesn’t feel right, even if it feels strange, that you would be able to...

In this moment, God is saying, “If you love the way you love yourself, I will give you the strength, I will give you the power, I will give you everything there,” but it comes with faith to take God at his word. It is actually better to give than it is to receive. And it’s not because of what I’ll get on the other side of it. But it’s because if I live how calls me to live, he will empower me with that kind of power. He will strengthen me with that kind of strength. And I will be able to play the role that I have and respond in such a way that people can come to know Jesus.

Or maybe there is someone else on the other side and you’re thinking, “I can’t picture being loved like that. No one has ever loved me with this kind of love that you’re talking about. This kind of love that would say that they would be responsible for me. I don’t even know if I’m worth that kind of love.”

Can I just say that you are? No matter what you’ve experienced or no matter what you’ve felt or not felt in your life, there is a God who loves you. No matter what your past looks like, how much you’ve done or that’s been done to you.

Can we just take a second and see who we're celebrating in this story? We're celebrating Judah. Judah, the one who years before actually sold his brother into slavery, who had done so many horrible things in his life. But in a moment, God restored him. In a moment, God changed him. In a moment, God changed everything for him in the course of his life. And the rest of his family life would be forever changed.

God will meet you right here in this moment. And you see, what's fascinating about this story is that Judah would step up and not only would he be able to step in and restore his family, what's wild is that through this family, this broken family with so many problems that came up left and right—God would choose to come through this family. Jesus would be a descendent of this family.

And what takes it a step further is that Jesus didn't come through the line of Joseph. Jesus came through the line of Judah. In Revelation, Jesus would be described as the Lion of Judah. And Jesus would come later and to do on just a grander scale what Judah did for his family.

You see, what Judah did ultimately, in this moment, was that he offered a substitutionary sacrifice. When he went to Joseph he said, "I will lay my life on the line. I will bear the pain. I will bear the blame. Give it all to me. Take my life for his."

And generations later, Jesus would come, and he would go to the Father just like Judah went to his father and he would say, "Let me go. I will be responsible. I will put my life on the line. And not just for a person, not for just a family, but for all of humanity." Jesus put it all out there, he lived this perfect life, showing us what it looks like to truly live for other people. To love our neighbors as ourselves.

And when it came down to it, when it was put on the table that it was his life for ours, he gladly went to the cross and died for us and took every bit of pain, every bit of sin, every bit of brokenness and he nailed it to the cross and he died to it. And he came out on the other side and he said, "Trust me. Follow me. And if you will do that, if you will trust me with your life, then you will truly gain a life that you never thought would be possible. I will restore your heart in a way that will completely change and shape the world."

And if we do that, Jesus actually said that if we live like that... You know what? He could imagine a world that looked like that. And he said that if we do that that people will come to know him. That if we go from here and we begin to live out this love everything could change. That we are witnesses of this love. That we are to put it on display to let everyone know: This is who Jesus is and all that he's done.

And if you're watching today and you want to respond to this love, if you're ready for that, if you want to talk with someone, you can go to tpcc.org/prayer right now. Someone from our team will follow up with you.

And for the rest of us, let's put it all on the line. Let's stop going through life and thinking that there are their problems and our problems, but in all of them—we're in this together, we are united, we are one body, we are in this together. We're going to love

each other like we love ourselves and we're going to love God with everything that we have, let's do that this week.

That's what I'm going to pray for right now. Would you pray with me?

God, thank you so much for today. God, thank you for your love. God, thank you for meeting us where we are. God, thank you for changing us. Thank you for growing us. Thank you for not giving up on us. And God, thank you for this call that you've given us. God, this truth that if we could come to understand your love, and if we could love other people like we love ourselves, God, more and more people could come to know you.

And, God, we know that you are with us. And we know that you are for us. And we know that you have offered a sacrifice. So, God, help us to live with that kind of passion. Help us to live with that kind of love, where we will openly and just be ongoing to say, "I will put my life on the line for my brothers and my sisters—for all people." God, help us to do that. We love you. It's in Jesus' name: Amen.