

Secret Sauce

Introduction

We are now 4 weeks into this study....We have studied Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph....

I doubt God will ask any of us to start a new nation...most will never be instructed to sacrifice our firstborn....probably not going to be sold into slavery and few if any will be falsely accused and sent to prison....So what do we gain by studying their lives? Why are they Divine Mentors to us? If so, what are they teaching us...what is the secret sauce?

Well the answer is not really the stories of what happened in their lives...the events of their lives were unique to them....but rather something that all of these men had in common....

That is what they teach us...that is the gold that we are digging for. As you study these men, ask God to reveal to you what they all have in common...That is what we are going to begin to see today.

Men of Faith..... Messed up people used by God to move forward the promise and the blessings of God Each in many ways foreshadowing the Messiah Jesus Ordinary people....being used by an extraordinary God. Last week we began to look at Joseph. The Dreamer his brothers called him. He was one of Jacobs 12 sons who would father the 12 tribes of Israel.

We learned that the family feud that started between Esau and Jacob led to the Arab Nation (descendants of Ishmael and Esau) and the Jewish Nation (descendants of Jacob aka Israel)

These two nations would always be in conflict. Both nations would grow into a great number of people per God's blessing, but only Israel had the blessing of being God's people and the future of the Messiah

Last week we left Joseph.....having been sold into a caravan of traveling Ishmaelites and on his way to Egypt. His brothers lied and convinced Jacob his father that he had been killed by wild animals.

Joseph had gone to find his Father's sheep, but they were not where they were supposed to be, so he searches for them. When he finds them, his brothers betray him even though he is innocent of any wrongdoing They take his robe, throw him into a pit, and betray him by selling him for some coins of silver.

Let's rejoin our story...

Today

Genesis 39:1–3 (ESV) — 1 Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was

in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

Ok so think about Joseph----He is innocent....he has done nothing wrong....he has gone from favored Son to slave.....He is taken to Egypt where Hebrews were considered second class citizens....and worse they were shepherds.... We learn later what Egyptians think of Shepherds,

Genesis 46:34 (ESV) — 34 for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.”

Think about the discussions you would be having with God at this time....You are 17 years old, your whole life is ahead of you, you are falsely accused and betrayed....now you are no longer the favored son....you are a disgusting hebrew slave. What do you think this would do to your faith in God?

Incredibly Joseph makes the best of a terrible situation. We see this as a pattern in his life. No matter what circumstances Joseph finds himself in, he makes the best of it and honors God in the process.

He is placed in charge of all of Potiphar's house. Still enslaved but given great trust by Potiphar. Then the plot thickens and his faith is tested.

Genesis 39:6–7 (ESV) — 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. 7 And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.”

Think about how easy it would be for Joseph to indulge in a bit of pleasure. He has been abandoned it seems by God, nothing has turned out the way he taught it would, he deserves better than this, why not do something for himself?

He is a young man no doubt full of testosterone. Entitlement is a strong motivator for sin. So often we use the circumstances in our lives....particularly when things don't go our way....as excuses. We think "I deserve this"

Genesis 39:8–10 (ESV) — 8 But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife.

Now Joseph initially resists but Satan has a way of bringing temptation around many times. But Joseph makes an incredibly powerful faith statement..... Potiphar has put him in charge of everything. Potiphar has enormous trust in Joseph. Do you remember why?

Genesis 39:3 (ESV) — 3 His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

Potiphar knew that he could trust Joseph because Joseph's God was evident in his life Potiphar's trust was not in Joseph, but rather the God working through Joseph.

And Joseph knew it too. Joseph had every reason to turn away from God, to blame God for his misfortune, but even in his tough times, he was aware of the blessings of God,

Genesis 39:9–10 (ESV) — 9 How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" 10 And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.

Wow...Time out...We need to camp out on this verse for a moment.

First Joseph identified what was happening. Sexual relations with another man's wife was not a mistake, not an "affair", it was WICKEDNESS.

The first thing that we can learn from Joseph about resisting temptation is that we need to identify what the problem really is. Our culture constantly tries to make things sound better to help us alleviate guilt. If we can make it sound better then it doesn't seem so bad when we do it.

Some Students recently have come up with the following list of "politically correct" terms for teenagers: * No one fails a class anymore, he's merely "passing impaired." * You don't have detention, you're just one of the "exit delayed." * Your bedroom isn't cluttered, it's just "passage restrictive." * These days, a student isn't lazy. He's "energetically declined." * Your locker isn't overflowing with junk, it's just "closure prohibitive." * Kids don't get grounded anymore. They merely hit "social speed bumps."

* Your homework isn't missing, it's just having an "out-of-notebook experience." * You're not sleeping in class, you're "rationing consciousness." * You're not late, you just have a "rescheduled arrival time." * You're not having a bad hair day, you're suffering from "rebellious follicle syndrome." * You're not shy. You're "conversationally selective."

* You weren't passing notes in class. You were "participating in the discreet exchange of penned meditations." * You're not being sent to the principal's office. You're "going on a mandatory field trip to the administrative building." * It's not called gossip anymore. It's "the speedy transmission of near-factual information." * The food at the school cafeteria isn't awful. It's "digestively challenged."

Unfortunately we do this with all of our actions. We don't even use the word sin anymore. When is the last time you heard someone say....I have sinned. No we replace it with I made a mistake, I did something stupid,

Adultery becomes an affair, Fornication becomes just living together Pride becomes Self confidence Materialism becomes living the good life or being blessed Gluttony becomes obesity Homosexuality becomes an alternative lifestyle Idolatry becomes obsessed or focused We have a way of making it sound ok. We dress it up a bit, make it more palatable, try to make it seem less offensive.

Let me show you how foreign these words have become in our culture. Just 150 Years ago our President addressed the nation with these words....think about how foreign they are to our society today.

President Lincoln did and calling on the nation “to confess our sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon.”

Since we seem to be unable to call a sin a sin, we have a hard time with true repentance and humble sorrow. Because we minimize our sins we end up minimizing God's mercy and pardon.

In today's culture, confession sounds kind of like this.

If you think you have made a mistake I am sure you feel bad about it, but the circumstances of your life were probably responsible, you did the best you could, the fact that you feel bad is good. Lots of people have done the same thing. I am sure God understands. I wouldn't worry about it. Hope you feel better.

No ownership of action...no responsibility for damage...no personal accountability...no brokenness...no sorrow...no....well...no problem...not really your fault.

But look at Joseph's response....

Genesis 39:9–10 (ESV) — 9 How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

He called it what it was....Wickedness and Sin. Once you correctly identify it- it is much harder to continue to do it. It is critical that we identify sin with the terms God uses .

Isaiah 5:20 (ESV) — 20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

Have you noticed that we rarely have to resist sin only once?

Genesis 39:10 (ESV) — 10 And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.

When we clean up sin.....it gets prettier each time it comes around. We have more and more opportunities to rationalize, excuse and explain away our actions Do you know why Satan keeps tempting you with the same temptation over and over? Because it eventually usually works.

But not on Joseph.....his faith is incredible. Joseph has something that we should all work towards....

Joseph lived in a constant awareness of God

We see it in this story.....He was aware that God was in control when he was sold into slavery....He was aware that God was blessing him in Potiphar's house....He was aware that his actions were sinful in God's eyes and He was aware that his sins were offensive first and foremost to God,

Through out his life we see this pattern over and over.....He was just very much aware of God's presence,

One day Joseph ends up in the house when Potiphar's wife was alone. She tried to seduce him but he ran from her. However she was able to grab his tunic and then claimed that he tried to rape her. She screamed and he ran and left his clothes behind. The punishment of this offense was of course death.

But instead he was put in prison...suggesting that her story may not have been fully believed. Either way Joseph's life was spared and he was sent to prison.

The Second thing we see is that Joseph is aware of who the sin is really against

Joseph tells her.....Potiphar is greater in this house than I am, He has placed me in charge of everything, trusted me with everything and held nothing back except you. You would expect his next line to be....."I could never do this to Potiphar after all he has done for me" But look at what he says.

Genesis 39:9–10 (ESV) — 9 How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Joseph knew that his sin, while it might hurt Potiphar, is really against God. When we sin the one most impacted and most offended is God. We often try to forget that our sins....offend God. It is easier to just think the damage is limited to the people involved.

When you call it a sin.....name it what God names it.....and make God the offended one.....Moving forward becomes much more difficult. How many times have you heard...."No one will ever know" just change that in your head "THE ONE will know"

Genesis 39:20–21 (ESV) — 20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

Ok surely now Joseph has had enough. He has done everything right. He is once again falsely accused. This time instead of being a slave in Potiphar's house he is in the King's Prison

You would think this would be Joseph's "Im Done" moment. God I did exactly what you told me to do. I refused to sin.....and this is my reward?

And yet once again.....Joseph has this unique insight to know that God is at work in his midst. He is once again successful.....now leading others in the prison. Not because of how great he is but rather.....

Genesis 39:23 (ESV) — 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

Same pattern right? It was obvious to even those Egyptians who didn't know Joseph's God that something supernatural was happening through him.

And just like Potiphar it was obvious that the success, the blessings, were coming through Joseph.....not because of Joseph

This is so critical for us to understand. We should not take credit for the things of God. Joseph always seemed to recognize that what was happening around him was because God was working out his Plan.

Pharaoh was angry with two of his key men. The cupbearer and the chief baker. They were put in prison with Joseph and each of them had a dream. Joseph told them that God could allow Joseph to interpret the dreams for them.

Good news for the Cupbearer...in three days he would be risen up and restored to his role. Joseph asked him to remember him when he is back in his job.

Not so fortunate for the dream of the Chief Baker. In three days he would be hanged and killed and birds will eat his flesh. Be careful what you ask for....

Every thing occurred just as God had revealed to Joseph. But the cupbearer seemed to have forgotten Joseph.

Genesis 40:8 (ESV) — 8 They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”

Cupbearer lived Baker Died

Two Years Later.....Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret. Now remember Joseph is still in prison. He is brought before Pharaoh. Pharaoh has been told that Joseph.....

Genesis 41:9–13 (ESV) — 9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “I remember my offenses today. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, 11 we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation.

12 A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. 13 And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.”

Notice "HE interpreted our dreams to us" Pharaoh thinks Joseph has unique skills. Isn't it easy to take credit for what God has done when others start telling you how great you are?

I mean this is Joseph's chance. If Pharaoh thinks he has unique insight into dreams, he may release him from prison.....it has been over 12 years since he was sold into slavery Here is his moment....

Genesis 41:15 (ESV) — 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.”

Time for the pride ride....Yes I am great....Yes I can do it.....Glad you finally got around to seeing how great I am.....Pharaoh give me your dream.....stand back and watch....get ready to be impressed, But look at Joseph's real response,

Genesis 41:16 (ESV) — 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

Oh.....There he goes again....giving credit to God.....being aware of God's presence.....of God' working through him.... He interprets the dream.....

As Joseph claimed, God could interpret the dream through him. He told Pharaoh that there would be 7 years of feast followed by 7 years of famine. He suggest to Pharaoh that they store up food during the feasting so they can survive the famine years. Pharaoh puts Joseph in charge of doing just that.

Joseph controlled the distribution of food for all the land of Egypt and when the famine hit, people came from all over because they had all the food.

That includes Joseph's Father and his brothers....the drama builds...they come to Egypt to find food. Joseph's original dream of the stalks of his brothers and father bowing to him.

Sold into slavery....left as dead....sent to prison...foreign lands...falsely accused...and now...now here they come....The brothers who betrayed him...need him to live.

Sure enough, they kneel down and bow to him in honor.....requesting that he allow them to

Brothers

Genesis 42:6–9 (ESV) And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. 7 Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." 8 And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. 9 And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land."

This is going to be so good.....they Sold him into slavery.....now they are bowing down to him....just like in his dream....Whose the dreamer now boys! This is going to be great with he tells them who he is and really sticks it to them.

Maybe those Ishmaelites will come by again and he can see THEM into slavery. Look at what happens....this is going to be so good. Joseph ends up messing with them a bit...forcing them to go back and get the youngest son. Setting up them to look like thieves. But rather than anger and revenge, it was Joseph's compassion that burned for them.

Genesis 45:1–3 (ESV) — 1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me."4 So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please."

Think about Joseph's revenge here. They are served up to him on a platter. His dream was coming true right in front of them. God is raising him up to destroy them...right? Revenge can be so sweet....all the days in prison...all the false accusations...their betrayal and lies about him...all coming to a head...in this moment.

Oh man...think about how scared they must have been..... Gonna be good....here it comes...

Genesis 45:5 (ESV) —3 And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

Dismayed? What an understatement...This is priceless...they must have been scared to death. They couldn't speak...I am Joseph...wow...They are done. Their goose is cooked. Surely they are dead men walking.

They have betrayed the one the Father had sent to them and they deserved death. They could do nothing to save themselves. They had rejected him and sent him away. Yeah..they were dismayed all right...their sins and lies have caught up with them and all they can do is pray for his mercy....Sound familiar. Joseph can do with them whatever he wants....this moment is his.

5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

What? Joseph doing that God thing again.... Always seems to be aware of God's presence and working through him. This isn't the Devil made me do it.....This is God made you do it. Look at Joseph's insight....it is incredible

God sent me before you to preserve life...God knew this moment of reckoning would come. Everything was under His sovereign control. All that Joseph had suffered was to save those he loved the most... When Joseph didn't understand what God was doing...he still remained faithful. He was always aware of God's presence and actions around him and he never let his circumstances define his faith....It is incredible.

Genesis 45:7–8 (ESV) — 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Genesis 45:9–11 (ESV) 9 Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. 10 You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. 11 There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.’

Genesis 45:13–15 (ESV) 13 You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.” 14 Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

The son...the son that God has made Lord of all Egypt... preparing the way for the Father.

With Pharaoh's blessing Josephs sends them to his Father with many provisions. He tells his father to come to Egypt. But first he tells the brothers something funny...I think...

Genesis 45:24 (ESV) — 24 Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, “Do not quarrel on the way.”

Jacob inquires of God and gets permission.....

Genesis 46:2–4 (ESV) — 2 And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” 3 Then he said, “I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. 4 I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph’s hand shall close your eyes.”

Genesis 46:27 (ESV) — 27 All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.

Genesis 47:27–28 (ESV) — 27 Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. 28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.

I would guess that the brothers really learned their lesson...right? From now on....only the truth.....no more deception.....all is good with Joseph.....Dad (Jacob) has died.....No more favoritism....We are going to lead the 12 tribes of Israel....so we better start acting like it.... Do you remember when I said that God uses people even if they do stupid things.

Genesis 50:15 (ESV) — 15 When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.”

Genesis 50:16–17 (ESV) — 16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: 17 ‘Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.” ’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

Genesis 50:18–19 (ESV) — 18 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” 19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?

There he goes again.....I am not in the place of God.....I am aware of what He is doing.....Revenge is not my call....

Genesis 50:20–21 (ESV) — 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. 21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Wow....after all that they had done to him....what you meant for evil....God meant for good. There he goes again....God is working around me and through me.

Foreshadowing Jesus

Do you remember how we have been talking about these stories that point to Jesus? How the Bible foreshadows and points to the Messiah? Let me draw some parallels and see if we can see Jesus in Joseph's life

Favored Son of Israel.....Deeply loved by his Father.....Came looking for his brothers....they were not where he expected them to be.....His brothers don't believe in him and hate him.....His brothers rejected his right to rule.....rather than receive him they conspire against him.....then betray him even though he is innocent and did nothing wrong.....

All he did was share a vision from God about the future.....He is found guilty without due process.....he is stripped of his garments and they are taken from him.....he is thrown into a pit.....he is sold for coins of silver.....He is reported to be dead but is alive....He went away but will one day come back....His own brothers did not recognize him.....He was repetitively tempted but did not sin....

.....He was bound.....held with two criminals.....One criminal was given life (cupbearer).....the other one death (baker).....Joseph's brothers eventually bowed their knee to him.....He was 30 when his revelation to his brothers began.....His brothers deserved death but bowed to him and were given mercy.

He suffered through God's plans so that many could be saved....He had every reason and the power to seek revenge but instead offered forgiveness and restoration.....His brothers later repented for what they had done to him.....

and He constantly lived in the presence of God.....recognizing that God was working out his plans around him and through him.....he always gave God the credit for everything.

Does that sound like anyone we know?

Closing

Yes Joseph in so many ways for tells of the coming Messiah....but there is something much deeper for us here...So what do we learn from the incredible Faith of Joseph?

Joseph was always aware of what God was doing.....He had an incredible ability to pull himself out of the situation and see God's work around and through him.

He did not let his circumstances define his position of favor with God. He knew that God favored him even if he was sold into slavery, falsely accused, thrown into prison....it didn't matter Everywhere he went.....everything that happened.....it was just God working out His Plan. Imagine if we could live our lives that way.....

Why not? Why can't we live like they did? Because we don't believe it. God wants to speak to us but we aren't committed to abiding with Him each day....prayer...bible study...talking to God....are optional it seems to most of us.

I think that is what all of the Divine Mentors want to teach us. Sure they all have one thing in common...they walked with an awareness of God and what He wanted to do in their lives..

We don't always live like that....at least I don't. It took me a long time to learn that God wanted to speak to me...to guide me..to direct me...just like He did them.

I spent a lot of my years in church studying what God was doing through other people and completely missing what He wanted me to see. I thought I was just supposed to marvel at what God did in their lives...

I thought that studying the Bible was to teach me how to live...that somehow these Divine mentors would give me the secret sauce. If I studied them enough I could grow....but I completely missed the point.

God told us about the faith of the Divine Mentors so that we would understand His relationship with man. God created us for relationship with Him...Each one of us has a purpose..a God Given purpose in our lives. We were created and uniquely gifted like no other human being specifically to do what God created us to do. I never believed that God truly wanted to speak directly to me. That He wanted to guide me exactly as He guided Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and all the other mentors in the Bible.

The difference between them and me is that they expected God to do something incredible in their lives and I was just trying not to screw up. I was trying to be perfect...He just wanted my surrender.

But as I studied these mentors years ago, I realized that they were just normal people...but they lived fully aware of God and what He wanted to do through them. They believed and trusted with unbridled faith. They listened for God's guidance with expectation. They understood that their actions affected the heart of God.

They knew what God wanted because they asked....when they didn't understand they trusted Him anyway. Circumstances could not change their faith...I wanted to live like they did. I wanted to see God do incredible things in my life just like they did.

So I asked myself the hard questions...If God had something to say specifically to me....directly to me...about me.... am I giving Him the opportunity?

Do I arrange my day to make sure that I am fully present in His presence? Do I prioritize my time with Him.....spending more time listening for His voice...that telling Him what He should do for me?

Do I engage Him with anticipation of what He could do in my life? I am not perfect...neither were these mentors...they weren't perfect but they were present. I had to commit to being present...all the time.

That is the secret sauce of these Divine Mentors....they were present...they were always in God's presence...they experienced Him in all that they did....Everything that they experienced was through the filter of what God was doing. God always seem to have their undivided attention. They prioritized His agenda rather than theirs. They lived surrendered lives...

They are our Divine Mentors not because of what they did...but because they stayed present with God and He developed in them supernatural faith. So, since God never changes, could it be that God wants to guide your life and my life in the same way He guided theirs? If we were fully present with Him would our faith become supernatural? Would we experience a relationship with God like they did? Does He really have your undivided attention? Because He had theirs....Are you desperate to have His guidance? Because they were. Is your life pointing others to see the Messiah? Theirs did.

Divine Mentors Week 4 Secret Sauce
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Remnant Church of Sarasota

If Scriptures were written now...what would they say about your faith? Your priorities? Your Presence?
God is still writing chapters of your life....it is time to join His story. Let's Pray.