

WHERE IS THIS GOING?

Genesis 50

Findings in the journal “Psychological Medicine” showed that the 1970 generation was more likely than those born in 1958 to report symptoms of poor mental health at age 42, such as often feeling depressed, anxious or irritable. The increase in psychological distress was more prominent in men. Among those born in 1958, 10 per cent of men suffered from distress, compared to 16 percent of those born in 1970. Although women were more likely than men to report poor mental health in both generations, the rate rose less sharply for them – from 16 per cent in 1958 to 20 per cent 12 years later. This trend has been bad for this generation, the generation of many parents of students today. And it only seems worse for young people today.

That is why your parents can really feel the crunch you are in. A recent USA Today/Gallup poll finds that nearly 60 percent of Americans are also doubters. I meet many parents who fear the future that awaits their children. The young (and I draw the line at 40 and under) face two threats to their living standards. The first is the adverse effect of the Great Recession on jobs and wages. Even as this fades with time, there's the second threat: the costs of an aging America. It's not just Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid -- huge transfers from the young to the old -- but also deferred maintenance on roads, bridges, water systems and power grids. [Newsweek](#) called the young "generation screwed." One writer more mildly calls it "generation squeezed."

“Where’s this all going?” That is the question so many young people face as they look into the future. It doesn’t just have to be about the economy. It can be about the person you might spend the rest of your life with. It could be about switching a major. It could be about finding a new roommate. It could be about an illness. It could be about retirement. “Where is this all going?”

Joseph certainly faced that question as he saw all kinds of things happening. It wasn’t just that bad things happened to him. They always seemed to happen when he thought things were getting better. He was his father Jacob’s favorite son. That seemed great for him. But his jealous brothers seized him, threw him into a well, and then sold him as a slave to some traders. But as a slave in Egypt he grew to be entrusted as his master Potiphar’s chief slave. Then that was all ruined when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce and he resisted. She claimed to her husband that Joseph had tried to assault her, so Potiphar had him thrown in prison. Then he gained hope as he earned the trust of fellow inmates and interpreted their dreams. He asked one of them, who was about to be released, to put in a good word for him. But that man forgot. It seemed like Joseph was going nowhere.

But we know how it all ends up. When the king of Egypt, called the Pharaoh, has a dream, the former prisoner tells him about Joseph. Joseph interprets the dream as a prediction that Egypt will have seven years of good crops, then seven years of famine. The Pharaoh makes Joseph his number two man. When Joseph’s brothers come to Egypt looking for food during the famine, Joseph reveals himself to them and tells them not to worry. He is able to see after all

those years where God has sent him. It has been all about preparing for Joseph to save his family from famine.

Joseph found out where all his life was going. But what about you and me? There are times when perhaps we can see that—if a college degree does land us a good job, if a date leads to a good relationship with another person, if a job transfer leads to a happier work situation. But so often we don't have that kind of affirmation. Do we continue to struggle with this major or risk another one which may not land us a good job? Do we study abroad or stay here to save money? Do I hang in there with that tough class or drop it before it hurts my record? It is like trying to follow some professors' lectures. We ask, "Where is this going?"

Joseph may have seen where it was going. But that was only after years of questioning. And even after that Joseph didn't totally know where it was going. Though his father Jacob and the family were able to come to Egypt and live in comfort, and though he even got to meet his younger brother Benjamin whom he had never met, Joseph knew there had to be more to come. That is why he gave strict directions to his family to make sure that when he died his bones would be buried not in Egypt, but in modern day Israel, the land God had promised to his great-grandfather Abraham. Hebrews 11:21, in the great chapter about faith, says, "By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones." Over 440 years later, when Joshua led the people back into the promised land of Israel, they took with them the bones to Joseph and buried them.

Joseph also did not know where it was going with his family after he died. They were living securely in Egypt where they prospered. But as the years went on new Pharaohs forgot Joseph and felt threatened by the family of Jacob. They made slaves of them. Under Moses God rescued them from that slavery so they could return to the land promised to Abraham. Under Joshua they conquered that land, but time and time forgot God. Even when God provided them leaders like Gideon and Samuel, and David, they forgot. Eventually God had them exiled into Assyria and Babylon. Then, as He promised, they returned back to the land promised to Abraham. But they were not free. They were ruled by Persians, then Greeks, then Romans. But from them came the One who would bring God's promises true—Christ Jesus. Joseph didn't know where it was going—just that God was in charge.

We don't know where it is all going. But unlike Joseph we know about Christ Jesus. We know He is the Son of God. We know that He fulfilled all that was written about Him. We know that He went to that cross with all our sins and died with them. We know He rose on Easter. We know that He ascended so that He can be with us wherever we are. We know where it is going at the end—not to a life here on earth in security of Egypt, but to everlasting life with Jesus forever.

Joseph had his bones taken to Israel. Though Egypt gave him wealth and power, he looked to Israel for his future. He looked not to the life of this world, no matter how good it was, but to the eternal life with God. There he would finally know, "Where is this all going?"

We too can look forward to that. In heaven we can see how God used the events in our lives to not only keep us as His own, but to help others as well. Perhaps, like Joseph, we can look back and see how God has used us, but so often we can't. We so often focus on things—investments, degrees, published papers, job positions, community awards—to see what we have done in our lives. God looks into the hearts of the people we can touch. Sometimes we see that as we see peoples' lives changed as God works through us. But so often we don't. But in heaven we will see. That will be our great reward—to see people that God helped through us so often without us noticing it in this life!

In the meantime we will have many questions. Our lives will take many turns and twists as we are taken to places we never planned to go and with a lot of uncertainty of how it will play out. But we know our goal. It is the same as what we always can know every moment of our lives—Christ Jesus is ours.

We pray:

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.