

Hope Rising

“When You Are Not Happy With the Hand You Are Dealt”
Story of Joseph—Genesis 37-45

1. WE’VE ALL BEEN DEALT CARDS—Circumstances into which we’re born.

- **Recognize that you are God’s unique creation.**
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139:14
- **Discover your God-given S.H.A.P.E. and use it.**
(Spiritual Gifts—Heart—Abilities—Personality—Experiences)

2. THERE ARE GOOD CARDS AND BAD CARDS—This is a ‘fallen’ world.

a. “Good Cards” common to us.

- SUPPORTIVE PARENT.
- SAFE COMMUNITY.
- MORAL GUIDANCE.
- HEALTH.
- WEALTH.

b. “Bad Cards” common to us all.

- DYSFUNCTION.
- DEVASTATION.
- DISAPPOINTMENT.
- REJECTION.
- UNFAIRNESS.

Choose the attitude to do your best wherever you find yourself.

3. TRUST GOD ON HOW YOU SHOULD PLAY THE CARD.

What will you do when you have been dealt a ‘wild card’?

- **Adversity then Happy Ending—Joseph**
- **Miraculous ministry then executed in prison—Paul**
- **Born into poverty and died in poverty—Lazarus**

We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him and who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

Pharaoh said, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?”
Genesis 41:38

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SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

GROWING TOGETHER

1. Jon gave a few of the highlights from the biography of Joseph in the Old Testament (not the Joseph who was married to Mary, the mother of Jesus). The details are actually found in Genesis 37—50. By way of group review, who can remember an event or factoid about Joseph' life?
2. What do you think kept Joseph going even against all the odds?
3. The story Joseph seems to say that if you don't give up all will workout in this life. It did for Joseph. Do you think that is always the case?

WHEN GOD SEEMS TO SAY 'NO' TO YOUR PRAYER REQUEST.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

4. Following Paul's example, is it OK to ask God to remove things from our lives that make things difficult or painful? Why did God let Paul ask and then say "No" to his request?
5. What lessons about "playing the hand we've been dealt" does this passage give us? What do you think "my grace is enough" means for you?

WHEN LIFE ENDS PAINFULLY OR UNJUSTLY FOR SOMEONE. LUKE 16:19-17:10

6. In this parable, what image does Jesus give us of Lazarus after his life on earth is over? Where is he? What does this say to us when 'justice is not served' here on earth? What does God say about this in Romans 12:19?
7. Where is the rich man? Is Jesus condemning wealth? (Was Abraham rich in his lifetime?) Why is the rich man lost in this story? What did he do or not do?

SHARING TOGETHER

8. With Joseph, Paul and Lazarus we see three different outcomes. Joseph had harrowing trials but persevered, eventually a happy ending to his life. Paul sometimes saw God's miraculous provision, but when God said "no" he was content with God's grace in his life. Lazarus lived and died in utter poverty trusting God. How would you describe your own plan of response to a disappointing or devastating hand in life? How's your approach the same or different compared to one of these three? When it comes to sustaining hope that keeps you going, what place or role does God have in your life? According to God's promises where are all three of these men right now? How does that give you hope?

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