

# The **Story** of ~~**Joseph**~~ *God*

## God's Invisible Hand in Our Lives

Genesis 37:1 – 50:26





# The Structure of This Class

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12 Weeks

Weeks 1 – 6: *Genesis 37:1 to Genesis 40:23*

\* “You’ll Get Through This” – Max Lucado





## The Structure of This Class

This is **NOT** an expository or exegetical treatment of the text

Lots of Discussion/Sharing (hopefully)

This Biblical narrative is woefully shy on detailed information.

- Some detail can only be discerned by inference or by “imagination”.
- Sometimes what is not said is just as important as what is said.

I’m not in a hurry!





## The Goal of This Class

Discuss the following questions:

- Does God really have a unique purpose for our lives? Do all things really work together for good for those who love Him? How can losing a job, or the death of a spouse, or a serious illness, or constantly living paycheck-to-paycheck, etc. be a good thing?
- Is it difficult to face challenging situations without letting our emotions dictate our decisions; without developing a negative attitude?
- Is it hard to remember (or even believe) that God is for us and not against us; He will never leave us or forsake us?







## The Goal of This Class

God gave us this story of Joseph's life so we could observe how His invisible hand of providence worked through a series of events that prevented a devastating famine in Egypt.

God gave us this story of Joseph's life so we could have some practical insight into how to "get through" whatever "life sends" in our direction.

God gave us this story of Joseph's life so we would have the confidence of knowing and accepting that He works in our lives too.





## The Goal of This Class

Another reason why God gave us this story of Joseph's life is so we could observe what can happen if we ignore or forget Him, make unwise decisions, carry anger around within us or have an unforgiving heart.





## Not a Recipe

There are myriad **self-help** books or verses (e.g. James 1:2 “Count it all joy . . . “), and Christian songs (e.g. “Cry Out to Jesus” by Third Day; “You Say” by Lauren Daigle) and quotes (“Through the dark and stormy night . . .” by Whittier) that can help us **maintain a godly focus**.

***BUT*** –

A pure and sure knowledge that, throughout our trial, God, as He did with Joseph, is weaving myriad strands together to produce an unimaginable outcome for us.





## Not a Recipe

Reasons we remain in our trial:

- a. Is it about how long we pray? **NO!**
- b. Is it about how often we pray? **NO!**
- c. Is it about how we pray? **NO!**
- d. Is it about when we pray? **NO!**
- e. Is it about what we say when we pray? **NO!**
- f. Is it about being worthy? **NO!**







## Not a Recipe

On the other hand . . .

- a. Is it due to a selfish desire?
- b. Does our attitude reflect humility? (i.e. repentant heart)
- c. What is our relationship with God?
- d. Are we allowing room for God to be God? (i.e. open hands)
- e. Are we patiently allowing for God's timing?
- f. Have we misunderstood God's response?





## Things to Ponder

Things to consider throughout our discussions:

- The **sovereignty of God**
- The **reality** of serious challenges or trials (pain, fear, anger, etc.)
- The *down side* of our “natural man” response or reaction to difficult situations
- The *up side* of a “Spirit led” response or reaction to difficult situations
- Our **reluctance** to call out for God’s mercy and grace and deliverance
- Expecting that God will **quickly** give mercy and grace and deliverance





## Things to Ponder

Things to consider throughout the discussions:

- **The sovereignty of God**
- **Thanking God** for His blessings (whether or not they fit your idea of a “solution”)
- **Patience** followed by patience followed again by patience
- **Expecting and acknowledging** that God’s hand is always with us
- **“Doing the next thing”** with peaceful anticipation of how His plan will unfold
- Exhibiting **humility** and **kindness** and **initiative** and a **quiet spirit**
- Viewing any/all “opportunities” with **prayerful discernment**
- **The sovereignty of God**





# Historical Narrative

## The value of historical narratives

- Real People
  - Real human emotions and weaknesses and strengths.
  - Not superheroes
  - No genetic advantages
  - No special training

Why is this important?





# Historical Narrative

## The value of historical narratives

- Real Situations
  - *What is the historical context?*
  - *What are the challenges faced by the people?*
    - *floods*
    - *wars*
    - *starvation*
    - *oppression*
    - *captivity, etc.*







# Historical Narrative

## The value of historical narratives

- Observe the real nature of man
  - Obedient
  - Disobedient
  - Bargain (Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Jephthah, Jonah, Job)
  - Rely on God
  - Rely on self
  - Succumb to temptation
  - Resist temptation
  - Jealous
  - Angry & Arrogant (Samson, several kings)
  - Humble (prayerful, respectful)





# Historical Narrative

## The value of historical narratives

- Observe the true nature of God
  - Provision
  - Benevolence
  - Longsuffering
  - Judgment
  - Anger
  - Mercy
  - Deliverance
  - Trustworthy





# Historical Narrative

## The value of historical narratives

- Influence on Future Generations
  - “Rest from war”
  - Return to war
  - Return to God
  - Return to disobedience
  - Unity
  - Division
  - Captivity





## Historical Narrative

*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:4*

*Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. . . .<sup>9</sup>We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,<sup>10</sup> nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.<sup>11</sup>Now these things happened to them as an example, *but they were written down for our instruction*, on whom the end of the ages has come. 1 Corinthians 10:6-11*





## This Story of God

SO – What instruction are we supposed to get from this story of Joseph?



Don't tell your family about your dreams.



Tell your dad not to like you best.



Be more self-aware.



Strive to have a better relationship with your siblings.



Life is not fair sometimes.







## This Story of God

### OR How about . . .

*But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Genesis 50:19-21*

What might we infer from the meaning of meant?

**\*meant** (2803) – to **weave** or (generally) to **fabricate**





# The Sovereignty of God

SO – in this story of Joseph, are we actually witnessing how God “weaves” events to “obtain” His desired outcome?

- Big picture: prophecies
- Small picture: events across a couple of generations

Through this and other such stories we are witnessing the awesome power of a sovereign God!





# The Sovereignty of God

## A Few Other Things to Ponder

Look back at some steps in your “journey”. Can you see *God’s invisible hand*?

- Consider which “opportunities” were *of your making*
- Consider which “opportunities” were *God-given*
- Consider how *God’s plan touched more lives* than any scheme you could have devised
- Consider if *God’s blessings were better* than anything you could have specifically asked for (i.e. our idea of a good outcome will often fall far short of the outcome planned by God)





# The Sovereignty of God

## A Few Other Things to Ponder

Look back at some other steps in your “journey”.

- Were there “opportunities” you said “no” to?
- Did you resist His prompting ?
- Did you search for a “better alternative”?
- Did you focus your prayer on just what you wanted?
- Did you approach challenges with a poor attitude?

Was *God’s invisible hand* still at work in your life?

