

DETOURS

DETOURS, PART 6: DETOUR TO DESTINATION

God uses detours in our own lives to bring us closer to Him. God will take us on a detour because He is constructing something in our lives. Today, we will see Joseph finally realize his dreams and God brings him to his destination on a 22 year detour—to not only rescue an entire nation, but his family as well.

BIG IDEA: As our detour ends, God’s great plan begins.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What’s the earliest tragic event you can remember trying to make sense of? How did it leave you feeling?
 - a. The death of a close relative.
 - b. The divorce of your parents.
 - c. An automobile accident.
 - d. A serious illness.
 - e. The loss of a friendship.
 - f. The loss of a job.
 - g. Physical or sexual abuse.
 - h. Other:

At age 17, Joseph probably had little understanding of why he suffered. He had 22 years to ponder the meaning of his suffering before his last explanation to his brothers in Genesis 50:19-20. Experiences in life—and especially personal experiences with God—painted meaning into his sufferings. Likewise, as we endure suffering, we usually have no clue to what our difficulties mean or even if they ever will have meaning.

2. What tragedy or hardship[in your own life would you like to understand from God’s perspective?
3. Do you know a person who, like Joseph, has overcome great adversity without bitterness or anger? What do you admire most about that person?
4. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Genesis 45:1-15.*

Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, “Out, all of you!” So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace. “I am Joseph!” he said to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. “Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt. “Now hurry back to my father and tell him, “This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately! You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.” Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph! Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly.”

Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same. Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

Genesis 45:1-15 (NLT)

5. What proof does Joseph offer his brothers (3-13)? His father? (9-11, 21-23)
6. How does Joseph's bombshell strike the brothers (3, 14)? Pharaoh's Palace (2, 16)? Their father (26-28)?
7. Kim said the Hebrew verb in Genesis 45:4 for 'Come closer' It refers not just to spatial proximity, but to an intimate closeness. It is a term occasionally used for coming near for the purpose of embracing or kissing someone. How would you have responded to people who had betrayed you? A hug? A kiss? A punch in the face?
8. I love Genesis 45:5-8! Joseph's hindsight is able to look back and see God's fingerprints and plan all along, answering the, "Why God?" and "Why me?" questions, but it took 22 years for Joseph to see it! Why is it so hard to see God's plan when we're in the middle of pain and suffering? Why does it sometimes take years to understand His plan—detours, destination and everything?
9. Joseph sees a change in his brother's lives—they care for their younger brother Benjamin, as well as their father. List some of the ways Joseph saw a change in his brothers.
10. Look at your own life now and compare it to what you were like 22 years ago. How would your friends and family say you've changed? In what way? For the better? How has your relationship with God changed and changed you?
11. Kim said, "Attitude is so crucial in the life of the Christian. We can go through the Sunday motions, we can pack a Bible under our arms, and sing the songs from memory, yet still hold grudges against the people who have wronged us. But Joseph's attitude was different." Who is someone you have trouble forgiving? Why? By you not forgiving, what is it costing you?
12. Kim said, "If you're under the impression that you are going to be great because of some accomplishment you've achieved, but harbor wrong attitudes? You're in for a terrible jolt. The greatness of God's plan in our lives comes in the sweet-spirit of humility and forgiveness.
13. Has Joseph truly forgiven his brothers? Why do you think so? But are they convinced of their forgiveness? Why or why not? (see Genesis 50:15-21)

But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said. So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin." When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. "Look, we are your slaves!" they said. But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

Genesis 50:15-21 (NLT)

14. What do you make of the brothers' fear as described here? Is it justified? Why or why not? How does Joseph's story reveal the truth of verses 19-21?
15. Based on Joseph's story, how would you define *divine providence*? If you don't know what providence is, here's a definition: *'the foreseeing care and guidance of God. The word provide is a good clue to this word's meaning: when a religious being is said to give people providence, he's taking care of them — providing for them.'*
16. How have you seen God use His *divine providence* in your life? In the lives of others?

MOVING FORWARD

Everyone struggles with the issue of "Why bad things happen to good people." Ultimately, only God knows the answer to this question. We may not understand it all, but we can learn a valuable lesson from Joseph. He trusted God for years, not understanding what the purpose was in his own suffering. Eventually he understood, and so will we, if not on earth but in eternity.