

The Story of Joseph: Seeing the Bigger Picture

Week 1: Joseph's Dreams

Scripture:

Genesis 37:1-17

Motivation (Why You Need This):

What circumstances could you endure if you believed they would ultimately lead to something good? Your follow up thought may be, “*depends on the circumstance.*”

Two Types of Circumstances...

- **Controlled Circumstances** (we won't be talking much about this type)
 - ✓ Bad decisions we make which result in undesirable consequences
 - ✓ This type of circumstance is avoidable if we obey God
 - ✓ Sometimes these circumstances DO lead us back to God
- **Uncontrolled Circumstances** (this is where we'll spend the most time)
 - ✓ Death and loss
 - ✓ Job and family issues
 - ✓ Health or financial struggles
 - ✓ Unmet desires or expectations; Disappointment, discouragement, depression

Uncontrolled circumstances are where we struggle because we think it's unfair; but, we'll be painting a bigger picture of circumstances as we look at Joseph's story.

His story will allow us to examine our present, ever-changing circumstances in light of God's unchanging promises.

Information (What You Need to Know):

How will we approach this? I am going to bookend Joseph's story for you – the beginning (way before him) and the ending (way after him).

- **The Beginning**
 - ✓ **Abraham (Gen. 12)** - God calls Abram and gives the covenant: land, nation, blessing (blessing to all peoples of the earth)
 - ✓ **Sarah and Isaac (Gen. 18–22)** - God provides the promised son and tests Abraham's faith
 - ✓ **Isaac's family (Gen. 25–27)** - Favoritism and deception fracture the home, yet the promise moves forward.
 - ✓ **Jacob (Gen. 28)** - Jacob runs, God meets him and reaffirms promises

- ✓ **Jacob's household (Gen. 29–31)** - Laban/Leah/Rachel brings rivalry and pain, but God is still building the family
- ✓ **Israel and Edom (Gen. 32–36)** - Jacob becomes **Israel** through wrestling and change; Esau becomes **Edom**—quick strength; Jacob still waits on promise.
However, the promises are still alive, but the family is fractured (Genesis 37)

■ The Ending

Genesis 50:20 (ESV) ...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.

Three thoughts when where we are is not where we think we should be...

■ **God's bigger picture is anchored in His promises, even in *ordinary* life**

Genesis 37:1 (ESV) Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. **2** These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives.

- ✓ Jacob is living in Canaan (sojourning)

“Unlike Esau, who quickly gained power and lands, Jacob lived as a sojourner in Canaan, without chiefs or tribes. One scholar notes that worldly success often comes faster than spiritual growth, which requires patience and faith.” – Bible Knowledge Commentary

- ✓ The family is on promised land, but still waiting for the occupation of it
- ✓ God's promises from Genesis 12 are still driving the story

How many years had passed from God's promise to Abraham until Joseph's story began to manifest? Over 200 years. Many died in ordinary life, having never seen God “fulfill” His promises.

■ **God is at work, even when the people around you are wrong**

- ✓ Joseph brings a *bad report* of his brothers (not revealed)

Genesis 37:2 (ESV) And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

- ✓ Jacob loves Joseph more than his other sons (gave him a robe)

Genesis 37:3 (ESV) Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age...made him a robe of many colors.

“Jacob's favoritism of Joseph was plain to everyone, including Joseph himself. As an outward display of his favor, he gave Joseph a **tunic of many colors**. This signified a position of favor, princely standing, and birthright. It was a dramatic way of saying he was the son to receive the birthright.” – David Guzik

- ✓ Joseph's brothers hate him and couldn't speak peacefully to him
Genesis 37:4 (ESV) But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.
- ✓ Joseph's first dream make his brothers hate him more
Genesis 37:5 (ESV) Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. **6** He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: **7** Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." **8** His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.
- ✓ Joseph's second dream makes them hate him even more, and even Jacob rebukes Joseph (but what Joseph said, he kept in mind)
Genesis 37:9 (ESV) Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." **10** But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" **11** And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

■ **God often carries forward the bigger picture through simple obedience**

Genesis 37:12 (ESV) Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. **13** And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am."

- ✓ Jacob says, "**Come, I will send you...**" (v. 13)
- ✓ Joseph replies, "**Here I am.**" (v. 13)
- ✓ Then Joseph is wandering, unsure (v. 15)
- ✓ A man asks, "**What are you seeking?**" (v. 15)
- ✓ Joseph answers plainly
- ✓ And the man points him to Dothan (v. 17)

"The assignment to Shechem brought Joseph providentially to Dothan, a site more convenient for contact with merchants using the main trade route on their way to Egypt." – MacArthur Study Bible

That random conversation is a part of God's bigger picture that we'll see in the weeks ahead.

Application (What You Need to Do):

When Joseph's story concludes, he was able to say this...

Genesis 50:20 (ESV) ...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.

So, I'll ask you the question that I opened with...

What circumstances could you endure if you believed they would ultimately lead to something good?