

## Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

September 7, 2025 Flip it: What you meant for bad God meant for Good. (Joseph)

### I Intro.

We're in unofficial fall, and we're in full swing. You'll see more opportunities for you to participate in the life of NCC. You're also going to see a big announcement in the next couple of weeks. Stay connected to our social media to keep up with everything that's happening. We're glad you've chosen to join us as we move through 2025. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

### II Sunday.

There is difficult pain in the heartbreaks and crushing events of life. This is more than just when bad things happen. This is when you are a victim of tough circumstances that can take your legs out from underneath you. It's when a person, or some group, brings harm to you. A friend, a family member, a co-workers, a person you know. Either directed towards you personally. Or you're a victim of a system or structures that intentionally isolate people like you. Or even economic, artificial, boundaries (disabilities, age, color, race, etc.) designed to make sure you aren't included in specific areas of life. We're going to identify these events or structures that were meant for bad, to harm, and how they can be 'flipped' towards good.

Our secondary title for this series: "When life breaks...God builds." These are stories of redemption. Redemption is about rescue, transformation, finding wholeness. 'Flipping it', redemption, rescuing, transformation isn't trying to erase, reverse or pretend the bad didn't happen. They are/were bad events intended to harm. This is a pathway God creates to restore the bad, 'flip it' to something good. We may not be removed from that bad thing. We may be stuck in the situation that arose. But it's the work of being redeemed from that bad thing (ashes) - to something new (beauty). Bringing good out of brokenness, freedom out of bandage, life out of death.

The story of Joseph is long (Genesis 37-50 the end of Genesis. 14 chapters). And a convoluted account of one thing meant for bad after another. I'll try to condense this story as much as I can.

**A. Story of Joseph.** Favorite son of Jacob/Israel and Rachel. Joseph had one full brother, 10 half brothers, and at least one half sister. He also is the person who had the technicolor dreamcoat. At 17 he unwisely shared two dreams with his brothers. First, there were bundles of grain bowing down to his, and in the second dream, the sun, moon and 11 stars bowed down to him. Obviously this angered both his dad and brothers. Brothers wanted to kill him. But instead, threw him into an empty well, sold him to a caravan headed to Egypt, painted his technicolor coat with goat's blood and said to their dad Jacob, that Joseph had been killed. Joseph was sold to Potifer, captain of Pharaoh's guard, and became one of his servants. Potifer's wife tried to seduce Joseph, but he ran away. She accused

him of sexual assault, and Joseph was imprisoned. The prison warden put Joseph in charge of the other prisoners. Through a friendship with the Pharaoh's baker, it got back to Pharaoh that Joseph could interpret dreams. There are a lot of back and forth stories about interpreting dreams. But eventually Pharaoh has a dream about 7 skinny cows eating 7 fat cows, and 7 dried up stalks of grain eating 7 fat stalks of grain. Joseph interpreted the dream as 7 years of abundance followed by 7 years of famine. Joseph is then put in charge of saving up during the years of abundance. Then negotiating deals with people wanting grain during the years of famine. During this time Joseph's wife Asenath bears him two sons. Manasseh and Ephraim.

In the second year of the famine word gets to Jacob, Egypt has food. Jacob sends his sons to go get food. Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they don't recognize him. Joseph runs them through the ringer, and accuses them of being spies. The brothers mention a younger brother back home, Benjamin, and Joseph throws them in jail for 3 days. Joseph pulls them out of jail, tells them to bring back Benjamin to prove they're not lying, but keeps Simeon. He has their donkeys loaded with grain, and hides money in their packs. Hearing the brothers talk about how they had done Joseph wrong, Joseph has to slip away from being in their presence. The brothers go back home. Jacob is distraught about losing Joseph, and now Simeon, AND having to send Benjamin. They also discovered the money, and were bothered by it. After using up all the grain, Jacob sends them back to Egypt again, this time with Benjamin. Joseph's personal assistant receives them. They tell them about the money so it won't be used against them, and they say they've brought Benjamin. They've also brought gifts from Jacob for Joseph. Joseph sees Benjamin, and again, has to slip out because he's overwhelmed with emotion. They have a big feast but Joseph does not eat with his brothers. Joseph's assistant reloads the brother's donkeys with grain again, doubles the money, and plants a silver cup in Benjamin's bag. The brothers leave, Joseph sends his assistant after his brothers about the "missing cup". They find the brothers and the cup. This creates all sorts of reactions, but they all go back to Egypt. They're brought back before Joseph ( they still don't realize it's him) and one of the brothers (Judah) begs that he be kept behind and Benjamin allowed to leave. Joseph loses it in front of them, sends all the Egyptians out, and tells his brothers who he is. Genesis 45 says Joseph wept so loudly, they could hear him outside of the room. Joseph tells the entire story of what happened. The brothers are stunned. We get the first mention of all of this being a part of God's plan.

**Genesis 45:5-8 *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.***

There's a big reunion. Joseph tells his brothers to go back and get their entire household. He gives them extra donkeys to bring all their possessions back. Joseph gets to see his father (Jacob) for the first time in over 20 years. They both weep, brothers are weeping, Pharaoh's court is weeping, the animals are weeping. Er'body is weeping. Jacob knows he's going to die. So, he blesses everyone. He and his family lived in Egypt for 17 years before he died. Jacob gives a final big speech, dies and is buried back in Canaan with his ancestors. Joseph works it out with Pharaoh that his family can stay. But then we see this. Remember, this is 17 years AFTER they reconcile and work things out.

**Genesis 50:14-21 *After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. 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.***

This story reveals a lot. First, the nature of God. We'll come back to this. Second, 'flipping' bad situations, intended for harm, takes time and effort. Scholars believe around 20 years passed after Joseph was sold into slavery, and then was reunited with his brothers. Joseph had to process his hurt, by himself. Continuing to live in the consequences of other people's actions for that long. Then there's another 17 years between that and the death of Jacob and this statement about what they meant for harm, God meant for good. Roughly 37 years of work to deal with the effects of the harm, and allow it to be turned into something good. We know that there is always the promise and hope of redemption, restoration. Redemption that comes from outside of us (God). And the work of 'flipping it' (redemption) we have to do ourselves. This is our responsibility.

## **B. The work of overcoming, flipping, redeeming an offense.**

I know this story felt cumbersome, meandering, ridiculous, so over the top. This is exactly what happens to us when we believe harm is done to us. And the personal journey we have to go on to BEGIN to deal with all the emotions and our reactions (yes plural) to when we believe we are done wrong. But we also see the work, the process that has to be done to flip harm into good.

**1. Dig into the nature of what happens to us when bad things happen to us.** When we find harm that's been done to us, it's going to create tension within us. There hopefully will still be some desire to still be a decent person, to do well, and to add to the betterment of our world. But we'll also wrestle with the hurt, and tendency to want to act in a revengeful way to the wrong that's been done to us. You will experience the tension between the two. See it in how Joseph responds to his brothers. And them to him. Sometimes it never feels over. The effects of being done wrong, being hurt, can last a really long time. For both the guilty ones and the...not as guilty ones.

**2. Flipping harm into good means owning your part of the harm.** We need to put some culpability on Joseph. He didn't deserve what happened to him. But he did play a part in the breakdown of the relationship with his brothers. Looking back, flaunting his coat, and telling dreams wasn't very wise. 'Flipping it' often requires us to redeem our choices, and sometimes rescue ourselves from the consequences of our choices. Doing it in a way that brings about good from the harm. The work God is doing intentionally. To redeem the world. To flip harm/evil into good. We are to be about this same work in the same way.

**3. Flipping harm requires deep inner work of contemplation, calculation, and cunning.** This is thinking through, something in such a deep and penetrating way, that works out all of the specifics of the issue to get to the solution. The Hebrew word for "*intended*" is hă-šā-bāh (khachshava). It means to calculate, thinking about or through, the process of contemplation, to bring about a specific outcome. What Joseph's brothers had done was a calculated, intentional effort, to bring harm to Joseph. There's a plan, a scheme, that was meant to harm him.

Then God is doing the same kind of work, effort, planning, calculating, but for that effort, work, to produce good rather than harm. Putting the same intentional effort to flip the harm into good. In **Luke 16:1-13**, we see the parable of the wise or unjust steward. I've always struggled with this story, but we see the steward is praised for his shrewdness. He appears dishonest on the surface. But Jesus uses this story to highlight the importance of using our abilities and resources as shrewdly, cunningly, for good as the world does this for evil. In a world that intends harm, evil, we're called to use the same effort and cunning for good. Someone once called it; *"Good trouble"*.

### **C. What does this story tell us about the nature of God?**

Work of redemption. Being rescued. Restored. Brought back to wholeness. Bringing good out of brokenness, freedom out of bondage, life out of death. Stories of this spiritual work are woven all through scripture. To actively be pulled from a place we're in bondage to, to a place of freedom. This is the message of Jesus at the synagogue in Luke 4. Sometimes we find ourselves stuck in a place that isn't in our best interest. In the series *"Flip it"*, We see God reaching into some of our worst situations, our toughest places, our greatest hurt, harms done to us, and redeeming those situations, sometimes rescuing us from places we don't want to be in. God wants to save us from. Flipping that bad, harmful thing into something beautiful and good. It should inspire us to look for grace in unexpected places. Sometimes the most beautiful thing grows out of the most surprising places. Like the flower growing out of the crack of the sidewalk that was poured over a previous place of beauty.

### **III Challenge.**

I oddly find hope in the end of Genesis and the life of Joseph. Joseph knows at the end of his life he's going to die. And he says this.

**Genesis 50:24-25** *"Soon I will die," Joseph told his brothers, "but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, "When God comes to help you and lead you back, you must take my bones with you."*

This is where Joseph's life ends. The end of Genesis. And Exodus begins. The beginning of the journey in the wilderness. So, we do see Joseph's life flipped from one harmful thing after another into a good and necessary thing. A beautiful story of life, redemption, rescue, restoration. But in all honesty, we also see this as the perpetual life cycle of flipping tough and at times devastating moments into good things. And God's continual presence and work in pulling us out of harm, redeeming us into good.

**Where are you in life right now? Do you need the restorative work of God to redeem, 'flip' what was intended for harm into something good?**