

## LESSON 7 | THE BEGINNINGS

# WEEK 7: DAY 1

# THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

*“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”* – Romans 8:28

This week, you’ll be looking at how Joseph weathered a hard time in his life. If you recall, Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. God looked after him, though, and Joseph found himself living as a slave in a house in Egypt. His master Potiphar quickly grew to trust Joseph. But as you’re going to find out in more detail later, Joseph’s story doesn’t end there.

We all experience trials in our lives. Being a Christ-follower doesn’t mean that life will be easy. In fact, the opposite is often true. We often experience tough times because we publicly identify with Jesus. But this week’s memory verse reminds us that in all things, God is constantly working to make good out of bad, for His glory, and according to His plan. We can be confident in this as we go through the tough times that are bound to come.

**Today, memorize Romans 8:28.**

This week, try memorizing this verse using the 5-5-5 method we talked about a few weeks ago. It’s a great way to commit God’s Word to memory.



## LESSON 7 | THE BEGINNINGS

# WEEK 7: DAY 2

# THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

*“And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison” - Genesis 39:20*

The movie “Unbroken” (Universal Pictures, 2014) is based on the true story of Louis Zamperini, who was an Olympic athlete, World War II veteran, and a prisoner of war in Japan. The movie compellingly illustrates Zamperini’s courage, will to survive, and commitment to his fellow prisoner. However, there is more to the story that the movie skims over. Later in life, Zamperini became a Christian and, because of his relationship with Jesus, extended forgiveness to his former captors. His attitude toward his experience has given Zamperini a massive platform to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

**Read Genesis 39.**

We see that Joseph does the right thing but ends up being thrown in prison for his reward. The hard truth is that sometimes doing the right thing doesn’t get you a trophy, but just pain and suffering. There are times when honoring God is going to result in ridicule, mockery, or persecution. The question we must answer is, “How much is obeying God worth?”

If anyone should have been bitter about life and toward God, it was definitely Joseph. But he maintains an obedient attitude toward God. Much like Louis Zamperini, Joseph fights to maintain a positive attitude, despite his circumstances. In a massive plot twist, we read in verse 23, “And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.” Even in prison, God was with Joseph and gave him success. Prison normally seems like a dead end, but God used it to propel Joseph forward to bigger and better things. The stories of Joseph and Zamperini point us to this truth: Sometimes tragic events lead us to a bigger purpose than we could have ever imagined.

### Something To Think About...

- What would you be willing to endure in order to do what is right? How can you prepare yourself now to be able to make the right decision later?
- How does it change your perspective to know that God can give you success when success seems highly unlikely? In what ways does that change your attitude today?



## LESSON 7 | THE BEGINNINGS

# WEEK 7: DAY 3

# THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

*“They said to him, ‘We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.’ And Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.’”– Genesis 40:8*

There is an elevator at Ruby Falls in Chattanooga, Tennessee, that drops deep into the earth. As you ride it down into the cave to see the underground waterfall, the constant view is of a massive wall of rock. Finally, the doors open, and you find yourself in an underground wonderland! With every step along the narrow path that follows, you start to wonder if you’ll ever get there. Finally, after much walking, you enjoy one of the coolest places ever!

**Grab your Bible and read Genesis 40.**

Joseph was sold into captivity, trapped in a foreign land, and now in prison as a prisoner and simultaneously in charge of watching two of the Pharaoh’s employees who had not performed their duties satisfactorily. One night each of these two had dreams that perplexed them. Since Joseph’s character and godly strength shone through even in prison, the first asked Joseph for an interpretation. He got a good report, so the second person asked for the same. Unfortunately, his was not so good.

Go back and look at verse 8. Here’s the thing: Even while imprisoned, Joseph sought to do the will of God. He didn’t wait for better days. He didn’t shrug these guys off. Furthermore, he spoke the truth—even in giving bad news. Life isn’t always great views in good places. The person that you are in the mundane moments (such as the elevator ride in Ruby Falls) should be the same person that you are when you are enjoying the magnificent moments in life (such as... well, the rest of Ruby Falls). Keep in mind that God can use you regardless of where you are. Don’t allow your perspective to get in the way of how you live for Christ.

### Something To Think About...

- How do bad situations affect the way you treat other people?
- What is one practical action you can take next time you are in a bad situation that will bring honor to God?



## LESSON 7 | THE BEGINNINGS

# WEEK 7: DAY 4

# THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

*“Joseph answered Pharaoh, ‘It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.’”*– Genesis 41:16

There was once a guy who was a very good drummer. During his junior year, he auditioned better than even the seniors, attaining the coveted position of 1st chair all-county percussionist. The next year rolled around, and it was time to try out for the all-county band once more. Having the confidence of last year’s success, he strode into tryouts and played extremely well—in his opinion. But a funny thing happened later that afternoon. When the announcer got to the percussion section, the confident senior realized it wasn’t his name that was called first. It was, in fact, an eighth-grader! You can imagine the lesson he learned in humility that year.

**Grab your Bible and read Genesis 41:14-36.**

Joseph had gained the attention of the Pharaoh because he had accurately interpreted the dreams of two servants. And now, the Pharaoh had given Joseph his undivided attention in order to have Joseph interpret his two dreams. Go back and look at verse 16. Note that even though Joseph had the opportunity to attempt to interpret the dream by his own power, he did not. Also, note that Joseph had the chance to make something up that might free him from prison. Again, he did not. Joseph daringly acknowledged the one true God in front of the most powerful man in the world—a man who did not share the same faith as Joseph.

When we live our lives in humility before God and man, the truth shines brightly everywhere we go. The drummer mentioned above allowed pride to take hold in his life and lived as though he was the uncontested best. He spent time portraying to others and himself that he had no need to worry and no need to practice or improve. And in the end, the truth was still the truth—someone else was better. In a similar way, Joseph could have allowed pride to influence his reading of the dream. And if he had, he would have been lying to himself and Pharaoh. But instead, he humbly presented the dreams before God, and the truth (even though it was hard to hear) was proclaimed. And as you will see later, this blessed far more people than Pharaoh.

### **Something to Think About. . .**

- When have you acted like that drummer and not like Joseph?
- What might have happened if Joseph had approached the Pharaoh under his own power?
- What are some potential outcomes when a person chooses to honor God instead of himself/herself in public?



## LESSON 7 | THE BEGINNINGS

# WEEK 7: DAY 5

# THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

*You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.*” - Genesis 41:40

Near the historic town of Dahlonega in the north Georgia mountains, there is a place where you can rent the necessary equipment to pan for gold. In fact, you can purchase a bag of river sand guaranteed to hold trace amounts of gold along with a few naturally occurring colorful rocks and crystals! The key to getting the gold and jewels out of a lumpy pile of river sand is in the process of sifting. Sifting involves slowly pouring the sand from the pan into a screen. The sand passes through the screen while the larger particles remain on the screen. If you work at it long enough, you will begin to see the shining minerals - and even gold!

The sifting process is much like the challenging times we face in our lives. Joseph has gone through a 13-year-long ordeal of slavery and imprisonment because of jealousy in his family. There is good news for Joseph in the scripture passage today. Get your Bible and look up Genesis 41:37-45. Take a few moments to read and digest the passage.

At this point in Joseph’s life, he has been through several difficult years. Just like pressure can turn coal into diamonds, long times of hardship can reveal the inner strength and Christ-like character in a person. Thirteen long years of God “sifting” out the sands of weakness in Joseph’s life were over. Joseph’s perseverance and obedience to God in the hardest of times have turned into a position as far from slavery as possible—a position that would save an entire nation of people! Joseph now would be governor over all of Egypt!

### Something to Think About. . .

- What is the most difficult time or challenge you have ever been through?
- What makes God’s “sifting” process in your life so difficult? How were you stronger after getting through that challenging time?
- Take a moment today to ask God to prepare you to persevere even in the most difficult of times, knowing that He is preparing you to shine brightly for Him like gold or a precious jewel.