

THROUGH IT ALL: INTRO (GENESIS 39)

Has there ever been a time when you thought you knew how things were going to play out in your life, but it all completely fell apart...

- Maybe you planned to make the team, but instead you got cut.
- Or you planned on having that group of friends, but you ended up alone.
- You planned for your parents to stay together, but they didn't.
- You planned for *lots* of things to be good in life — but they just... aren't.

And that's where we meet Joseph.

He's 17 years old when we first meet him. He's the favored son out of 12 boys. He has dreams of greatness — literal dreams from God showing how Joseph is destined for greatness. So, at 17 he thinks he knows exactly how his life is going to play out.

And then, in less than 24 hours, his entire life unravels. His own brothers are full of jealousy and hatred toward him. So they throw him into a pit, sell him into slavery, and before he knows what's happening Joseph is on a caravan headed to Egypt — a foreign country where he doesn't know anyone, doesn't speak the language, and doesn't know the culture. Everything he thought was true about his future has suddenly crumbled.

So tonight, as we kick off this series, I want to give you some big ideas that we'll see play out in the life of Joseph — like a "trailer" to a movie. And hopefully, after the trailer, you'll want to come back each week and hear the entire story!

So, the first big idea that we'll see play out in the life of Joseph is this...

1. Your worst moment is not your last chapter.

At just 17 yrs old, Joseph thinks his life is over. But God wasn't done writing Joseph's story. And He's not done writing yours either!

Here's what I know about you guys. Some of you are walking through stuff right now that no one in this room knows about. Maybe it's...

- Anxiety that feels like a heavy weight on your chest every day.
- A family situation that's falling apart at home.
- Being overlooked, ignored, or mistreated by people who are supposed to be your friends.
- A mistake you made that you can't take back.
- Feeling like God is distant or silent.

And here's the lie you're being told — by your culture, and maybe by your own thoughts: *"If my life is hard right now, it means that God doesn't care about me."*

That's a LIE! The entire story of Joseph is going to prove it's a lie. You see, the truth is, it gets worse before it gets better for Joseph. He gets falsely accused, thrown into prison, and abandoned. He suffers for *years*.

But, even though his life was hard at the moment – it didn't mean that God was done working. And this is what Paul means in the NT when he says...

Philippians 1:6 "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

Joseph's worst moment was *not* his last chapter. God wasn't done working! And your worst moment is not your last chapter. God isn't done working.

2. God's presence does not depend on your circumstances.

Just because life is hard doesn't mean that God is not right there with you. If you are His child then He is there and He's working even when you can't see it. In fact, throughout Joseph's story, we'll see a common phrase...

Genesis 39:2 "The Lord was with Joseph..."

Even in his darkest moments, God was with him through it all. For example...

- **When Joseph faced his worst betrayal.** His own family – the people who were supposed to have his back – they betrayed him most. But even then, God was with Joseph.

And some of you know what it's like to be hurt by people you trusted most. Maybe a parent. Maybe a friend. Maybe someone at church. The wound is real but, as we'll see, God can redeem what others meant for evil.

- **When Joseph faced his greatest temptation.** As we'll see, Joseph becomes a slave in the house Potiphar – a very powerful Egyptian man. But Potiphar's wife – a beautiful and powerful woman herself – tries to seduce Joseph. In that moment he's alone, he's far from home, and no one would know. But when she keeps pressing Joseph, he says...

Genesis 39:9b "...You are his wife. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

And, like Joseph, we all know what it feels like to be tempted when nobody is watching – when no one would find out and the pressure is on. Joseph will show us how to stand firm when everything around you says "just give in." But even in the moment of his greatest temptation, God was with him.

- **When Joseph played by the rules and still lost.** Even when Joseph did everything *right*, things still seemed to go *wrong*. Don't you hate when that happens?

In fact, maybe that's you right now. You're doing everything right — reading your Bible, trying to be a good Christian, staying out of trouble — and life is *still* hard.

But that doesn't mean God is not with you.

3. When life falls apart, God's plan may be falling into place.

You see, God wasn't surprised by the betrayal of his brothers. The pit wasn't outside of God's plan. God wasn't caught off guard by the slave traders or the prison sentence. Joseph will later see that God's plan was actually falling into place.

And you might feel like *you're* in a pit right now — not a hole in the ground, but maybe...

A broken friendship.

A family situation you didn't ask for.

A dream that seems dead.

And you might be asking, "God, I thought You had a plan for me?"

And the answer is: He still does! When you think life is falling apart, *that's* often when God's plan is falling into place.

This teaches us two valuable lessons...

- **Don't waste the waiting.** Joseph spends years in prison waiting – feeling like God had forgotten him. But God was actually using those painful moments to prepare Joseph for the leader he would become. The waiting wasn't wasted.

And we'll talk about what to do when you're in the waiting room of life. It's often during those times that God is building something in you that can't be built any other way. Things like character, patience, and trust. These take time. So don't waste the waiting!

- **Surrender the urge for revenge.** When Joseph finally gets his moment to take revenge on his brothers – the ones

who hurt him most – he doesn't do what they expect. Instead, he uses the opportunity to bless his brothers *and* save an entire nation from certain death!

You see, Joseph didn't allow bitterness to win. He later tells his brothers, *"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."*

So, the stuff you're going through right now – the hard stuff, the unfair stuff, the stuff that makes no sense – God is with you through it all. And He's working it all for good.

Cool Aspect of Joseph's Story

His story points to a much greater story:

- Joseph was a beloved son.
- He was sent by His Father to His own brothers, but they rejected Him.
- They stripped him of his robe, sold him for the price of a common slave, and threw him into a pit.
- And through Joseph's suffering, nations were saved.

But there's a greater and better Joseph. His name is Jesus.

- He too was the beloved Son of His Father.
- Jesus was sent by His Father to His own brothers, but they rejected Him.
- Jesus was also stripped of His clothes and sold for the price of a common slave.
- Judah (Joseph's brother) is the one who suggested selling his brother, and the Greek name for "Judah" is "Judas."
- Joseph was 30 yrs old when he began his public ministry in Egypt, and Jesus was 30 yrs old when He began His public ministry.
- And through His suffering, Jesus will save nations.

You see, Jesus went through the ultimate pit — the cross and tomb — so that you could be forgiven and have a relationship with God forever. And *THROUGH IT ALL* Jesus promises to never leave you nor forsake you!

So, let's start this series the right way.

I'm going to ask you to do three things:

- 1) **Show up.** This series will help you in SO many practical ways! So, don't miss it. You need to hear what God wants to teach you through the life of Joseph.
- 2) **Be honest.** In your small groups, don't give the "right" answer. Be real. If you're struggling, say it. If you're angry at God, say it. If you have questions, come and ask.
- 3) **Bring someone.** Most likely, you know someone who's going through a hard time right now. Invite them. This series is not only for you, it's for them as well. It's for all of us!

So make a plan right now for WHO you're going to invite, and HOW you'll invite them.

Let's pray.

Small Groups