

God Will Carry You Through

Genesis 37

Joseph is one of the most familiar characters in all of the Bible. The story of Joseph takes up about 14 chapters of Genesis. That's about one-fourth of the contents of the entire book of Genesis. Adversity did not harden his character. Prosperity did not ruin him. He was the same in private as in public.

The story of Joseph has all the marks of a great novel. It has a doting father, a pampered son, jealous brothers, an international food crisis, attempted murder, a seductress, and an unexpected rise to power.

We learn so many things from this story, such as how to overcome envy and face adversity, how to resist temptation, how to have faith in God's promises even when things look very bleak, and how to forgive those who have wronged us.

When our lives fall apart, it can feel like God has forgotten us. It's a time when God is watching you closely, with a finger on the thermostat of our trials. The life of Joseph is one of the most remarkable stories found in the Bible. His life is a mixture of sadness and glory, pain and of success.

This is a story about a guy whose circumstances are so horrible that you will feel better about your life after hearing the story. Yet, in another part of the story, he is so incredibly powerful and wealthy that, no matter how successful you are, he will dwarf you.

When we pick up the first movement of Joseph's story, he is at one of the lowest moments of his young life. He is a young man thrown into a pit and then sold into slavery into Egypt. He is purchased by a man named Potiphar, and in Potiphar's house, Joseph quickly rises to a place of authority and prominence. However, Potiphar's wife has eyes for Joseph and attempts to get him to commit adultery with her. He refuses, leaving his garment in her hand. Genesis 39:7-13

Many of the greatest people in the Bible knew great tragedy had to go through the times. In each of these cases, the Lord revealed His power and providence on behalf of His servants. What does all this mean for us? All of us find ourselves in the pit from time to time.

The trials, valleys, and troubles of life can be compared to a pit experience. Joseph was the favorite son. The other 11 got bunk beds, but he got his own room. When the others got new bikes, he got a new car. He was the first person to get an iPhone. The other brothers got hand-me-downs, but he got a perfectly tailored coat of many colors.

1. Sometimes The Best Stories Start In A Pit.

“When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him down into a cistern.” Genesis 37:23-24

One characteristic of a pit is you never see it coming. The pit is an unexpected tumble. You're walking down the sidewalk of life and something trips you up. A crisis. A cancer. A foreclosure. A diagnosis. A betrayal. A failure. It's one thing to land in the pit because of a bad economy or an unexpected problem. It's another thing to end up in a pit when someone who is supposed to love you pushes you in. Sometimes it's unfair treatment. The story begins with Joseph as a seventeen-year-old boy. His family was probably a great deal like your family. There are no perfect families. There are no perfect fathers. There are no perfect mothers. There are no ideal family situations. Joseph had the good and Joseph had the bad. Joseph's mother died when he was just a young boy.

Joseph may have been one of the loneliest young men who ever lived. There were many nights when Joseph cried himself to sleep because he didn't have a mother to come and love him and care for him. Joseph was a lonely young man.

We live in a culture of abuse and abandonment. We are angry, and we lash out. We walk out. We take it out on everyone else. We are frustrated and disappointed in life. We have an uncharted future. We don't know what's going to happen now. We don't know what's coming next. He has had a song of "gloom, despair, and agony on me. If it weren't for bad luck. I'd have no luck at all." Things will get worse for Joseph, but he never lets his heart get bitter.

"When the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him down to Egypt." Genesis 37:28

The story opens with everything looking up for Joseph. He dreams that everyone will one day look up to him. But what goes up must come down. The brothers put him down. Then they threw him down. Then they sold him down. Then he was led down the road to Egypt. Stripped of his name and position everything is gone. Living has a way of taking us down. Down to the divorce court. Down to the unemployment office. Down to the doctor's office. Down to the soup line. Down on your luck. Down in the mouth. You're just down.

By the time he arrived in Egypt, he had nothing. It didn't matter he was the great-grandson of Abraham. It wouldn't matter that his name would be in the bible one day. But Joseph never gives up. He remains faithful to God. It will get worse. He will have shackles. Betrayal. He will be falsely accused. He will be forgotten. He will have promises broken, but he will also experience the presence of God. Somehow he keeps believing. Somehow he has faith he will make it. Somehow he endured when it kept getting worse.

2. When You're Down To Nothing, God Is Up To Something.

God has a plan, even in the worst of moments.

"As for you, 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." Genesis 50:20

The word "meant" appears twice. The word "meant" in Hebrew means "to weave." This a picture of God as a master weaver overlapping and stitching a plan together, but we often see the back side of the tapestry God is weaving.

Evil comes into our lives, and God reweaves it into something good. *"To bring about and preserve many lives."* The term "bring about" in Hebrew means "to build or construct." It's is amazing how a builder can go into a builders supply store with a set of blue prints and turn stacks of boards and concrete mix and stones and doors and sheet rock into a beautiful home.

Every one of us has been redeemed on purpose and for a purpose. Every one of us plays a strategic role in the unfolding of the plan of God until Jesus comes. God intends to see that dream through in your life.

Did you know God is doing the same in your life? Do you see Him as a master builder? Do you see Him as a master weaver? If you don't, then all you have left is anxiety and pressure. This is why we try to do it all ourselves because we see ourselves as the weaver.

Our God is a God who gets people through things. He got the children of Israel through the Red Sea. He got the children through the wilderness for 40 years. He got the children of Israel through the Jordan River. He gets us through the valley of the shadow of death.

But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: *“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”* Isaiah 43:1-2

God will get you through what you’re going through. He got Daniel through the lion’s den and the three Hebrew friends through the fiery furnace Our God is a God of deliverance. He delivered Jonah from the whale’s belly. He delivered Simon Peter from a prison cell.

He had no idea when he was thrown in the pit that he would one day be the Prime Minister of Egypt. God will use your pain for His purpose. Sometimes God takes His time. As we pass through the prisons of life, God is merely training us. When we are found faithful in these valleys, we are allowed to experience greater levels of authority and blessing. God uses the difficulties of life to grow us so that He might us our lives in a more wonderful way than would otherwise be possible, Matt. 25:41; Luke 16:10. As we endure the prison experiences of life, we are trained for expanded usefulness by the Lord! Therefore, we need to learn not to rebel against the prisons we find ourselves in. We must learn to yield to the Lord's work in our lives and trust Him to have His way in us and through us. He knows where He wants us and He knows what He would have us do. Let us learn to trust Him & experience the best He has to offer us!

3. Allow Your Difficulties To Drive You To God.

The next statement we read about Joseph is that God was with him. Genesis 39:2

“Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.” Genesis 39:1-2

If you are living in difficult circumstances, don't allow those difficult circumstances to drive you away from God. Let them drive you to God. If you are living in a difficult home, if you are serving in a difficult place, if you are going to school in a hostile environment, don't let that pull you away from the Lord. Let that drive you to Jesus.

“Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.” Psalm 62:2

Sometimes the Bible has a way of summing up the life of a person in a single sentence. When we are told about the life of Barnabas, we read that he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.

What would God's summary of our life be if stated in one sentence? Joseph's life is summarized in the New Testament in Acts 7:9: *“God was with him.”*

Those four simple words characterize the entire life of Joseph. Regardless of the circumstances that came to his life, regardless of what happened to him, the Bible says God was with him.

Four times in Genesis 39 the Scriptures say, *“Now the Lord was with Joseph.”* Genesis 39:2

That was the secret of Joseph’s success. Things came into the life of Joseph that would have discouraged most men. Yet, in the midst of all Joseph’s circumstances, he came through with victory because *“the Lord was with him.”*

What would someone in your circumstances do if you were confident that God was with you?

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:18

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” Psalm 23:4