

Genesis 37-50 The Story Of Joseph

The story of Joseph is possibly one of the easiest read stories in the OT. It reads like a typical story, full of intrigue and plot twists, there is tragedy followed by triumph. It's everything you want in a good story. Right off the top it sets the stage for who the main players will be, I mean it's Joseph's story. He is the second youngest brother of 12 who was probably annoying and may have talked too much, but what do we expect, he's a teenager. He was also highly favored by his Father, which just made his brothers dislike him even more. Anyone here have younger siblings? Are they annoying? Don't answer that, wow, that's not nice. When the story starts, Joseph is 17. His Dad, Jacob, was the grandson of our patriarch of our faith, Abraham. We studied in-depth last week how God had made a covenant with his grandpa that He would bless Abraham and his descendants and would give them land and an offspring too numerous to count and then send a seed that would bless all of mankind, which will be Jesus. Well, God had the blessing go to Abraham's son, Isaac, who was Jacob's Dad, and then passed it on to him. Jacob has 12 sons, which will be the 12 tribes of Israel, but only had two children by the woman that he loved, Rachel, and so there seems to be a special bond between Jacob, and these two boys Joseph and the youngest Benjamin.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. - Genesis 37:3,4

He was favored in such a way that his brothers could see that Daddy's boy gets everything and they hated him because of it. And what's with this stupid colorful robe, walking around as if he thinks he is royalty. But the truth is Joseph was just a normal 17 year old. Then one day he has a dream and everything will change.

5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: 7 We

were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.”

8 His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

9 Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. “Listen,” he said, “I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

10 When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?” 11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. - Genesis 37:5-11

They already know that their obnoxious little brother is Daddy's favorite then he starts telling of a dream that one day all bow down to him, yeah, that did not go over well.

So if you're Joseph, you must be oblivious to their disdain in the first place, but make no mistake you are hated by your brothers.

With any good storyline, you have to have something go wrong. Like think about every movie that you've seen, something goes wrong and it tugs at your heart strings, and hopefully there is some resolve and it has a happy ending. Even all of the Disney movies, parents die, kids are stolen, there is some serious jacked up stuff out there. This is why I love chick flick movies, for real, it's always like a fairy tale ending. No one wants bad endings. I watched this movie with my wife once that she saw on Netflix and it was painstakingly slow romantic movie about some guy that was a train wreck but his best friend, the pretty girl, was always there for him and right before the movie ends, you guessed he finally sees she's the one for him. They get married and live happily ever after right? Wrong! They get together all seems great and then BAM she's ran over by a BUS! And the movie ends. What kind of psychopath writes that storyline? Worst movie ever and 2 hours I'll never get back! Anyways, a good story has the ability to keep you

interested by ups and downs with the characters. Well this story does not disappoint.

One day Joseph is sent out by his dad to go and check on his older brothers who had gone to graze their Dad's flocks near Shechem. Nothing real out of the ordinary except this is the place that the Jacob's daughter Dinah was defiled and where Simeon and Levi had killed a whole clan of men(ch 34). Joseph arrives, at Shechem and his brothers are no longer there, they had moved on to the region of Dothan. When he finally arrives, the brothers see him walking up, I mean, how couldn't they, who else would have that ridiculous robe on.

18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. 19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. 20 "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." - Genesis 37:18-20

I can't imagine that Joseph has any inclination that this is how his brothers truly felt but when he gets close enough they decide to not kill him but they throw him in cistern. And they sat down to eat a meal: The heartless character of these brothers was clear – they could eat a meal with Joseph nearby in the pit. They could sit down and enjoy food while their hearts were bent on murdering their brother.

Later, **Genesis 42:21** described the conviction of sin they ignored at that moment. **They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."**

When Joseph was cast into the pit, he pled with his brothers, and they ignored his cries as they ate their meal.

"A physicist could compute the exact time required for his cries to go twenty-five yards to the eardrums of the brothers. But it took twenty-two years for that cry to go from the eardrums to their hearts."
(Barnhouse)

The brothers decide that killing him isn't the best option, instead they sell him into slavery for 20 shekels. Jealousy had turned into hatred and there was no turning back now.

Joseph goes from being the favorite, pampered son of Jacob to a tale that he had been killed and eaten by an animal and now in reality, enslaved in the country of Egypt. How many of you know that God can take any situation and use it for His good? So often we hear people quote Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

God has the ability to use the worst of situations and still make it work out for His plan and glory. Joseph has been bought by a guy named Potiphar. Now Potiphar was the captain of the guard, one of Pharaoh's officials.

2 The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. 6 So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. - Genesis 39:2-6

Notice that is said the Lord was with Joseph. Joseph is in some foreign land, he has been purchased by some Egyptian official and yet, everything he does is blessed by God. I think it's interesting that it says Potiphar could see the Lord was with Joseph. What do you think stood out to him? Was he just kind and humble? Did he have joy even in this situation? Whatever it was, his master could SEE God in Him. Church, this is how the world should look at us as Christians. They should see God in us, shining like stars in the universe, like a billboard saying we are not our own, we are

God's Children! So often, I see Christians living in the brokenness of their current circumstances, and I have to think that when we do that, we hide the glory of what God has done for us. One of the main takeaways from the story of Joseph is this:

“He was loved and hated, favored and abused, tempted and trusted, exalted and abased. Yet at no point in the one-hundred-and-ten-year life of Joseph did he ever seem to get his eyes off God or cease to trust him. Adversity did not harden his character. Prosperity did not ruin him. He was the same in private as in public. He was a truly great man.” (Boice)

As we continue this story, you'll see Boice's words ring true, Joseph was a great person, so much that once he dies they'll carry his bones during the entire wilderness pilgrimage until they bury him in the Promised Land. Back to his story, all is going great, God is blessing everything he does and then his master's wife makes advances at him repeatedly and then one day she caught him by the cloak and said come to bed with me, he did what every man should do in that situation, he ran! Well in her rejected state, she lies about him and says he tried to have sex with her, his master is fuming and throws him in jail! Wow, so he goes from being sold into slavery by his own brothers to blessed in everything he does to now being lied about and thrown in Prison...

But while Joseph was there in the prison, 21 the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. - Genesis 39:20,21

When it seems like all hope is lost, if you stay faithful and walk blamelessly, God can still bless you in ALL circumstances. Joseph is now overseeing the prison system...what? That didn't take long!

23 The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. - Genesis 39:23

The warden could see that the Lord was with Joseph! Amazing.

While in prison, and we don't know exactly how long he is there, but he has two men that are with him that have dreams on the same night. One is the

cupbearer and one is the baker. God shows Joseph the meaning of the dreams and asks the cupbearer to remember him. The dreams come true, the Baker is put to death and the cupbearer is restored to his position with Pharaoh and yet he does not mention Joseph. 2 years pass and Pharaoh has a dream and so he calls on all the magicians and wise men in Egypt to interpret his dream and yet NO one could do so. Then, the cupbearer is reminded of this man Joseph and how his God interprets dreams for him.

14 So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. 15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." - Genesis 41:14-16

God is telling them that there will be 7 good years and 7 bad years. In the 7 good years, there will be plenty and blessings will abound, but to set aside for 7 years of famine that will come directly after and by this many will be saved from starvation. This is ALL God.

32 The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon. - Genesis 41:32

God had a plan...it really had nothing to do with blessing Pharaoh, but His plan was always for the children of Israel to become a nation, and the seed of Abraham to continue on. To accomplish what was foretold to Abraham when God told him in chapter 15, that 400 years your descendants must be in a country not their own, enslaved and mistreated, but after will come out with great possessions. God unveiled this to Abraham and this is starting to unfold.

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." - Genesis 41:39,40

So, if you're taking notes, sold into slavery by his brothers, favored by his master, lied about, unfairly thrown into prison, favored by the warden, interprets dreams through God, is brought to Pharoah and then Pharoah makes him the highest ranking person in ALL of Egypt, only with respect to the throne was Pharoah actually greater. WHAT JUST HAPPENED???

This story is incredible! So that's it right? God blessed this Godly man and now he rules over millions. Not quite, the famine strikes and the entire land suffers, but guess who was prepared for this? That's right because of Joseph, Egypt and their Pharaoh had nothing to worry about, for they had made provisions. People from ALL over are coming and buying food for Joseph had made sure to store enough for everyone, but it came at a cost. Meanwhile, Joseph's family was wealthy, but they had no food. So His dad, Jacob sends all of his sons to Egypt in order to buy food, well, all except the youngest, Benjamin. When he sees his brothers, he recognizes them but they don't recognize him. Remember he was 17 the last time they had spoken and he's now at least 37, the boy is now a man. He can tell they don't recognize him and he asks about their family, they say they had one sibling die and the youngest is at home. Remember, Benjamin is Joseph's ONLY full brother, so he says bring him here or no food for you! They leave Simeon in Egypt, sort of as a deposit to return with their younger brother. But when Jacob hears about this plan he is beside himself. ABSOLUTELY NOT! He had already lost one child, he was not gonna lose Benjamin...but what was the alternative? All the money in the world can't produce food outside of Egypt, so you and your family all starve to death or you send Benjamin back. Some theologians believe it's almost 2 years before they return back, can you imagine what Simeon is thinking? When they do return, Joseph has them eat with him, but he gives 5x more to Benjamin, just to see how they treat him. Can they be trusted? Were they mean to Benjamin like they had been to him? They passed the test, no one seems jealous, they just seem in awe and a bit scared of what is happening. Joseph then has them leave with plenty of food and plants a silver cup in Benjamin's sack, while on their way back home, he sends officials to stop them and search their bags, they hadn't done anything

wrong so they say to death for the person you find this cup with and lo and behold, it's with Benjamin. Now it would appear that Joseph is holding a grudge, I don't think that's the case, however, it would be hard not to have emotions come back up when seeing the ones who had abused you, but I think this was to see if they truly cared about Benjamin. Will they fight for him? And then Judah steps up and says please no let me take his place. Notice what ch 44 says.

18 Then Judah went up to him and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. - Genesis 44:18

Judah calls him lord and says he's equal to Pharaoh.

Remember the dream Joseph had as a teenager?

5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: 7 We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." Gen 37

It has now come to pass, they were ALL at his mercy, the one who was in charge of the grain! Joseph sees they mean no harm for their Dad or Benjamin and he finally tells them who he is.

If you ever get the chance to treat them how they treated you, I hope you walk away.

He sends for his dad and the rest of the family, Pharaoh gives them a beautiful place to live, the region of Goshen and provides for them all. Meanwhile, people are out of money, they sell their possessions, cattle/livestock and such and then still it's not enough so people from all over become servants of Egypt as they sell their very lives for rations of food. Egypt is booming!

Jacob addresses his sons, he holds some accountable and others he speaks life into. But about Judah he says this:

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. - Gen 49:10

This is referring to the Messiah for the line of the Messiah will come through the descendants of Judah(**Matthew 1:3**). Remember, this is the guy who thought they should kill their brother and then sell him into slavery. The guy who sleeps with his ex daughter-in-law, Tamar, thinking she was a prostitute, get's her pregnant and that's the guy and girl whose lineage the Messiah will come from. Judah with all of his brokenness and sin, one might think God would choose Joseph, but God proves that He uses broken people, and all of us should say AMEN! Jesus can redeem EVERYTHING and EVERYONE!

I feel as if Judah ends up being the most God fearing tribe of all of these descendants as we study the rest of the OT. Then Jacob says this about his son Joseph:

“Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall. 23 With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. 24 But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, 25 because of your father’s God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the skies above, blessings of the deep springs below, blessings of the breast and womb. 26 Your father’s blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers. Gen 49:22-26

Jacob dies and then we read of a very interesting interaction with the brothers and Joseph. They worried now that their Dad is dead, that Joseph will seek retribution.

19 But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. 21 So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

The story of Joseph can be summarized in verse 20 **“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now**

being done, the saving of many lives”. And it reminds of Jesus’ life! I’ve said it before, but it’s worth repeating, as the crowds cheered for Barabas to be released and Jesus to be crucified, while Satan supervised sinful men killing Jesus, he intended it for harm, but all it did was make the work of the Cross and Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice that much more powerful forgiving sins to ALL nations!

So, your situation isn’t yours alone. God has not left you, He has not forsaken you. God has a plan and that doesn’t mean it’s always fair, Joseph wasn’t treated fairly, Jesus most definitely wasn’t treated fairly. But do you trust in God enough to walk through the fire with unwavering faith with praise upon your lips toward Him? Because when doing so, the outcome is SO much greater than what we could come up with.

If Joseph’s brothers never sold him to the Midianites, then Joseph never went to Egypt. If Joseph never went to Egypt, he was never sold to Potiphar. If he was never sold to Potiphar, Potiphar’s wife never falsely accused him of rape. If Potiphar’s wife never falsely accused him of rape, then he was never put in prison. If he was never put in prison, he never met the baker and butler of Pharaoh. If he never met the baker and butler of Pharaoh, he never interpreted their dreams. If he never interpreted their dreams, he never got to interpret Pharaoh’s dream. If he never got to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, he never became ruler. If he never became ruler, he never set aside provisions for the severe famine coming upon the region. If he never set aside those provisions for the famine coming upon the region, then his family back in Canaan perished from the famine. If his family back in Canaan perished from the famine, then the Messiah could not come forth from a dead family. If the Messiah could not come forth, then Jesus never came. If Jesus never came, then we are all dead in our sins and without hope in this world.

GOD HAD A PLAN! And always does! Can you trust Him? Do you trust him?

GOD IS FAITHFUL! Write it down, read it aloud, believe it!

GOD. IS. FAITHFUL.