

GOD PLANNED IT FOR GOOD

MAIN POINT.

God can use our **pain**
for His **glory**.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and later falsely accused and sent to prison. But through it all, the Lord was with him (**Acts 7:9**). Jesus was arrested by jealous men, falsely accused, and crucified. But through it all, God was with Him and in Him to reconcile the lost world to Himself.



GOODNESS — OUT OF PAIN

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Genesis 37

Genesis 50

WE WON'T ALWAYS ESCAPE PAIN

GENESIS 37:3-5,18-22,26-29

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than his other sons because Joseph was a son born to him in his old age, and he made a long-sleeved robe for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not bring themselves to speak peaceably to him. 5 Then Joseph had a dream. When he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. . . . 18 They saw him in the distance, and before he had reached them, they plotted to kill him. 19 They said to one another, "Oh, look, here comes that dream expert! 20 So now, come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of the pits. We can say that a vicious animal ate him. Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!" 21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to save him from them. He said, "Let's not take his life." 22 Reuben also said to them, "Don't shed blood. Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him"—intending to rescue him from them and return him to his father. . . . 26 Judah said to his brothers, "What do we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 Come on, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay a hand on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh," and his brothers agreed. 28 When Midianite traders passed by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took Joseph to Egypt. 29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.

GOD REDEEMS PAIN

GENESIS 50:15-21

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said to one another, "If Joseph is holding a grudge against us, he will certainly repay us for all the suffering we caused him." 16 So they sent this message to Joseph, "Before he died your father gave a command: 17 'Say this to Joseph: Please forgive your brothers' transgression and their sin—the suffering they caused you.' Therefore, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when their message came to him. 18 His brothers also came to him, bowed down before him, and said, "We are your slaves!" 19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. 21 Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Leaders: Thank you for preparing to teach God's Word. As you do, may He teach you new and wonderful truths (Ps. 119:18).

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His **glory**.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JEALOUSY HARMS US AND OTHERS

GENESIS 37:3-5

"They certainly did not believe the dream as divine prophecy but rather the wishful fantasy of a spoiled brother. The Scriptures never evaluate the wisdom of Joseph's revealing his dreams. Of course, the dream came true as can be seen in Genesis 42:6; 43:26; 44:14; and 50:18. Perhaps this dream was for Joseph's benefit alone, and he chose to reveal it to his brothers as a reaction to their hatred of him or even to provoke them. At this point Joseph may not have been acting as the servant whom he would become through many trials and tribulations."⁷

GOD REDEEMS PAIN

GENESIS 50:19-20

"What became of Joseph in Egypt was the handiwork of God, too great for him to have accomplished alone (2 Kings 5:7). Evil succumbs to God's gracious purposes in behalf of his creation. This theology is exhibited in our passage by Joseph's assessment of his purpose in Egypt, for 'the saving of many lives' (v. 20b). The language recalls his first assessment at the brothers' reconciliation: 'But God sent me ahead of you ... to save your lives by a great deliverance' (45:7). In our passage 'many lives' appears to include the Egyptians and other peoples who had sought refuge in Egypt from the famine."⁸

GENESIS 50:19

"This godly man forgave his enemies, not so much because he had the depth of character to desire it, but because he knew that God had already offered them pardon. To hate his brothers would have been to deny the love of God offered them, and to become a little god of hate."⁹



CONTEXT

Jacob continued to perpetrate a dysfunctional behavior that had been prevalent in his family: favoritism. Joseph was born to Jacob's favored wife, Rachel. Jacob's favoritism led to a difficult journey for Joseph. Joseph exhibited immaturity in dealing with his brothers. He had a gift for interpreting dreams and would indeed rule over his brothers one day, but God would first take him through years of struggle and pain. He experienced several "pits" before God fulfilled the dreams in Genesis 37, including being sold into slavery and going to jail for an offense he didn't commit. But God was always with him. **God received glory and brought goodness from Joseph's pain, while refining him in the process.**

THEOLOGY CONNECTION



God's plan and human action

God's sovereignty over all of life encompasses the free actions of human beings. Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many plans are in a person's heart, but the LORD's decree will prevail." In ways we are unable to comprehend fully, the Lord's plan goes forward through the choices of human beings as moral agents. **Even freely chosen sinful actions are factored into God's overarching plan**, as is the case with the crucifixion of Jesus—an event both purposed by God through foreknowledge and also carried out in the wicked decisions of human beings (Acts 2:23). Knowing that **God is working all things for the good of those who love Him** (Rom. 8:28), we trust in His promise to fulfill His plan, even when we do not understand our present circumstances.

LEADER'S PRAYER

WE'VE SEEN YOU BRING GOODNESS OUT OF
OUR OWN PAIN; GOD, HELP OUR STUDENTS TO
SEE YOUR GOODNESS IN THEIRS.



KICK STARTER

♡ HEARTCHECK

Let's check in on how you're doing spiritually. Have you wrestled with the Lord about any issues? Are you allowing Him to produce change in you? Explain.

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

BAD MADE GOOD

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Create a list of bad situations your students might face, like a best friend moving away. Draw two columns on the white board or a poster board, and list six "bad" situations in one column and six in another. Number the items in each column one through six. Place students in pairs and give each pair a set of dice.

Each student in the pair should get a die and roll it. They each choose a scenario from a different column. Invite them to brainstorm whether any good could come from this situation. In other words, what might they learn from it? Allow them to play through different scenarios as long as time allows.

God is our redeemer, and He can use even the worst situations in our lives for our good. Today, we'll see an example of this in the life of Joseph.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

What does it mean to embrace victim mentality? Well, it means that when bad things happen, you immediately view yourself as the victim and someone else as at fault. It also usually means that you quickly adopt an attitude of despair and helplessness. You focus on what's been done to you instead of how God could use the situation. Victim mentality drags us into a self-focused state instead of helping us see what God's purpose may be in the situation. Now, this can't be confused with situations where we really are victims of someone else's bad choices. In those cases of abuse or neglect, we need to reach out for help. Even in those circumstances, God is with us. And rather than embracing victimhood, we can embrace the victory Christ has already accomplished for us in His death and resurrection. No matter what happens to us, we're conquerors in Him.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

God can use our **pain** for
His **glory**.

WE WON'T ALWAYS ESCAPE PAIN

READ GENESIS 37:3-5,18-22,26-29

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SINFUL ATTITUDES OR ACTIONS YOU SEE IN THESE FAMILY MEMBERS?

This family wasn't perfect. Jacob showed favoritism; Joseph displayed immaturity and possibly even arrogance toward his brothers; and the brothers were eaten up with jealousy and hatred. These sinful attitudes and actions only caused pain for this family; it led to attempted murder, Jacob thinking his son was dead, and slavery. But **God had bigger plans for them, and He would use them regardless of their sin.**

WHY DO PEOPLE OFTEN THINK CHRISTIANS WON'T FACE HARD THINGS? HOW IS THAT IDEA DANGEROUS?

Many of us think if God loves us, then He won't allow us to walk through pain. We ask, "Why would God allow this to happen to me?" But in Scripture, we see God's people endure suffering, sometimes due to poor decisions and sometimes due to God's specific will. **Suffering always has a purpose in the hands of God; He won't let it be wasted.** We can expect difficulty in life, but we can trust that God is with us in it.



WHY DO WE TEND TO THINK GOD IS OR ISN'T WITH US BASED ON WHAT'S GOING ON IN OUR LIVES?

If what's happening in our lives defines who God is and what He does, then we're in trouble. Because we live in a fallen world and experience the effects of sin, we'll experience pain here. It's easy to take our eyes off the hope we have in Christ and allow our eyes to zoom in on what's painful instead. Whatever our pain looks like, when we're forced into a "pit" like Joseph, we assume God has left us or that He simply doesn't care about what we're going through. We can look at Jesus's life to know this isn't true. He experienced betrayal, physical pain, and even death. But the Father never abandoned Him. **It was God's will to crush Jesus for our sake (Isa. 53:10), but Jesus never stopped trusting the Father. Even the crucifixion didn't cast a cruel light on God because Jesus knew God's character.** God isn't defined by our pain, but we can know Him in it.

GOD REDEEMS PAIN

READ GENESIS 50:15-21

Context: While Joseph was set over Pharaoh's household, his family suffered from famine in the land of Canaan. But Jacob, Joseph's father, "learned there was grain in Egypt" and sent his sons to check it out (Gen. 42:1). Joseph recognized his brothers and, after testing them, eventually revealed who he was (Gen. 42-45). When Pharaoh found out that Joseph's brothers were there, he invited Joseph's entire family to come and live in Egypt. Joseph was reunited with his father, and they all lived together in Egypt for a time before Joseph's father died. That's when his brothers began to panic, but God had a plan.



HOW DID JOSEPH'S STORY COME FULL CIRCLE? WHAT DOES THIS SHOW YOU ABOUT PAIN?

God brings purpose from pain. Joseph didn't really belong in Egypt, but God positioned him there for the purpose of saving a remnant of Israel from famine. **All of the difficulties along the way—all of other people's evil actions against him—led to Joseph being in a position to help his people.** And because Joseph knew God was sovereign over his pain, he could forgive his brothers.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE WAY GOD CHANGED JOSEPH IN JOSEPH'S REACTION TO HIS BROTHERS? WHAT DO YOU THINK KEPT HIM FROM FEELING AND ACTING LIKE A VICTIM?

Joseph's journey had been incredibly difficult. Many of us would have taken the opportunity to get revenge against the brothers for all the pain they helped set in motion. **He could've embraced the role of a victim, but instead, Joseph extended grace.** At seventeen, he showed some immaturity in how he shared his dreams with his brothers. But now, **he knew God had been there all along.** Joseph foreshadowed Christ, offering forgiveness and mercy in place of judgment.

WRAP-UP

HOW COULD BELIEVING GOD IS ALWAYS WITH YOU AND THAT HE BRINGS GOODNESS FROM PAIN HELP YOU APPROACH DIFFICULT SEASONS?

God isn't just present when you're worshiping Him or praying to Him. He isn't only present when you're making godly decisions. God is with you at all times because the Holy Spirit dwells within believers. God is always with you because you're a temple (1 Cor. 3:16). There is no circumstance that God won't be with you in. We also have account after account of how God somehow worked goodness from pain. **God is a redeemer of His people, and He even redeems our pain. We can place it at His feet. We can trust Him in sickness, grief, and betrayal. We can trust Him because He is faithful (2 Tim. 2:13).** When we walk through pain with this mindset, God will use it to grow us, to show us more of Himself, and to make us more like Him. Our pain can point people to God's goodness and faithfulness.