



Unit .04

Session .02

God Redeems Adversity

Scripture



Genesis 39:1-6, 19-23; 41:14-16

1 Now Joseph had been taken to Egypt. An Egyptian named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guards, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. **2** The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, serving in the household of his Egyptian master. **3** When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful, **4** Joseph found favor with his master and became his personal attendant. Potiphar also put him in charge of his household and placed all that he owned under his authority. **5** From the time that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph. The LORD's blessing was on all that he owned, in his house and in his fields. **6** He left all that he owned under Joseph's authority; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome. ... **19** When his master heard the story his wife told

him—"These are the things your slave did to me"—he was furious **20** and had him thrown into prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. So Joseph was there in prison. **21** But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him. He granted him favor with the prison warden. **22** The warden put all the prisoners who were in the prison under Joseph's authority, and he was responsible for everything that was done there. **23** The warden did not bother with anything under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him, and the LORD made everything that he did successful. ... **14** Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon. He shaved, changed his clothes, and went to Pharaoh. **15** Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said about you that you can hear a dream and interpret it." **16** "I am not able to," Joseph answered Pharaoh. "It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

What do you think Joseph thought and felt during his journey to Egypt, especially when Potiphar purchased him? List two things you believe would have been most difficult.

When have you felt God's presence in adversity or loneliness?



99 Essential Doctrines

God's Providence

Providence refers to God's continuing work and involvement in His creation. This includes, in various degrees, God's preservation of the created order, His governance, and His care for His people (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Gen. 8:21-22). Christians believe the world, and even the cosmos itself, is contingent upon God, incapable of existing apart from Him. Christians also believe in God's personal and direct intervention in the world—as opposed to a hands-off approach to creation—that affects not only the natural order, but also the individuals and events within human history.

Main Point

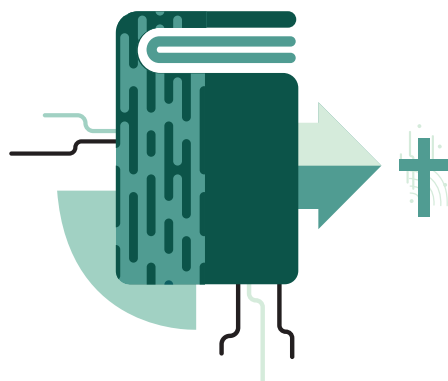
God uses Joseph's circumstances and sufferings to accomplish His plans and purposes.

How would you respond if you were falsely accused of something? How do you think Joseph responded?

What lessons can we learn from Joseph's victory over temptation?

Why is it important to do the right thing, regardless of the outcome?

Imagine yourself in Joseph's position. How would you feel if the cupbearer forgot to mention you? How might Joseph's belief in God being there through the good and the bad give comfort and hope during these moments?



Christ Connection

Joseph's life pointed forward to Jesus. Jesus would be betrayed, handed over to captivity, stripped of His robe, and unjustly sentenced to death. But Jesus' rejection and humiliation was God's plan to save Israel and the world. Maybe it looked like God had abandoned Jesus, like His cries to the Father went unanswered, but when the grave opened on Sunday morning, it was clear Jesus was not alone. God vindicated His Son.

We get a glimpse of this plan in Joseph's life. He suffered. It seemed like he was abandoned, but God was with him and accomplishing His good plan. Joseph succeeded even in captivity, and his humiliation would eventually lead to God's exaltation to bless Israel and all nations (Gen. 12; Phil. 2)



Head

What is the advantage of looking at all of Joseph's trials through the big picture? How can we do the same for our own?

Why is it easier to go through trials by focusing our attention on God rather than our circumstances?



Heart

Why do we assume God is there in the good times and gone in the bad?

God never abandons His people. How does this bring you specific encouragement this week for something you are facing?

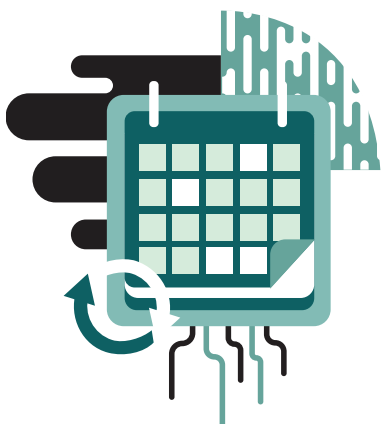


Hands

Which is easier—showing kindness or becoming bitter during difficult circumstances? Which did Joseph choose? Explain.

What can we learn from Joseph's story when it comes to focusing on others instead of ourselves during moments of personal difficulty?

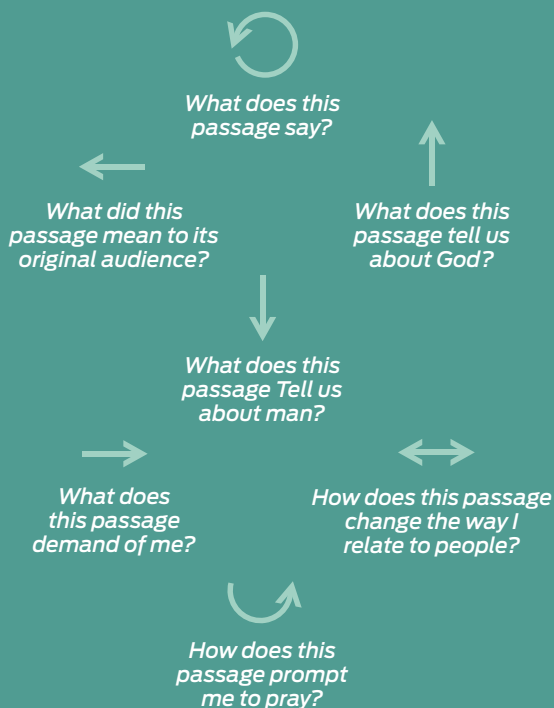
Daily Devotions



Day 1

Genesis 39:1-6

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



We shouldn't read past verse 1 too quickly. Instead, we should sit with it for a few minutes and consider how this affected Joseph. He was a 17-year-old pampered boy, all alone in a foreign land. True, his eleven brothers were not fond of him, but they were his family. Before he had lived with his people in his land. But because of his brothers' betrayal, he was a slave in a distant land with a people not his own. We need to appreciate the loneliness Joseph probably felt. When we do, we can see the beauty of verse 2: "The LORD was with Joseph."

We all feel alone at different times, but the amazing promise of Scripture is that followers of Christ are never alone (Matt. 28:20). We may feel like Joseph did because we are also away from our families. But the truth is that we are not alone: God is with us. We may relate to Joseph because those we care about—those we thought loved us—betrayed us and wounded us deeply. But God is with us. We may feel like Joseph did because we cannot relate to anyone around us. But God still is with us.

How has the promise that God is with you comforted you through times of loneliness?

Genesis 39:7-23

In Genesis 38, we learned that Judah's wife, Shua, died (v. 12). Some time later, he saw a veiled woman he thought was a prostitute and went over to her and asked to sleep with her (38:16). This account of Judah seeking comfort by seeking out a prostitute is contrasted with Joseph in Potiphar's house in the next chapter. Joseph surely needed some comfort after all he had been through. The potential comfort was seeking him out in the form of Potiphar's wife, who was making advances toward him. But Joseph did not give into the temptation. Day after day he refused, appealing to his respect for Potiphar and more importantly his reverence for God, which eventually cost him greatly.

Because of sin, our hearts are hard-wired toward moralism. We believe that if we do good things, if we obey God, then we will experience good things in life—He will reward us. But moralism tries to define what is good. Sure, when we obey God with the right motive—out of love—good will result. The problem is that sometimes what God calls “good” and what we call “good” are not the same. When that happens, our dictionary is the one that is off.

Like Joseph, we may suffer for our obedience in this life. Why is this better than prospering in sin?

Genesis 40:1-2

God was used all of these letdowns in Joseph's life for a greater good. All of his pain and adversity would be redeemed one day. Each apparent setback moved him one step closer to Pharaoh's court.

As we try to be faithful to God, we need to remember this too. Sometimes our faithful obedience will lead where we expect; we will see God bring good from it. At other times, our faithful obedience will lead where Joseph's did—we will experience adversity because of it, but in time we will see how God used it for His good. But there is a third way God might use our faithful obedience. We might experience adversity because of it but never see God bring good from it in this life. During these times we need to be careful to understand that God has promised to work all things together for His glory and our good, but He has not promised we will see how He does that. As God's people, we must seek to serve God and trust Him, whether we see gain and reward or not.

How has God brought good from adversity you have experienced because of your obedience?

Genesis 41:1-36

Two years had passed since what may have seemed as Joseph's greatest opportunity to be released from prison. The cupbearer had forgotten Joseph. But one day, Joseph was summoned from prison. The cupbearer remembered after all, and Joseph was to appear before Pharaoh to interpret his dream.

Joseph then shared God's interpretation of the dream. Joseph did what Pharaoh asked of him, but then he continued. In a bold move, the Hebrew slave offered counsel to the king of Egypt. Pharaoh didn't bring Joseph in for his advice. But Joseph offered a solution to Pharaoh's problem rather than just describing the problem—presumably with wisdom God gave him.

God has sent Christ-followers to live on mission for Him in our culture. Our role is similar to Joseph's—we are to be prophetic voices pointing people to coming judgment. At the same time, we are called on to provide the answer—the gospel—that people need to trust in to be delivered from that judgment.

What opportunities has God given you to share the gospel with boldness? How can you use those opportunities this week?

Genesis 41:37-57

When we were first introduced to Joseph in Genesis 37, he wore a robe of many colors given to him by his father. But that robe was stripped off of him (37:23), and for the next thirteen years, Joseph would wear the clothing of a slave and a prisoner.

After over a decade of adversity, where each day seemed to bring only more bitterness than the day before, Joseph was clothed in fine linen garments (v. 42). His story came full circle. God restored Joseph, not just to a context as good as before, but to one even better.

This is God's heartbeat. We see it here with Joseph. We saw it with Job. Most notably, we will see it again when Christ returns and makes all things new. Christ's work of reconciliation will purge every last semblance of the Fall. He will return creation to its condition before the Fall. He will usher in His kingdom where everything is even better than before. This is our hope—a hope greater than Joseph ever dared dream—our hope in Christ.

When you think of the new heavens and new earth, what excites you the most? Why?