

A Life: Joseph – *Genesis 37-50*

Intro: The final section of Genesis unpacks the life of Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. The purpose of this story is to emphasise the lengths that God will go to in order to continue his story and fulfil his promises made to Abraham. One man's rollercoaster life is used by God to save the lives of many – which brings up a greater understanding of God's sovereignty and how he works through individual experiences to paint a bigger picture for the world.

READ through the story of Joseph (Genesis 37; 39-45)

A SURVEY OF THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

CHAPTER 37:

Joseph's Dreams

Jacobs favour

Brothers plot

Reuben intervenes

Judah intervenes

Joseph sold to Ishmaelites

Potiphar purchases Joseph

CHAPTER 39

Joseph and Potiphar's wife

Prison

Joseph given authority in prison

CHAPTER 40

Cup Bearer and Baker assigned to Joseph

Cup Bearer and Baker's dreams

Joseph interprets dreams + puts in wise plea

Cupbearer forgets Joseph and reinstated

2 years pass

CHAPTER 41

Pharaoh's dreams

Cupbearer remembers Joseph

Joseph before Pharaoh – interprets his dreams

Joseph displays wisdom before Pharaoh

Joseph elevated to Vizier

7 years of preparation in Egypt

7 years of famine

CHAPTER 42 - 45

Jacob sends brothers to Egypt

Encounter between Joseph and Brothers

Joseph deals with deep hurt

Judah offers to substitute himself for Benjamin

Joseph reunites with his brothers

Joseph realises God's sovereign plan: "it was not you who sent me here, but God" (45:5-8)

CHAPTER 46-50

Jacob returns to Egypt

Jacob blesses his 12 sons

Jacob dies

Summary: Genesis 50:20: "what you intended for harm, God intended for good"

1. Joseph's life is marked by moments of great ecstasy and joy, moments of deep darkness, isolation, and everything in between. Look at the survey of Joseph's life above. In what ways can you relate to these events and the feelings experienced by Joseph?
2. Two crucial moments of the story are in Genesis 39:2 and 39:21. In the midst of losing everything as a slave and then a prisoner, the text explicitly says "the LORD was *with* Joseph." Do you believe that God is *with* you in your lowest moments? Do you sense his presence during these times, or only later in hindsight as you look back?
3. Consider the following moments in Joseph's story – what was God doing in each scenario? Does it seem like he was orchestrating these seemingly random events?:
 - Joseph is given dreams by God when 17 yrs old. A decade later, Joseph interprets the dreams of the Cupbearer. Years later, Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh.
 - Jacob tells Joseph to locate his brothers. Joseph cannot find his brothers, a random man directs him to his brothers. His brothers see Joseph coming and plot to kill him. Reuben intervenes and begs the brothers to reconsider. Jacob intervenes and jumps on an opportunity to sell Joseph to a band of Ishmaelite's who happen to be passing by towards Egypt. Joseph is sold and ends up in Egypt.
 - Joseph is hand picked out of a potential group of hundreds of slaves by Potiphar. The false accusation laid against Joseph by Potiphar's wife, lands him in a particular prison for high up officials. Joseph is exalted to a position of authority – while at the same time, the Cupbearer and Baker (royal officials) are prosecuted

and sent this prison and end up being assigned to the cell of Joseph. They then have their dreams and Joseph interprets.

4. This story is meant to be the bible's answer to "what on earth was God doing??!" It reveals to us that, even though we may not see it initially, God is using our story to continue to write his massive salvation plan for the world. Joseph points this out with great wisdom on two occasions: Genesis 45:5-8 & Genesis 50:20. What do these two statements tell us about God's plan for our lives?
5. On Sunday we talked about seeing God's side of the story. True wisdom in the bible is being able to discern what God is doing in the events of our lives. Knowing God's presence *now*, being ready to receive the refining he may put you through and learning to listen to other more experienced Christians are ways we can learn to see God's side through hardships.

However, you may never see God's side until hindsight kicks in, and what you are going through right now may not be about you, but may be intended to redemptively affect someone else.

6. Finally, meditate on the following verse, written by Paul in Romans 8:28. Pay particular attention to the "all" and the "good". What does this mean for your current situation or the situations of those you know?

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.**