

## Devotion Two - Joseph: God Works All Things for His Good

Life isn't fair. You've probably heard this before, and chances are it only rubbed salt in the wound of miserable circumstances. We all have "those days" when nothing seems to go right or when it feels like the world is against us. We often experience frustrations that no one else seems to understand. And we all have difficulties in relationships. Unless you never allow another human to grow close to you (not recommended), you're bound to experience conflict and struggle with other people. Fights might come up between you and your parents, your siblings, or your friends, but the outcome usually involves hurt feelings. In all of these challenges, we have choices to make. We can forgive and repair mended relationships or choose to remain bitter and resentful. We can complain and shut down in tough situations or choose to accept them and rely on God's strength to overcome.

In Genesis, we find the account of Joseph, which in fact occupies a decent percentage of the book. Joseph endured a lot of difficult situations. He was sold into slavery by his own brothers, taken far from his homeland, and forced into service for a foreign household. He was wrongfully accused of crime and thrown into prison. Throughout these challenges, God was with him and had a plan to use the tough circumstances. Joseph eventually rose to power as Pharaoh's second in command after God allowed him to interpret dreams that predicted a famine. Because of this foresight, many were saved from starvation.

*So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth. –Genesis 41:56-57*

Joseph played an important role in the salvation of many in Egypt and in other countries. This included his own estranged family. His brothers were quite shocked to see him not only alive and well, but serving as "Vice Pharaoh" in charge of the food supply! It could have been a great opportunity for revenge after all that had happened, but Joseph knew better. He encouraged his brothers and recognized that God's will was governing events.

*But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 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. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. –Genesis 50:19-21*

We don't have God's bird's-eye view big picture version of life. We experience things moment by moment and struggle when hardships come our way. The conclusion of Joseph's challenges reminds us that God can use even the worst of circumstances. Nothing happens outside of His knowledge and permission. This can be tough to swallow when tragedy strikes. Why does God allow bad things to happen? We won't always have the answers in the timing we'd prefer. There might be things we can't understand this side of Heaven. But we can rest assured that God is in control. He has a reason for everything and can work events for our good, even if they hurt.

In Joseph's rejection, false imprisonment, and faked death to slavery, God worked to save his brothers and father from starvation. His brothers meant evil, but God worked good. God did this with the Cross of Jesus, working our salvation through His death. We can trust God because we know that He is faithful to all of His promises. We see that faithfulness in Christ. The Holy Spirit gives us faith, helps us endure through difficulty and to forgive those who hurt us, just as Joseph did, and just as Jesus endured the cross and forgives us all.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God, thank you for providing for us. Thank you for the plans that you have for us. Help us to trust in Your promises and endure, even when life is hard and even when we don't understand what is happening and why. Thank you for your love and mercy. May we show that to others. In Jesus's name, Amen*

### Journal Questions:

- How can God use hard situations for His good? Have you ever experienced this in your own life?
- What can help us to accept challenging circumstances without fully understanding why they are happening?
- Think of what Joseph had to *endure*. How did his understanding of who God is help him to endure?
- Have you ever forgiven someone who hurt you? Why is forgiveness so important?

