

The story tonight is the story of a guy named Joseph and his story takes up 13 chapters in the Bible. I cannot recommend enough that you read these for yourself. Tonight I want to take this story that you've hopefully already read and I want us to really rest in some parts of it. So imagine what it would be like to be living this:

Let me start by setting up some of Joseph's backstory. Many years before Joseph, God tells Abraham, "Leave your city, leave your job, follow me out into the desert and I'm going to bless you and through your descendants all the nations of the world will be blessed."

Abraham obeys, has a son named Isaac. Isaac has a son named Jacob. And we don't have time to get in to it tonight, but one of the things you'll notice as you're reading this story is that God uses deeply flawed people, who make some pretty huge mistakes. Jacob especially, is a troubled guy in a lot of ways.

Jacob had 12 sons, and the 11th of those sons was named Joseph. Joseph was one of two sons born to the wife Jacob loved most. You may have noticed a lot of problems with that sentence. Both the part where there are multiple wives – which every time someone in the Bible tries it ends in disaster – and the part where Jacob has a wife and sons who are his favorite.

And Jacob doesn't exactly keep this information a secret. He buys Joseph this extravagantly nice coat, which is this flashing neon sign to all Joseph's brothers, "Dad likes him more." If you've ever been in a situation like this where someone is playing favorites... you know how emotionally devastating that can be. We're dealing with an extremely toxic home life.

This situation would be even worse at this time in history. The way the inheritance system worked back then, the biggest piece of the inheritance by far went to the firstborn, then a smaller piece to the 2nd, etc. Joseph is 11th in line.

What's this mean for Joseph? He's never going to have the opportunities his brothers will have. He's always going to be dependent on them to survive. His entire life is going to be one extended hand-me-down.

Maybe you can relate. Maybe you know what it's like to feel like the cards have been stacked against you, or to feel like because of your family you were dealt a lousy hand. Or maybe you've felt unwanted.

So one day, Joseph has a vision from God where He sees all his brothers bowing down to him. This is a huge reversal, right? Rather than Joseph bowing down before his brothers the rest of his life THEY are bowing down to HIM. This vision from God is a promise of hope, that his life matters, that he's going to do something significant.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD A DREAM?

- dream of a future career
- dream of a relationship
- dream of financial security
- dream of independence
- for some of you maybe that dream seemed to be something from God

Our dreams tell us, “Your life is going to matter.” “Your life is going to be fulfilling.”

THERE'S HOPE.

At this point Joseph has two options: 1) recognize the extremely strained family dynamic that is at play in this situation, believe that if God gave Him this dream that God will fulfill it in his time, and devote himself to being a peacemaking and humble 11th oldest son. 2) Tell your brothers – your 10 older brothers – that you've had a dream where they are all going to be bowing down to you ... and just see how that goes.

One day, Joseph went out to see his brothers while they're out herding cattle and they decided to kill him. But then calmer heads prevailed and instead they chucked him in a waterless well, left him there all day, then finally sold him as a slave to some foreigners on their way to Egypt.

This is in essence what happened to Joseph.

How do you think Joseph is feeling about this time?

To me, when I imagine Joseph sitting in captivity, in a foreign land where he might not have even spoken the language, terrified and angry and deeply hurt ... I'm imagining him remembering that dream God had given him, and him having a moment where the dream breaks. It just shatters before his eyes.

WE

Where is God when our dream turns to disappointment?

All of us start off thinking the script of our story will be written a certain way, but it never quite goes as we would have written it.

I've mentioned some of this before, but I've only been working here at the church for a little over a year. It was our anniversary and not one of you got me anything. I'm not mad, I'm just disappointed.

I quit my previous job not knowing what I was going to do next: here's a pro-tip – don't do that. But I was convinced God was giving me the green light and I thought "Well, I have a pretty good resume so it won't take that long to find a new job ... maybe just 3-4 months."

Fast forward to 8 months later. I still didn't have a job. My wife and I were eating in to our savings. My wife was in a job she kind of hated while I was sitting at home and there was this sense of "God where ARE you in this?"

And the truth is, that story isn't all that bad in the big scheme of things. There are many others who deal with much bigger issues in their lives:

- health
- death
- failed career
- finances
- living situation

- relationship

GOD

One of the things we see in the story of Joseph is that God is right there with him in the middle of the disillusionment.

“The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, 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. 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.”

What is the writer trying to make clear to us here? God is WITH Joseph.

God is not just with us in the Garden; He's with us in the dungeon, too.

This is almost impossible to believe. Because when we're going through that pain, that disillusionment, that shattered dream, the message ringing out in our souls is **“God can't be trusted.”**

For non-Christians, this is the biggest roadblock to faith.

Tape measure illustration – I used a 100' tape measure and show how the crisis moments of our lives take up a few inches of the few feet of our lives, and the 100' of eternity. I then asked, “Do you really believe God can't take the short blip of these couple inches and redeem them?”

Just because your story isn't going the way you want doesn't mean God isn't in it.

More of Joseph story