

SESSION 1

OVERCOME BETRAYAL



What did sibling rivalry look like at your house?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLbetrayal

THE POINT

God is at work, even when it's not obvious.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Have you ever questioned the presence of God? I have.

My youngest son nearly drowned when he was two years old. In that terrifying moment—when all we knew was how close he was to death—it was hard to see God’s hand anywhere. But despite everything we couldn’t see, we chose to trust. Later, we saw clearly how God had been at work in so many details, right down to the ER nurse having the exact type of pacifier our boy loved. Our son survived, and we came away knowing God had been at work even before we cried out to Him.

We often think of God in moments of betrayal—whether we’re betrayed by loved ones, trusted friends, or just by circumstances. We may even feel betrayed by God. Thankfully, God never betrays us. He’s always working for our good, even when we don’t realize it.

As we’ll see in the Book of Genesis, Joseph was deeply affected when his own brothers betrayed him. Yet God was there the whole time, working on his behalf to help him move beyond betrayal.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Genesis 37:19-27; 39:1-2 (HCSB)

37:19 They said to one another, “Here comes that dreamer!

20 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 their hands and return him to his father.

23 When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped off his robe, the robe of many colors that he had on.

24 Then they took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

25 Then they sat down to eat a meal. They looked up, and there was a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were carrying aromatic gum, balsam, and resin, going down to Egypt.

26 Then Judah said to his brothers, “What do we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?”

27 Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay a hand on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh,” and they agreed.

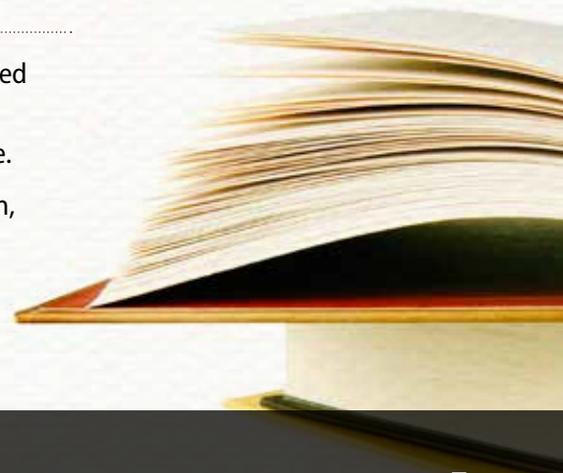
39:1 Now Joseph had been taken to Egypt. An Egyptian named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there.

2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, serving in the household of his Egyptian master.

Key Words

Pits (37:20)—These were deep holes dug as reservoirs for water collection and storage.

Robe (37:23)—A special garment of many colors or ornateness Jacob gave Joseph to signify Joseph as his favorite son (v. 3).



Genesis 37:19-24

It's hard to imagine a group of brothers wanting to kill one of their own, but that's what happened between Jacob's sons. We can't justify their aggression, but their jealousy had deep roots. For example, Jacob's wives were sisters with an intense rivalry, and his 12 sons came from four different mothers (see Gen. 29:30–30:4; 35:23-26). Worse, Jacob played favorites. He loved Joseph more than his other sons (see Gen. 37:4), and he gave Joseph a special robe (v. 3) that identified him as a prince or a person of distinction.

Joseph didn't help the situation. He tattled on his brothers (see v. 2), and he blabbed about two dreams that made him appear more important than the rest of his family—even his father and mother. For these reasons and more, Joseph found himself on the receiving end of his brothers' pent-up hatred. They were his family, but they turned on him like a pride of hungry lions. He was betrayed.

Too many of us learn the sting of betrayal at an early age. And, sadly, we often re-learn it in every season of life.

- ▶ You shared a secret with your best friend about a crush you had on someone, only to learn that your friend blabbed it to everyone in the class.
- ▶ Everyone was talking about an awesome party they went to on Saturday night, and you realized you were the only one not invited.
- ▶ Your parents said, "I do forever," but forever only meant until now.
- ▶ Someone took credit for your idea in the office and got the promotion you deserved.

Jesus knows what betrayal is like. Judas betrayed Him to the religious leaders, Peter publicly denied even knowing Him, and almost all the other disciples fled the scene when He was arrested.

What's your gut reaction to Joseph's betrayal?

QUESTION #2



Genesis 37:25-27

In one moment, Joseph went from meeting his brothers to staring death in the face. Being thrown in a pit must have hurt, but I'll bet his brothers' apathy hurt even more. As the brothers said years later, "We saw his deep distress when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen" (Gen. 42:21).

Then the brothers thought of a new plan: they could get rid of Joseph *and* make a quick buck at the same time! This idea presented itself when they saw a caravan of Ishmaelite traders headed their way. It was perfect—no fuss, no mess, and a little cash on the side.

God probably seemed completely absent to Joseph in that moment—but was He? Joseph was facing death, when a caravan suddenly came down the road. Some would write that off as coincidence; not me. The traders showed up at just the right time. Why? Because God wanted Joseph in Egypt. God was working behind the scenes to make sure he got there.

Let me state this again: God is always at work in your life—even when it's not obvious. Hold on to that truth when you feel you've been thrown into the pit. In addition, trusting that God is always at work will help you live with hope when you're tempted to feel guilt and regret over past shortcomings and failures.

For example, have any of these thoughts ever crossed your mind?

- ▶ I wasn't the faithful parent I should have been.
- ▶ I wasted parts of my life in sinful living.
- ▶ I didn't speak up for Jesus like I should have.

God works in all things—even our failures—for the good of His people. God can even work in our lives in spite of these things. He can take a trial and turn it into a testimony.

Since God is always at work, what's our responsibility when we can't see what He's doing?

QUESTION #4

"A false witness will not go unpunished,
and one who utters lies will not escape."

— PROVERBS 19:5

Even after betrayal, how do we behave in ways that show God is at work?

QUESTION #5

Genesis 39:1-2

Verse 2 sums up the main idea of this session: "The LORD was with Joseph." People may betray and abandon us, but God does not. No matter what it looks like from our perspective, God has not and will not abandon us. Joseph still may have questioned why all these things were happening to him, but he remained faithful to God—and God remained faithful to Him. God doesn't necessarily rescue us from all our difficulties, but we can be assured that He walks with us through them.

Only much later did Joseph see why God had allowed him to experience these events. It was God's plan all along for Joseph to have a powerful position in Egypt—a position that would ultimately keep his family alive during the famine and maintain the bloodline of the Messiah. Therefore, God's plan was accomplished even in the midst of something as destructive as betrayal.

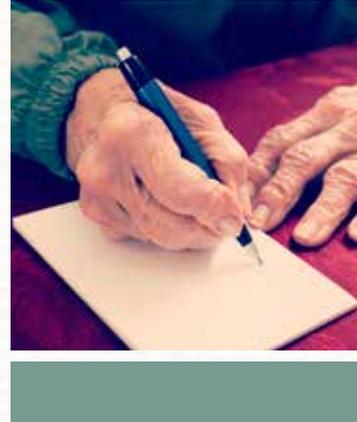
Several years ago, I felt completely betrayed by one of my friends. We had been close, but suddenly something changed. He and I were on opposite sides of an invisible wall. We still are. On multiple occasions I've asked him to join me for coffee or a meal, hoping for a conversation—but each invitation is met with coldness and disinterest. At this stage I still feel betrayed and wronged, so what do I do? **I continue to trust that God will work all things together for my good.**

Joseph's example helps me trust God. Like Joseph, I may not see the different ways God is working in spite of the hurt and betrayal I feel. But I can still *know* that He is working. And I can still trust Him.

LIVE IT OUT

We choose our responses to betrayal. Here are some suggestions for trusting God even when you don't know what He's doing:

- ▶ **Look back.** Make a list of the different ways God has worked in and through your life in recent years.
- ▶ **Forgive yourself.** Identify a failure or shortcoming from the past that still produces guilt in your life. Choose to let go of that failure and trust in God's ability to work for your good.
- ▶ **Forgive others.** Identify a betrayal that continues to impact your life. Take a step this week to move toward forgiveness and healing in that relationship.



I'm sorry to say that you will experience betrayal. You will experience times when you cry out to God—maybe even times when you wonder if He's really there. Thankfully, God is at work even now to carry you through those moments, just as He carried Joseph.

Finding Your Way Out of the Desert



One of my favorite television shows is Man vs. Wild, an ingenious reality show that attempts to show you how to survive in any number of hostile environments—from the Costa Rican rainforest to the Alaskan frontier to a wide array of desert locations. The host is an aptly named British gentleman named Bear Grylls, who parachutes into these remote locations, and spends a great deal of time running from, yes, bears, lions, and elephants.

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