

The Story of **JOSEPH**: Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?



*"**20** You intended to harm me, but **God intended it all for good**. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people." Genesis 50:20 NLT "And we know that **God causes everything to work together for the good** of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:28 NLT*

- ▶ What has been the most difficult time in your life? What thoughts or doubts did you have about God's care for you during this time?

Tornados, hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, sickness, disease, crime, school shootings, terrorism, etc. People often ask, "Where is God when bad things happen?" The answer is often difficult to accept, but there is an answer.

Since the Fall in Genesis 3, when **humanity chose sin**, **God has allowed sin to run its course**. The curse of sin includes all the bad things we have witnessed in the world. The good news is, God has a time table. He will bring this age of evil to an end with the Second Coming of Christ. He will one day judge all evil and end all sickness and sorrow. *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."* **Revelation 21:4** NLT.

In the mean time while sin runs its course, **God often works through bad circumstances to accomplish good**.

Romans 8:28 tells us: *"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."* (NLT).

Proverbs shows God's sovereignty over our lives in that He directs the course of our lives. *"We can make our plans, but **the Lord determines our steps**."* **Proverbs 16:9** NLT.

"The Lord directs our steps, so why try to understand everything along the way?" **Proverbs 20:24** NLT.

The story of Joseph in **Genesis 37-50** is a **good illustration of how God works through bad things to accomplish good**. Joseph suffered unjustly. It would be natural to ask "God, where are You? Why are you allowing this to happen to me?" The story of Joseph shows us how to respond when we are puzzled by pain and suffering. It shows that **God's silence is not an indication of inactivity or not caring**, but that He is **active behind the scenes** working for our good.

Central Lesson

God is often working behind the scenes to bring good out of our bad experience.

Joseph's PROBLEMS

1. Joseph was **HATED** by his ten brothers because his father, Jacob, favored him more than them (37:2-4).

2. Joseph was **DESPISED** by his family because God gave him dreams that indicated they would all one day bow before him (37:5-11).
3. Joseph was thrown into a **WELL** by his brothers who plotted to kill him (37:12-24).
4. Joseph was sold into **SLAVERY** by his brothers to Midianite merchants(37:25-28).
5. Joseph's brothers reported to his father, Jacob, that he had been killed by wild beasts (37:29-36).
6. Joseph is sold as a slave to an Egyptian officer named Potiphar (39:1-6). God blessed and prospered Joseph while he was in slavery to Potiphar.
7. Joseph was **ACCUSED** of a crime he did not commit and was placed in prison (39:7-23). Joseph refused the advances of Potiphar's wife (vs.7-12). In revenge, she falsely charged him with attempted assault (vs.13-20).
8. Joseph was **FORGOTTEN** by two men that he helped in prison, the cupbearer and baker of Pharaoh. God gave the two men dreams about their future. God gave Joseph the meaning of the dreams and interpreted them (v.8). In return, the two men promised to get Joseph out of prison upon their release (vs.14). However, they forgot about him and he remained in prison for two years (v.23).

God's PURPOSE

Two years later, Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret (41:1-8). The cupbearer remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him (41:9-32). The dream was a warning from God of seven years of great abundance followed by seven years of severe famine (41:25-32). Pharaoh made Joseph second in command over Egypt to lead the harvesting and storage of food during the years of plenty in order to prepare for the years of famine (41:33-49).

At the time, Joseph, nor anyone else, knew what God was doing. But **God had a purpose** for allowing Joseph to suffer. Joseph eventually discovered it and explained it to his brothers in **Genesis 45:1-8; 50:19-20**.

Bottom line, **the twelve tribes of Israel survived the seven years of famine and continued on through history to eventually give the world the Messiah - because of Joseph's hardship**. God is all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful and is often working behind the scenes to bring good out of our bad experiences.

Central Lesson:

God is often working behind the scenes to bring good out of our bad experience.

Suggested Prayer: "Heavenly Father, forgive me for the many times I respond improperly to the hardship that has come into my life. Help me to not doubt Your love and concern for me. Help me to be strong in faith and have assurance that You are working behind the scenes to bring good out of my bad experiences. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen."

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.