

Study Questions

Ice breaker: Who has had the greatest influence on your Christian life and why?

1/ What had changed in Joseph's life by the time we get to chapter 39?

2/ How must Joseph have been feeling by the time he arrived in Egypt?

3/ How did Joseph prosper in difficult circumstances?

4/ We are told four times that *"the LORD was with Joseph"*. v2, v3, v20-21, v23. What comfort does the promised presence of God bring to you in your life?

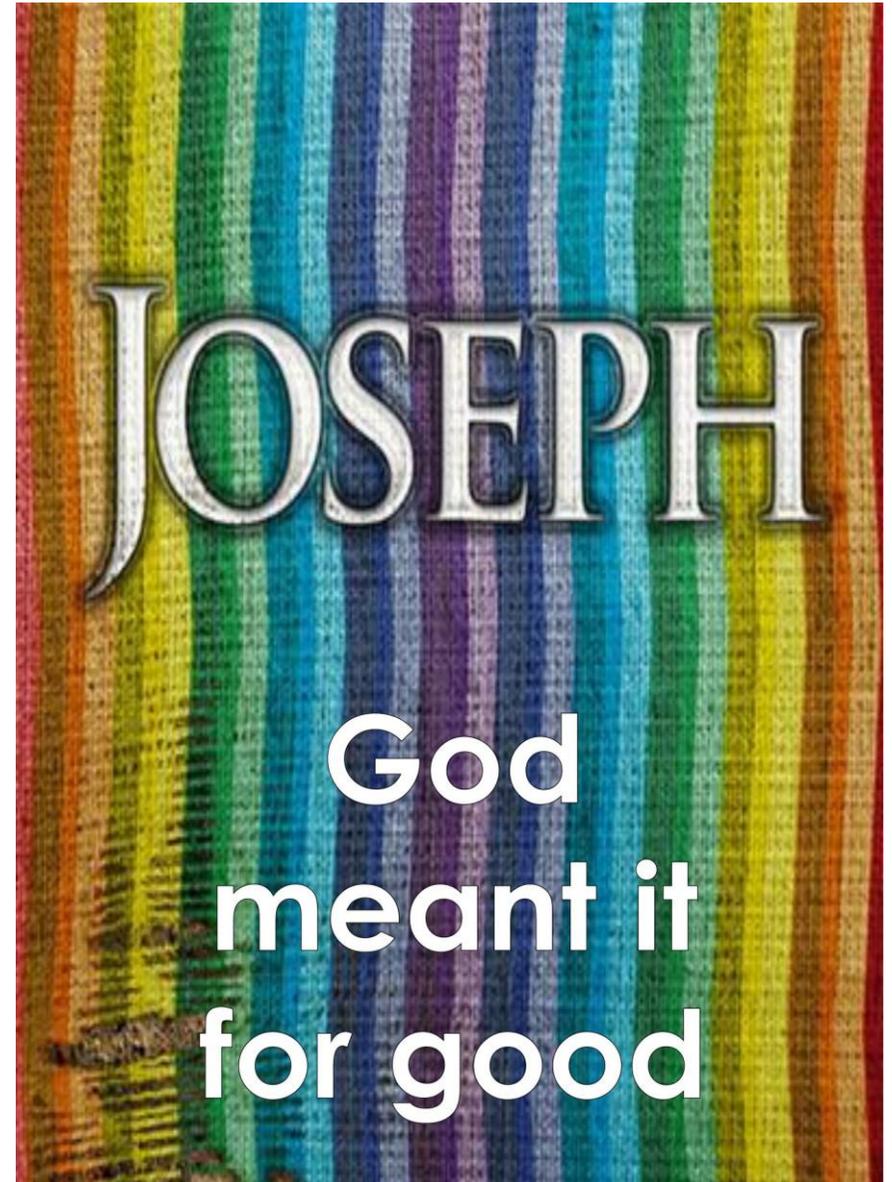
5/ As we consider chapter 39, why was Joseph such a blessing to others?

6/ Joseph made a good impression on his boss. How is our testimony before a watching world? Why is our example so important?

7/ We are blessed to be a blessing. In what ways can we bless those around us?

8/ At times in our life's we will all face difficult circumstances? How should we respond.

This week: Complete three random acts of kindness to three different people.



Viewfield Baptist Church, Dunfermline

Sermon 5- Sunday 24th March

"Making the best of difficult circumstances" Genesis 39

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“Making the best of difficult circumstances” Genesis 39

We are told in v1 that Joseph had been taken to Egypt. This journey down to Egypt would have been fascinating. Joseph had come a long way from the rural farmlands of home to the rich and sophisticated urban heartland of the world’s superpower of the day. He had come to a strangely cosmopolitan and pluralistic society, where there were so many gods but no knowledge of his God. Yet, it was not those gods who were in charge of Egypt and Joseph’s destiny. It was Yahweh, the God of Israel, who is the Lord of the whole earth. God was working out his providential will for Joseph, for the nation of Israel and indeed for the whole world. This is the central theme of this whole story.

Sinclair Ferguson said: *“The story of Joseph is a great symphony on the theme of God’s providence.”*

The key word in this chapter is the word LORD. It is used 7 times in Chapter 39. When it is used in upper case in our Bibles, it translates God’s personal name, Yahweh.

God’s name is almost always translated LORD (all caps) in the English Bible. But the Hebrew would be pronounced something like "Yahweh," and is built on the word for "I am." **Exodus 3v13-15.** God’s hand was in the situation. God was in control. He was working all things together for the good. In these early verses of Chapter 39 we are told that Joseph prospered in difficult circumstances. He was blessed and was a blessing. His life was a wonderful testimony to the Lord.

Let’s consider some of the ways in which Joseph is a great example to us from these opening verses in chapter 39?

1/ Joseph made the best of difficult circumstances

Joseph is a good example of a believer who trusted God and made the best of difficult circumstances. We would be wise to pause here and consider what Joseph has been through to help us understand the change and adjustment he had to make. Joseph found himself in a country and culture he didn’t know, surrounded by a language he didn’t understand. He was in unfamiliar surroundings. He was a stranger in a foreign land.

We are told also told in **verse 1** that Potiphar bought him. **“Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites.”**

What horrendous circumstances. Joseph would rather have been at home, but he made the best of the circumstances in Egypt. How must he have been feeling? Fearful, rejected, anxious, lonely, uncertain.

How did Joseph cope in these difficult circumstances? The passage tells us that Joseph not only adjusted to his new situation, but flourished in it - and for one major reason. That reason emerges in a beautiful phrase that appears a number of times in Joseph’s story: **“And the Lord was with Joseph.”**

In fact, four times we are told that **“the LORD was with Joseph”**. **READ V2, v3, v20-21, v23.** In all his troubles, in spite of his rejection and being carted off into a foreign land, God’s relationship and faithfulness to him never changed.

2/ Joseph was blessed and was a blessing

When he was at home in Hebron, Joseph’s brothers considered him to be a troublemaker, but in Egypt, he was a source of blessing. Why? Because God was with him. God promised Abraham that his descendants would bring blessing to other nations (**Gen 12v1-3**) and Joseph fulfilled that promise in Egypt. Joseph was blessed by God. We are told that as he fulfilled his role as one of Potiphar’s many house slaves, he prospered. In fact, in **verse 2** we get an immediate insight into this.

Why was he so successful? Joseph was a faithful witness to the Lord while he lived with Potiphar. The sovereign Lord was intimately involved in Joseph’s life.

He made a good impression on his boss. **V3: “When his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favour in his eyes.”** This implies that his master knew of his religious convictions. We are told that his Master saw that the LORD was with him. Joseph’s faith in the LORD was recognized by Potiphar because he saw the evidence of that faith in Joseph’s life and work. Joseph was growing in character. He was a diligent and hardworking young man.

Alexander Maclaren once said: **“The best advertisement of Christianity is a good life. People read us a great deal more than they read the Bible.”**

Joseph was blessed by God and was also a source of blessing to others. The blessing of the Lord was very evident to the people in Potiphar’s household, and they knew that Joseph was the cause, **v5**. Potiphar gradually turned more and more responsibility over to Joseph until Joseph was actually managing his entire household except, for the food Pharaoh ate, **v6**.

As believers we are blessed abundantly by God. Just as we have been blessed we are called to be a blessing to others.

