

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

MARCH 21 - 25, 2022

SERMON SERIES

March 6 - April 3

# What God Intends for Good

LIFE  
OF  
JOSEPH

# MONDAY

Read **Genesis 42:1-28; Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13-15**

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## Out of Egypt

This week's Genesis readings set the climax to Joseph's story. Via Joseph's ordeals God relocated Jacob, Jacob's twelve sons and their families to Egypt (Genesis 46-47). After Joseph's death, however, Egypt enslaved the Jews for 400+ years until Moses led the Israelites' Exodus to the Promised Land. Why would God have orchestrated things like this?

Joseph himself clarifies: *"God sent me ahead of you to preserve ... a remnant ... [and] save your lives"* (Genesis 45:7). Egypt enabled Jacob's family to survive the regional famine while also reuniting and restoring them. Ancient Egyptians—culturally hyper-hygienic—despised shepherding given its work amongst "dirty animals" (Genesis 46:34). The Hebrew patriarchs were shepherds. Thus, in Egypt the Israelites—except Joseph—would neither assimilate nor intermarry, remaining ethnically "pure." Moreover, leaving Egypt pictured both Israel and the coming Messiah (Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:13-15), with imagery also deeply meaningful for Christians: "Redemption from Egypt is a picture of our deliverance from sin and death through faith ... Egypt represents our old life of slavery to sin." (GotQuestions.org)

Joseph's story is packed with drama that many find relatable: a dysfunctional home with rampant favoritism (first toward Joseph,

then Benjamin—Genesis 37:3; 42:4, 38), a problem traceable to his grandparents (Genesis 25:28); a godly believer prevailing amidst God’s enemies; and God’s saving providence, preserving His remnant while advancing His plans.

Many of Joseph’s circumstances paralleled Jesus Christ’s: favored by the Father due to virtue and faithfulness; betrayed for a slave’s price; wrongly accused and punished; severely tested and tempted, yet triumphant amidst desperate circumstances; forgiving and grace-filled. Joseph’s dealings with his brothers, his would-be slayers and betrayers (Genesis 37:18-28), picture how God can prompt His enemies (each of us before accepting Christ) to turn to the Lord and know salvation. Our loving Father, “*unwilling that any should perish*” (2 Peter 3:9), can redeem anything even amidst the most “impossible” circumstances!

This week we explore, through Joseph’s story, the process that leads many to follow the Savior: testing and trials; recognition, remorse and ownership of failures and the inability to save ourselves; readiness to receive God’s grace; and sacrifice and self-denial—walking in the Way of Christ.

## QUESTIONS

Why did God send Joseph to Egypt and ultimately reunite Jacob’s family there? What does “Egypt” represent biblically? What were some parallels between Joseph’s life and Jesus’ life?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN BOIT (Living Room International)

Pray for Living Room International as we begin to offer maternity services in Eldoret. Pray for the mamas and babies who will be entrusted into our care. Pray that our team will continue to grow in skill and compassion.

# TUESDAY

Read **Genesis 42:26–43:14; Malachi 3:2-3; James 1:2-4**

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## **Trials, Tough Questions and Self-Awareness**

A casual read of Joseph's dealings with his brothers in Egypt might have one conclude that Joseph was playing a "cat and mouse game." He seemed intent on jacking them around—understandable given their earlier treachery, currently desperate circumstances, and misrecognition of Joseph with his Egyptian trappings and authoritative position. However, Joseph's aims transcended callous gamesmanship.

Let's summarize several exchanges between Joseph and his betrayers. When his brothers arrived in Egypt to buy grain, Joseph accused them of spying (Genesis 42:9)—they were guilty, but not of this. To secure their departure, Joseph insisted that they leave a brother behind as "collateral"—this sacrifice must have stirred memories. A servant secretly replaced their money alongside purchased grain in their sacks to test their hearts and integrity (42:24-28). When back with father Jacob, they were mortified to discover the money returned. Fearing retribution, Jacob reluctantly dispatched them again to Egypt with the money, additional gifts, and favored son, Benjamin. (43:11-14)

Back in Egypt, Joseph invited the brothers to his house, stoking fears of reprisal. Instead, Joseph fed them and returned Simeon, secretly having his steward restore their money again while placing a valuable cup in Benjamin's bag (43:18-44:2). Following departure, Joseph's

servant overtook them with charges of thievery; they protested, offering up the life of any among them correspondingly guilty. When the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, an extreme test materialized: would they "sacrifice" this brother—as they had Joseph, wrongfully, years earlier—or stand up for him despite their present innocence? (44:3-13)

Many lament, "Why does God permit troubles? Why is life often so tough and unfair?" After Adam and Eve disobediently ate the forbidden fruit in Eden, God followed up in asking Adam, "*Where are you?*" (Genesis 3:9) This query was not geographically based—omniscient God knew their whereabouts—but a prompt to self-awareness. Joseph's dealings with his brothers were filled with formative "*Where are you?*" trials.

Tests and difficulties make us aware of limitations, confronting us with our sinfulness and utter dependance upon God and His mercy and grace. Such recognition undergirds repentance that is essential to redemption—more on this tomorrow.

## QUESTIONS

Was Joseph being cruel and vengeful in his tough dealings with his brothers in Egypt? Why did Joseph have their payment for grain secretly restored to their travel bags as the brothers prepared to return to Canaan? Why does God permit—even sometimes orchestrating—trials and difficulties?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN BOIT (Living Room International)

Pray for wisdom, protection and provision as Living Room begins construction to expand our services to include surgery and ICU. Construction is expected to be complete in September.

# WEDNESDAY

Read **Genesis 43:11-34; 2 Corinthians 7:8-10; Matthew 5:3-4**

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## Repentance, Owning Sins and Inability to Save Ourselves

John the Baptist proclaimed, *“Repent of your sins and turn to God”* (Matthew 3:2 NLT), a theme Jesus emphasized early in His ministry (Matthew 4:17). John understood repentance’s pivotal role in *“making straight the way of the Lord”* (John 1:23), preparing to receive Christ.

Joseph—Holy Spirit inspired—also grasped repentance’s role in redemption and renewal. His tough dealings with his brothers stirred them to recall and own their treachery: *“We are guilty concerning our brother (Joseph) ... we saw the distress of his soul, [yet] when he begged us, we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us”* (Genesis 42:21). The brothers’ guilt increasingly plagued them amidst their exchanges with Joseph, his methods prompting their associated grief regarding what they had done and who they had been.

*“Brokenness is ... agreeing with God about the true condition of my heart and my life as He alone can see it. It’s a lifestyle of unconditional, absolute surrender of my will to God. ... It’s a lifestyle vertically of living ... in the light in transparent honesty and humility before Him.”* (Nancy DeMoss) Joseph knew brokenness via his betrayal unto slavery, subsequent false accusation, and wrongful imprisonment. His tough-love methods immersed his sinful siblings in the process, preparing them for reunion.

We must recognize and own our inability to save ourselves, that we have countless sins needing God's forgiveness alongside our powerlessness to reconcile ourselves to Him. Religious legalists dismiss this need, feeling self-righteous—they see salvation as the just rewards of “worthy” people. Jacob may have wrestled with this still, given his past. Did he have the brothers take gifts, money, and his youngest son (Genesis 43:11-13) with the aim of manipulating and appeasing “*the lord of the land*” (42:33)? Or did Jacob finally come to see himself as a mere steward of God's provision, letting go of these things accordingly?

Joseph's ten former betrayers became increasingly ready to take their God-given places among Israel's patriarchs. Like all desiring reconciliation with God, the brothers needed to repent, owning their prior sins and seeking unmerited forgiveness to enable the Lord's mercy and their usefulness to Him.

## QUESTIONS

How does God use brokenness to refine us and prompt growth? Why was it important for the brothers to recall and “own” their earlier betrayal of Joseph? How do pride and self-righteousness work against our spiritual growth?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN BOIT (Living Room International)

Pray for our staff that we will continue to love our patients and community in tangible ways with the love of Jesus.

# THURSDAY

Read **Genesis 43:33–44:1-17; James 1:2-4; Luke 16:10-12**

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## Receiving God's Mercy and Grace

When younger, I revealed spiritual immaturity in wondering, “Why did God subject Jesus to torment and crucifixion? Why couldn’t God just create us ‘finished,’ skipping the pain and drama?” (1) A holy God cannot wink at sin; “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23)—we won’t develop the first answer today. (2) Trials can draw us toward God, enabling His creation purpose. (3) Ordeals build self-awareness, revealing our need for a Savior. (4) Hardships develop character, strengthening us spiritually (James 1:2-4).

There’s another reason, however. Though mercy (not getting what you deserve: damnation) and grace (getting what you don’t deserve: adoption into God’s family) are free in Christ, God doesn’t grant them irresponsibly. One must be ready to receive them: “*As each has received a gift, use it ... as good stewards of God’s varied grace*” (1 Peter 4:10). In the parable of the talents, the servants were accountable for wise use of what they had received (Matthew 25:14-30).

Joseph’s brothers were increasingly prepared to receive mercy and grace throughout their ordeals with their incognito brother. They needed not only to repent and admit their vulnerability, but to engender honesty and faithfulness—keys to good stewardship.

Father Jacob had learned such hard lessons via a life of scheming and its bitter fruit—thus his prayer upon releasing the brothers to Egypt: *“May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man (Joseph), and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin”* (Genesis 43:14).

Their related journey was trying. Money to purchase food was twice restored secretly, the second time along with Joseph’s valuable silver cup (42:25; 44:1-2). Would-be glorious gifts of grace—Joseph’s steward reassured them after the first incident, *“Do not be afraid. Your God ... has put treasure in your sacks for you”* (43:23)—understandably felt like traps.

Upon the second discovery of replaced money and the cup in Benjamin’s bag, Judah spoke on his brothers’ behalf: *“God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord’s servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found”* (44:16). The hook was set—they were now ready to receive!

## QUESTIONS

What are some reasons why God didn’t create us “completed”—why we must struggle with our own fallenness and the world’s? How did Joseph’s brothers grow to become increasingly ready to receive mercy and grace from their brother (and from God Himself)?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN BOIT (Living Room International)

Please pray for the courage to keep dreaming dreams that are bigger than ourselves, for compassion to love in ways that are bigger than ourselves, and for eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to understand how God is leading our work.

# FRIDAY

Read **Genesis 44:14–45:8; Romans 12:1-2; Luke 9:23-24**

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## Sacrifice and Self-Denial, Walking in the Way

This week we've considered the story of Joseph testing his brothers to see if they would turn on each other as they had turned on him years earlier. The brothers' willingness to obey Jacob and trek to Egypt for food was an encouraging start—they honored their father's wishes, concerned about the family's needs.

Eldest son Reuben felt understandable guilt well before Joseph's ordeal. He had bedded his father's concubine—deeply disrespecting Jacob in a power play (Genesis 35:22), eventually costing him birthright privileges (1 Chronicles 5:2). Of the ten brothers, however, Reuben alone had advocated for Joseph as the others schemed to get rid of him. Perhaps Reuben's shame prompted his coarse, awkward proposal to offer his sons' lives if he could not return Benjamin safely to Jacob (42:7).

Judah, son #4 of both Jacob and Leah, stepped up as the leader amidst the brothers' exchanges with "*the lord of the land*." Joseph's tough love was a catalyst, but it was Judah who set a self-sacrificing course. Though one of the nine brothers earlier discussing their guilt amongst themselves (42:21), Judah declared it openly to Joseph and before God (44:16). Earlier he pleaded with Jacob to have Benjamin join their second Egyptian trip, personally guaranteeing his safe return (43:8-9)

Later, upon Joseph's threat to detain Benjamin after the cup planted in his bag was discovered, Judah—out of concern for Jacob—asked that he supplant their youngest brother as Egypt's prisoner (44:33). As a willing sacrificial substitute, Judah pictured our Redeemer here. And, interestingly, though one might have otherwise expected the Messiah's human lineage to go through Joseph, Jesus was Judah's descendant—thus, Jesus being called “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Revelation 5:5).

Judah—and presumably his brothers with him—had commenced on the servant's path. They had sinned greatly: Reuben and Judah had inter-family “affairs”; Simeon and Levi had ruthlessly wiped out Shechem's community, “avenging sister Dinah” (Genesis 34); nine plotted Joseph's death, betraying him. Yet God used even these—as He can you and me—for His glorious purposes. Israel's patriarchs were tested and prepared for their roles in God's redemptive plan!

## QUESTIONS

What were some key indicators that Joseph's brothers were progressing toward the readiness God desired for them? How did Judah show himself to be the rightful leader of the family, unlike Reuben and the other two older brothers? What does this story tell us about God's redemption?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN BOIT (Living Room International)

Pray for God's help to reach the patients and their loved ones who need treatment and need to know that they are loved by God.

## Sources

- The GotQuestions.org's quotes can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/Egypt-in-the-Bible.html>.
- Nancy DeMoss's quote is from <https://www.reviveourhearts.com/articles/choosing-brokenness/>.

