

Kingdom sized Dreams
Genesis 30:22-24; 37:1-50:26
January 12-13, 2019

Summary and Goal: Genesis 37-50 is primarily a survey of the life of Joseph. We will discover that Joseph went through a set of detours in his life. But it was in the detours that he was developed into the person God wanted him to become. There is a bigger story that Joseph is participating in. Unknown to him, Joseph's life is being used to preserve the foundation of the nation of Israel, and the Messianic promise made back in the Garden, that there will be One that will come to crush the serpents head and free us from the curse of sin. The story of Joseph's life helps us to be confident that God will be with us through our detours and that he will use them for building His Kingdom

Main Passage:

Genesis 30:22-24; 37-50

Session Outline:

1. Joseph in the Pit (Genesis 37)
2. Joseph in the Palace (Genesis 39 1-20)
3. Joseph in the Prison (Genesis 39: 21- 40:22)
4. Joseph back in the Palace (Genesis 41)
5. Joseph preserves The Kingdom (Genesis 49:8-10)

Session in a Sentence:

God will take us through detours in this life to develop our character, and to make sure that his Kingdom purposes are accomplished.

Kingdom Connection: The story of Joseph is a story of how God established his Kingdom by preserving the nation of Israel and the tribe of Judah. Ultimately, Jesus would come to free us from our sins. His kingdom will free people from the pit of sin, and the prison of shame. Jess will come from the tribe of Judah. Joseph is used by God to ensure that the tribe of Judah will continue and that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah will reign.

Missional Application: The story of Joseph proves to us that when we are going through detours in life, we can trust the heart and hand of God. Joseph's story is not prescriptive. It is descriptive. The events that occur describe what happened in Joseph's life. You will not find any commands or imperatives. What you will find is that God is giving us a great example. As we travel throughout the detours of life we can rest assured that God is with us, and he will use the circumstances of our lives to build his Kingdom.

Introduction

Driving through Houston one of the most common things that you will see is a neon-orange diamond shaped sign that reads “Detour Ahead”. At first glance, when you see this sign one emotion can come to your mind: frustration. An unexpected detour can cause you to become frustrated that you will not arrive to your destination on your timetable. It can cause you to become frustrated, because you don’t know where the detour is going to spit you out. Detours can cause us a lot of stress in life.

Throughout the Bible we see that God is building his kingdom, through a set of detours. God hardly takes his people to their destination without bringing them through detours. Abraham experienced a series of detours in his life as he was battling through infertility and wrestling with the promise that God gave him that he would have an heir and from that heir would come many nations. Jacob experienced several detours in his journey with God when it came to family issues. Even King David experienced unexpected detours in his life when God was preparing him to become King.

God uses detours in the lives of his people **purposefully**. Truthfully, we can be frustrated, disappointed and even doubtful about the various detours we are experiencing in life. Detours come in all shapes and size. We experience detours with our careers, our relationships, or our financial plans. We can rest assured that detours in life are not by accident, and they do not happen whimsically to us. In fact, **God has designed the detours in our lives to develop us**. God is not so much interested in us arriving at a particular destination, as he is in our character development along the way.

As we look at the story of Joseph we can be encouraged, because Joseph is going to go through a set of detours in his life. He is going to be thrown seemingly off course. But as Joseph is going through these detours, we will see the constant refrain of Joseph’s life “And the Lord was with Joseph.” Joseph’s life is a testament that we can trust the sovereign plan of God for our lives.

Character Background:

Joseph is a central figure in the history of the Pentateuch. Moses (the author of Genesis) devotes more space to Joseph’s life than he does with any other person, including Abraham. Joseph has 14 consecutive chapters written about him. Joseph comes from a very dysfunctional family. His Father is married to two different women and has relationship with others in his house. Reuben has an inappropriate relationship with one of his father’s concubines Bilhah (Gen 35:22). Simeon and Levi murdered all of the men of Shechem (Gen 35).

When we meet Joseph, he is 17 years old. We find that Joseph is looked upon with partiality by his father Jacob. ***Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age.*** (Gen 37:3). Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons, and he made Joseph a special coat that expressed Jacob’s partiality toward Joseph. Throughout the Scriptures, any partiality is specifically condemned by God. (See Acts 10:34; Eph. 6:9; & James 2:1)

We often think of the *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* with Donny Osmond. But the Hebrew translation is unclear about the coat’s design. It could have been a multi-colored coat. The Latin Vulgate says that the coat could have had long sleeves all the way down to his ankles. The coat could have simply been an oversized coat with stripes. The details of the coat

are unimportant. The symbolization of the coat is what matters. Joseph wore this coat proudly and it represented his Father's favoritism toward Joseph. This oversized coat prevented Joseph from participating in chores and labor that the other brother partook in. Moreover, we find that Joseph is the Old Testament's first tattle-tale. He brings a "bad report" about his brothers to his father. Because of Jacob's partiality towards Joseph the other brothers ***"hated him and could not speak peacefully to him."*** (Gen 37:4)

As if Joseph was not in bad standing with his family already, he gets thrown into a bigger hole (pun intended). Joseph receives a dream from the Lord about his future position. Joseph dreams that all his brothers will one day bow down in front of him. He shares this dream with his family. Scripture makes clear that his brothers' response to the dream was hostile, at best. ***"His brothers said to him, 'Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?' So they hated him even more for his dreams and his words."*** (Gen. 37:8)

Joseph dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and the rest of his family. This dream revealed that not only would Joseph's brothers bow down before him, but his father and mother would bow down before him as well. (Gen 37:10) In the Old Testament the doubling of a dream proves that the dream is going to come to fruition. One dream may have been circumstance... or bad pizza... but two dreams was considered as direct revelation from God himself. (Gen 41:32). Joseph's dream caused his brothers to become more hateful and more jealous of him.

1. Joseph in the Pit

One day, Joseph finds himself going to check on his brothers as they are tending their family's herds away from home. As Joseph is walking toward them in Dothan, Joseph's brothers say, ***"Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits."*** You can imagine the disdain coming through his brothers speech. Their blood boiled with jealousy and hatred for Joseph. As Joseph came upon his brothers, ***"They stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore and they took him and threw him into a pit."***(Gen 37:23-24) The Hebrew word for "stripped off" is often time used to speak of skinning an animal. They violently tore off Joseph's coat, that symbolized his favoritism and authority over the brothers. The Bible will later tell us (Gen 42:21) that Joseph begged and pleaded with his brothers all throughout the night to not go through with their plan. "Simeon don't do this! Reuben, help me! Dan, please get me out of here!" The great Bible Commentator F.B. Meyer writes about the haunting screams that Joseph wailed out throughout the night:

"Years passed after year: but the years could not obliterate from their memories that look, those cries, that scene in the green glen of Dothan, surrounded by the tall cliffs, over-arched by the blue sky whose expanse was lit up by a meridian sun. They tried to lock up the skeleton in their

most secret cupboard, but it contrived to come forth to confront them even in their guarded hours. Sometimes they thought they saw that agonized young face in their dreams and heard that piteous voice wailing in the night wind. “¹

Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. They dipped Joseph’s coat in blood and claimed that he was attacked by a vicious animal. Their Father Jacob mourned the death of Joseph for more than 13 years.

2. Joseph in the Palace

Joseph stepped out of the pit and walked into Potiphar’s palace. Potiphar was a powerful Egyptian officer. He was chief of the guards. Some commentators believe that Potiphar was Captain of the Executioners. Regardless, Potiphar was a powerful man, and Joseph was now his property. Although Joseph experienced a tragedy and a violent attack of injustice, Joseph didn't develop a victimization mentality. Although he had every right to play the victim, to doubt the Lord and the dream he had given Joseph, he didn't. Joseph matured a lot through the “pit experience”. He was no longer entitled and allergic to hard work. Instead Joseph worked hard for Potiphar because Joseph was faithful where he was positioned, he was exalted in Potiphar’s house.

Joseph’s hard work was not the only reason behind his success. God was with Joseph (Gen. 39:2). His power, grace, and favor were upon Joseph’s life. Instead of viewing his circumstance as a setback, Joseph knew that nothing is wasted in God’s economy. God can transform setbacks into stepping stones for success. ***The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.” (Gen 39:2-4)***

But Joseph’s success brought seduction. The Bible tells us that Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. Joseph was a good-looking man. The Bible tells us that Joseph’s looks and success attracted eye of Potiphar’s wife. Day after day, Mrs. Potiphar enticed Joseph to lie with her. Joseph refused to go to bed with Mrs. Potiphar. He gives her a sixty-two-word diatribe as to why he cannot sleep with her.

Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? (Gen 39:8-9)

Joseph gives Mrs. Potiphar the primary reason as to why he could not sleep with her. Not only would he be sinning against his master, but he would be sinning against his heavenly Master. Joseph knew that there was no private section of his life. Because the refrain of his life was that “the Lord was with Joseph”, he knew that God was in the room every moment. Joseph knew that what was done in the dark would come to the light with God.

¹ Meyer, F. B. *Joseph: Beloved, Hated, Exalted*. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1982.

Temptation did not cease because he resisted Mrs. Potiphar one time. She continually whispered in Joseph's ear to lie with her. But Joseph continually refused. Until one day, *when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, ² she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.* Joseph put on his best pair of Nike's and ran out of the house. But Mrs. Potiphar accused Joseph of trying to take advantage of her. Potiphar charged Joseph and sent him to prison, indefinitely.

Once again, it appears that Joseph's garment has gotten him in trouble. Joseph has got to be thinking now, that this is Déjà Vu. Joseph may have lost his coat again, but he didn't lose his character. Joseph's incident with Mrs. Potiphar is a living illustration of 1 Cor 10:13:

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Although Joseph escaped the temptation; God placed him on another detour. Joseph lost his position in Potiphar's house, and he lost the prestige that came with the title Joseph kept his integrity. And because of that, God honored Joseph as he left the Palace and entered the prison.

3. Joseph in the Prison

Now we find Joseph out of the palace and in the prison. When we look historically at the text of Joseph it is incredible that he ended up in prison. Sexual assault and adultery with a royal official's spouse was punishable by death. Most scholars believe that Potiphar did not actually believe that Joseph would commit such a crime against him and his spouse, but his hand was forced to punishing Joseph and remaining loyal to his wife. Joseph's address changed, but the faithfulness and grace of God in his life did not change. *But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. (Gen. 39:21).* The refrain of Joseph's life remained true. The Lord was with Joseph. God had taken Joseph on another detour, but he was there with Joseph throughout the prison experience. Joseph was quickly promoted in the prison. He was placed in charge of all the prisoners. And then he became in charge of the prison itself. *The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed. (Gen 39:23)*

Because of Joseph's experiences in the pit, the palace and now in the prison Joseph was learning valuable skills that were preparing him for the future that God had mapped out for him. Joseph was learning invaluable management and administrative skills. Joseph learned how to speak to nobles in the palace, but also gained street smarts in the prison. God was preparing Joseph for what he had prepared for Joseph.

As Joseph was in the Prison, he met two members of the Pharaoh's cabinet. These two men had dreams that needed interpretation. Because of the extent of our time, we can't get into the details of these dreams, but Joseph interprets the dreams that they have. The cupbearer gets released from the Prison, and the Baker does not get released from the prison; instead he hangs on the gallows. This fulfills Joseph's interpretation.

Joseph tells the Chief Cup Bearer to remember Joseph when he gets out of jail. The Cupbearer forgot Joseph... until 2 years later when Pharaoh had a troubling dream that needed to be interpreted. Nobody in all the land of Egypt could interpret Pharaoh's dream. At that moment the Cupbearer remembered his time in prison, and he remembers how Joseph was able to interpret the Cupbearer's dream, correctly.

A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream and as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged. (Gen. 41:12-13)

Pharaoh immediately called Joseph into his courts. Joseph made it clear that it was not his own ability to interpret dreams and predict the future. All the credit was given to God. God was using Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's interpretation to unfold the plans of world history.

“God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do... here will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt,³⁰ but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land,³¹ and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. (Gen 41: 25, 29-31)

Joseph's interpretation revealed to Pharaoh that there would be seven years of plenty and abundance, but afterwards there would be seven years of famine. This famine would cripple Egypt and it would devastate the entire known world at the time. God allowed Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dream, not just so that Joseph would be exalted, but so that people would be preserved.

4. Joseph back in the Palace

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.”⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” (Gen 41:39-41)

Joseph is now entrusted as the second most powerful man in the world. Joseph's story is incredible. He went from being an unwanted brother sold into slavery to running the most powerful empire on the planet at the time. This didn't happen overnight. The Bible tells us that Joseph was 30 years old when he entered into Pharaoh's service. Joseph went through 13 years of detours to get where we find him.

Joseph's life is a great example that God is not interested in a microwave kingdom, God wants his kingdom to be established with a crock-pot mentality. The microwave is quick, it's fast, and easy, but the food usually turns-out mediocre. It's perfect for pizza rolls and ramen noodles. If you want a quality meal, you need to use a crock-pot. when you put a pot-roast in the crock-pot in the morning and it simmers throughout the day, the meat is tender, the smell permeates your home, and it is ready to be eaten when you come home from work that evening. It may have taken more time, but the quality of the meal is noticeable. God has the same mentality when he is building his kingdom. He takes his time to build things that are going to last and that are valuable. God doesn't microwave his people into holiness, and he doesn't microwave his

kingdom. He let's them simmer in difficulty, time, and hardship; and the quality is noticeably different.

In the years of plenty, Joseph stored up food. The famine was worse than anybody expected. ***Moreover all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain because the famine was severe over all the earth (Gen 41:57)*** The famine spread throughout the known world, and because of the faithfulness of God in Joseph's life and because of Joseph's wisdom the world was spared from the devastation of the famine.²

5. Joseph Preserves the Kingdom

If we aren't careful we can miss the forest for the trees. We see how far Joseph has come with his rise to success. But remember, God gave Joseph a dream when he was merely 17 years old that has yet to come to pass. At this point Joseph has not seen his brothers in 13 years. They have not reconciled, and quite honestly, they weren't sure that he was even alive at this point. But Genesis tells us that the famine spread past Africa and into Canaan. The famine reached Joseph's brothers and his father.

If God would not have intervened through the life of Joseph, then the foundation of the Nation of Israel would have died through famine. Joseph's brothers venture down to Egypt to ask for food for their family. They do not know that their brother is alive, and they certainly do not know that he is the Governor of Egypt.

Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. (Gen 42:6)

The dream that God gave to Joseph when he was 17 years old was finally fulfilled. Joseph is ruling and reigning over his brothers, and they are bowing down to him. But why is this so important in the scope of the Kingdom of God?

And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. (Gen 45:7-8)

What God is doing through the story of Joseph is saving the nation of Israel. He is preserving the 12 tribes of Israel, and more specifically he is sparing the tribe of Judah. From the tribe of Judah will come the actuator of the Kingdom of God, the Messiah. At the end of the book of Genesis this Messianic prophecy is given about the tribe of Judah:

***⁸ "Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.***

***⁹ Judah is a lion's cub;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down; he crouched as a lion
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?***

² This is an incredible Christ comparison. The whole world came to Joseph for sustenance and life, just as the whole world comes to Jesus Christ for true sustenance and spiritual life.

*¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

The Lion of Judah shall be praised, will rule with authority, the royal scepter will not depart from him, and he will be worth of the people's obedience. In the first book of the Bible this prophecy is declared, in the last book of the New Testament this prophecy is fulfilled. Revelation reveals to us that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah is Jesus Christ and one of the elders said to me, "***Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.***" (Revelation 5:5). What God was doing through the story of Joseph was setting the table for God's Kingdom to be realized through Joseph.

The story of Joseph's life is really the story of God working through Joseph's life. God is not a supporting actor. He is the main character in history and in our lives. Walter Brueggemann said: The main character in the drama is Yahweh. Though hidden in the form of a dream, silent not at all visible, the listener will understand that the dream is the unsettling work of Yahweh upon which everything else depends. Without the dream there would be no Joseph and no narrative. From the perspective of the brothers, without the dream there would be no trouble or conflict. For the father, without the dream there would be no grief or loss. The dream sets its own course. And in the end, the dream prevails over the tensions of the family.³

At the end of the Genesis Joseph expresses confidence that we can trust the hand and the heart of God. Looking back over the course of his life, he shares this with his brothers: ***As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today (Gen. 50:20)***

God will go to extreme measures to make sure that his Kingdom spreads and is fulfilled. He will take us on supposed detours in our lives to make sure that his kingdom purposes are accomplished. We, like Joseph can trust God, no matter our circumstances that He is with us.

³ Brueggemann, Walter. *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*.pg.298 Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982.