

# ...but God

Series with Skip Heitzig

<b>SERIES:</b>	...but God
<b>MESSAGE:</b>	<b>Evil Happens...but God</b>
<b>SPEAKER:</b>	Skip Heitzig
<b>SCRIPTURE:</b>	Genesis 50:15-21

## MESSAGE SUMMARY

The story of Joseph is one of the Bible's most compelling tales. And the most gripping feature is the difference between Joseph's outlook and that of his eleven brothers. After all the intrigue, the ups and downs of Joseph's life and career, and the years of deception and selfishness by Joseph's brothers, the finale comes after their father, Jacob, dies. This is one of the Bible's best *but God* moments, as forgiveness eclipses failure. Let's consider Joseph's brothers as they approach him one last time.

## STUDY GUIDE

### Connect Recap Notes: April 22, 2018

Speaker: Skip Heitzig

Teaching: "Evil Happens...*but God*"

Text: Genesis 50:15-21

## Path

The story of Joseph is one of the Bible's most compelling tales. And the most gripping feature is the difference between Joseph's outlook and that of his eleven brothers. After all the intrigue, the ups and downs of Joseph's life and career, and the years of deception and selfishness by Joseph's brothers, the finale comes after their father, Jacob, dies. This is one of the Bible's best *but God* moments, as forgiveness eclipses failure.

- I. Their Baseless Fear (v. 15)
- II. Their Blatant Fabrication (vv. 16-18)
- III. Their Brother's Forgiveness (vv. 19-21)

## Points

### Their Baseless Fear

- If anyone had a reason to sell his life and start over, it was Joseph. His brothers hated him, the Midianites sold him, Potiphar jailed him, and his cellmates forgot about him. But God didn't.
- Only ten words describe how God made the universe, but one-fourth of Genesis is devoted to Joseph's life. His life is a story of tragedy to triumph, of rags to riches. Joseph went from

obscurity to the second most powerful person in Egypt. In short, this is a story of providence. God worked supernaturally, naturally.

- In verse 15, we see that his brothers feared two things:
  - Joseph's personal emotion ("Joseph will hate us"). The word *hate* is *satam*, to bear a grudge.
  - Joseph's possible action ("repay us for all the evil which we did to him")
- A guilty conscience is a heavy load to bear; it needs no accuser.
- The brothers were worried Joseph would get rid of them, as they had gotten rid of him all those years ago.
- Guilt distorts reality; it is like rust on the iron of our conscience.
- **Probe: What are some things you fear in life? Why do you fear them? How can you overcome a baseless fear or grudge?**

### Their Blatant Fabrication

- In chapter 49, we find that Jacob was not afraid to call out his sons' sinful behavior in the past as well as predict their future. Jacob knew the disposition of his sons.
- The brothers used their dead father as a scapegoat, the fall guy in their fabrication. They essentially told Joseph, "Our dad's last dying wish was that you let bygones be bygones." Joseph saw through this. Old habits die slowly. People change, but not that much.
- As opposed to Joseph's *but God* living, the brothers lived in *but we*. Think of their attitude:
  - Joseph told us dreams *but we* resented him.
  - Joseph came to give us a message from our father, *but we* despised him.
  - Joseph's coming with his coat, *but we* will show him and sell him.
  - Joseph is the prime minister and our father is dead, *but we* will outsmart him.
- First they sent messengers but then they bowed and offered to be Joseph's slaves.
- **Probe: Have you had someone make up lies about you or spread false rumors? How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome? Did you see God's hand involved in any aspect of the remedy?**

### Their Brother's Forgiveness

- Joseph was sensitive, wiping away his tears. His weeping wasn't for himself, but for his siblings—he saw their torment and trickiness. But he forgave them. His attitude of compassion arose from his theology, what he believed about God:
  - God is in charge. Our problems often begin when we take God off the throne and try to play Him (see v. 20).
  - God uses bad events to bring about good results. Joseph had a clear understanding that God was at work and trusted Him for the outcome. No matter what people's intentions are, God will bring about His desired end (see v. 20).
  - Read Romans 8:28. The term used for *work together* in the text is *sunergeó*, meaning synergism, a cooperation of two or more things. It means the working together of various elements to produce a result greater than the sum.
  - God uses people to help other people (see v. 21). God will use your suffering to help serve other people who are suffering. He "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 2:4, NIV).

- How big is your God? Is He big enough to providentially arrange the events of your life for your good and His glory?
- Probe: Why can forgiveness be so difficult for some? Share about a situation in which it was difficult for you to forgive. How did God give you the grace to forgive? What were the benefits of doing so?

## Practice

**Connect Up:** Pastor Skip referred to two types of providence: natural (whereby God cooperates with created things to cause them to act in a certain way) and supernatural (a miracle). How are the two similar and different? Though we don't fully understand God's governance and use of both, how have you experienced them in your life? In what events in your life did you see God's hand at work?

**Connect In:** Using Joseph as an example, what characteristics should the church work hard to mimic and implement? For example: forgiveness, grace, trust, patience, etc. Discuss others you can think of.

**Connect Out:** How can you use Joseph's story to witness to nonbelievers? What events and scenarios within the story do you think an unbeliever might respond to?

## DETAILED NOTES

- I. Introduction
  - A. Joseph had so many bad things happen to him
  - B. His brothers hated him, Midianites sold him, Potiphar jailed him, cellmates forgot him, *but God* promoted him
  - C. One-fourth of Genesis—thirteen chapters—is devoted to Joseph
    1. Rags to riches story: Joseph went from total obscurity to the second most powerful person in Egypt
    2. Reveals God's providence: God cooperates with natural law to affect a supernatural result; an extraordinary outcome from ordinary circumstances
    3. Joseph proved no one needs to be held down by past baggage
      - a. Dysfunctional family
      - b. Jacob had four wives at the same time
      - c. Brothers involved in rape, incest, murder, and human trafficking
  - D. Genesis 50 is the crescendo and grand finale
    1. Jacob had died and been buried
    2. Brothers were paranoid
- II. Their Baseless Fear (v. 15)
  - A. Brothers' guilt is evident
    1. Joseph's brothers got rid of him, sold him to the Midianites, taken to Egypt, etc.
    2. They thought Joseph was dead; they found out he controlled the world economy from Egypt
    3. Joseph had provided for and protected his brothers; they were completely in debt to him, fearing he could rescind his favor and protection
  - B. Their father, Jacob was dead

1. Brothers thought Jacob was a buffer between them and Joseph
  2. They were completely vulnerable
- C. Brothers had two fears
1. Joseph's personal emotion ("Perhaps Joseph will hate us")
  2. Joseph's possible reaction ("may actually repay us for all the evil")
- D. A guilty conscience is a heavy load to bear
1. Guilty conscience needs no accuser (see Psalm 38:4)
  2. They were projecting their guilt into the situation
  3. They had been carrying their unresolved guilt for forty years
  4. Guilt filters everything and distorts reality
    - a. They thought Joseph hated them—he loved them
    - b. They thought he was unforgiving—he forgave them five chapters ago
- III. Their Blatant Fabrication (vv. 16-18)
- A. Jacob's supposed words were very likely fabricated by the brothers
1. Brothers were so paranoid, they sent messengers ahead of them
  2. No record that Jacob said these things
  3. It was too important a message to deliver via messenger
  4. Jacob would have told Joseph himself; all twelve sons were at Jacob's side when he died (see Genesis 49)
  5. Used their dead father as the fall guy, a scapegoat
    - a. Brothers' collective personality was paranoid, opportunistic, deceptive
    - b. They had been lavishly treated by Joseph and Pharaoh, protected and provided for all these years, and relocated to avoid famine
    - c. They had already confessed to lying all these years
    - d. Self-preservation (see Proverbs 29:25)
- B. Joseph always lived from the *but God* perspective
1. Joseph revealed himself to his brothers (see Genesis 45:1-13)
  2. "God sent me before you to preserve life.... God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you...and to save your lives" (vv. 5, 7)
- C. Joseph's brothers lived from the *but we* perspective
1. "Joseph told us his dreams, *but we* resent him"
  2. "Joseph brings us a message from dad, *but we* despise him"
  3. "Here comes Joseph in his coat, *but we* will show him; we will sell him"
  4. "Now dad is dead and Joseph is prime minister, *but we* will outsmart him"
  5. This is self-preservation
- IV. Their Brother's Forgiveness (vv. 19-21)
- A. Brothers expected anger and vengeance, but Joseph wept
1. Joseph saw their torment and was sensitive
  2. He saw their fear and extended forgiveness
  3. He comforted them
- B. How does love and forgiveness come from the heart of someone who has been so mistreated? How is that cultivated in a person who has been so hurt?
1. This was Joseph's theology on pain and suffering:
    - a. God is in charge, not me (see v. 19)

1. Our problems begin when we push God off the throne
2. Romans 11:34; 13:1; Daniel 4:17
  - b. God uses bad events to bring about good results (see v. 20)
    - i. Joseph had a clear understanding of God's providence, no matter people's intentions
    - ii. Joseph knew that his brothers were to be the twelve tribal leaders of Israel; their lives had to be protected
    - iii. Romans 8:28
    - iv. Be careful what you call "bad"
  - c. God uses people to help other people (see v. 21)
    - i. Joseph committed to providing for his brothers and their families
    - ii. Joseph acknowledged their evil acts, but he saw that God took all those "bad" events and worked them together
2. Suffering is never wasted
  - a. God can help someone else from your time of suffering
  - b. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

#### V. Closing

- A. How big is your God?
- B. Big enough to take the bad things of your past and weave them together to produce something of value and beauty?
- C. Can you trust Him in maybe the worst point in your life?
- D. Say *but God*, not *but me*

**Figures referenced:** Jonathan Haidt, William Newell, Walter Scott, Shakespeare, Charles Spurgeon, R.A. Torrey

**Cross references:** Genesis 45:1-13; 49; Daniel 4:17; Psalm 38:4; Proverbs 29:25; Romans 8:28; 11:34; 13:1; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

**Greek/Hebrew words:** sunergeó

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