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**Genesis 39:1-23**

*The Genesis of God's People:*

*No Matter The Circumstance*

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Introduction: **(Slide #1)**

1. For my opening, I was going ask you to imagine being forced to drive a detour and not responding well.
2. This was going to lead to God taking us on detours in life to teach us lessons and then to Joseph's story.
3. Sometimes God gives me the opportunity to live out the passage before I preach it, so this happened.
4. On Friday, I drove down to South Station in the afternoon to pick up Monica and her mom.
5. I hit some traffic on the way down, and when I finally hit the big dig, I got a call from Monica.
6. I was going to give her mom her car to go to the Cape and we were going to take the train home.
7. I did not respond well, and during that phone call, I realized I'd taken the wrong exit.
8. I went on a 10 minute detour through the Seaport district telling God I didn't want to learn this lesson.
9. When I finally arrived, we didn't leave right away and we ended up missing the train by 2 minutes.
10. We waited a half an hour for the next train, we got on it, and headed towards Billerica (30min ride).
11. We didn't want to pay for a Taxi, so we tried Lyft, and our first driver cancelled.
12. Finally we were picked up by a nice man named Ahmal from Afghanistan and taken home.
13. What would normally be a two hour drive in traffic turned into a three hour multi-transportation event.

(God took me on a detour I didn't want to travel, and by the end we laughed about it.)

(When God takes us on detours, whether a road trip, or a circumstance, he's trying to teach us something.)

(The story of Joseph is the story of God taking Joseph on a detour, a pathway he never wanted.)

I. God leads Joseph into circumstances he doesn't understand. (v 1) **(S2)**

A. Joseph has been sold into slavery by his brothers.

1. Joseph is a young man with ten older brothers who didn't like him very much.
2. He told them two dreams that predicted they'd bow down to him (sheaves, stars/sun/moon).
3. His father Jacob also favored him with "an ornate robe" (37:3) or "robe of many colors" (ESV). t
4. His brothers kidnap and sell him into slavery and he is taken to Egypt 200 miles away.
5. God leads Joseph into circumstances he doesn't understand.

B. What are the circumstances you don't understand?

1. At a past church I interned at, both a husband and wife have been diagnosed with cancer.
2. They have a daughter who I can only imagine is working hard to trust God in this time.
3. I have another out-of-state friend who has a boss he can't seem to get along with.
4. He tries to be kind but his boss and him just keep fighting each other.
5. I have another friend who's been trying to finish a college degree since I graduated.
6. His school moved his capstone class to the spring so he'd have to pay for a full year.
7. Sometimes God leads us into circumstances we don't understand.

(The big question for Joseph and for us... Are we going to trust God?)

(Does God know what he's doing when he takes us where we don't want to go?)

## II. God is with Joseph and uses him to bless others. (vv 2-6a) (S3)

- A. God presence is with Joseph and works through Joseph to bless Potiphar.
1. In vv 2-3, it says, “The Lord was with Joseph” 2x to emphasize God is still there.
  2. Because God is with Joseph, it says he prospers and experiences success.
  3. This success is not limited to Joseph, but extends to his master Potiphar.
  4. God blesses “everything Potiphar has”—“house/field” (v 5), so he puts Joseph in charge.
  5. Do you remember a promise God made to Joseph’s great-grandfather Abraham?

**(S4) Genesis 12:2–3** “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (NIV®)

(In Joseph, God is beginning to bless all the people of the earth.)

(God took Joseph through this hardship so that he could be a blessing to Potiphar.)

(God is with you and can use you to bless others in your hardship.)

- B. The Navy Seals are one of the most elite military forces in the world.
1. Only 10-20% of those who start complete the training, not the strongest, fastest, or best leaders.
  2. Those who are weak, scared, and shivering with fear can pass... Why is this?
  3. A Seal writes, “Even in great pain, faced with the test of their lives, they had the ability to step outside of their own pain, put aside their own fear and ask: How can I help the guy next to me?”
  4. Joseph stepped outside of his frustrating circumstances to serve the one who enslaved him.
  5. My out-of-state friend who has a difficult boss can still be a success by helping his boss succeed.
  6. Maybe you're working through paperwork or a difficult gov system; God can use it for good.
  7. Who can you help? Who can you bless?
  8. God can use your detour to help you reach out to others for Jesus (invited Ahmal to join us).
  9. Our next **Big Day** is **September 10th**—be praying for your **Top Ten Most Wanted**.

(This doesn’t mean it will be easy... Sometimes life get’s harder before it get’s easier.)

## III. Joseph is tempted to not trust God. (vv 6b-10) (S5)

- A. Potiphar’s wife tempts Joseph to dishonor his master and disobey God.
1. We’re not told much about her; she had wealth, status, and was probably very beautiful.
  2. Captain Potiphar is like a Lord Chamberlain (Joseph head’s his house; he head’s Pharaoh’s).
  3. Like a power couple: Jay Z/Beyoncé, George and Amal Clooney, Tom Brady/Gisele Bundchen).
  4. Joseph also has looks, he’s “well-built and “handsome” (Hebrew for “beautiful”).
  5. I imagine he had the grin of Harrison Ford, physic of Matt Damon, and facial hair of Tom Brady.
  6. If he wanted Potiphar’s wife, he could have her, and even justify it in his own mind.
- B. When you’re tempted to not trust God, what’s your response?
1. Instead of justifying sin, Joseph magnifies the goodness of his master and the goodness of God.
  2. When you're tempted to sin in your marriage, magnify the goodness of your spouse and of God.
  3. When you're tempted to sin at school, thank God for your education and trust him.
  4. When you're tempted to sin at work, thank God for work and remember you can do it unto him.

5. Maybe some of you are experiencing prolonged temptation, Joseph did too ("day after day").
6. He beat the temptation by **resisting** (aligning his will with God's will) and **removing** (away).
7. If every time you drive by a store, you remember what's on the shelf, drive a different route.
8. If you're tempted to cheat on tests, sit in the front row.
9. If you can't speak respectfully about your boss at work, work from home.

(When you're tempted to not trust God, how do you respond?)

#### IV. Joseph does the right thing and is condemned. (vv 11-20a) (S6)

- A. Joseph doesn't sleep with Potiphar's wife, but still ends up in jail.
  1. Potiphar's wife grabs his cloak to force him to be with her, and he runs out of the house.
  2. He loses his cloak, now for the second time, which was probably an outer garment.
  3. The first cloak his Father Jacob gave him signified his favored status among his brothers.
  4. This second cloak was probably given to him by Potiphar to signify his status as head steward.
  5. Even when we do the right thing, there's no guarantee everything will get better.
  6. Sometimes God has to strip us of everything so we'll truly trust him.
  
- B. The Geologist Dr. James Clark visited the Soviet Union after the end of Communism.
  1. He was asked to preach at a small Russian church that had known persecution.
  2. Some had been imprisoned, others had family members who had died.
  3. So he started talking about clay; clay is made of microscopic mineral crystals. (S7)
  4. Under pressure these tiny crystals aren't crushed or made smaller, they grow.
  5. If you apply enough pressure, clay is sometimes transformed into garnet, a red gem. (S8)
  6. When he shared this illustration, he said it was like the whole congregation sparkled with tears.
  7. When even more pressure is applied, a new mineral called staurolite is formed. (S9)
  8. Staurolite is two greek words that mean "stone cross."
  
- C. God uses hardships to make Joseph like Jesus.
  1. One day Jesus will come, he'll be tempted, and he'll resist perfectly.
  2. He'll endure temptation, and not run away but to the ultimate sacrifice.
  3. When Potiphar rages, Joseph is tasting a little of the rage Jesus will one day taste for us.
  4. When we read this story, we put ourselves in Joseph's shoes, but we're more like Potiphar's wife.
  5. We lust for power, we use others for our gain, we lie, we condemn, we're manipulative.
  6. Joseph could have blamed Potiphar's wife and defended himself, but he went to jail for her.
  7. Jesus could have defended himself, but instead, he willingly died for you and me.
  8. **Jesus was stripped bare**, losing his robes, so he could be beaten, bruised, and shamed.
  9. Just like Joseph, Jesus lost his garments, but so that he could clothe you and me with eternal life.
  10. Jesus takes away our nakedness and clothes us with righteousness, holiness, and purity.
  11. In Jesus, we are clothed with his innocence and he takes the jail time we deserve.
  12. Instead of fleeing your circumstances, you have the strength to stand b/c Jesus has been there too.

(The love of Christ is what transforms us from a Potiphar's wife into a Joseph.)

(Joseph wasn't able to obey because he was perfect, but because God's presence was with him.)

#### V. God is still with Joseph and loves him. (vv 20b-23) (S10)

A. God is still with Joseph and loves him.

1. In the last three verses, it says “the Lord was with Joseph...” two more times.
2. But it also says something else, the NIV says God “showed him kindness.”
3. The Hebrew is the special Hebrew word “kheh’-sed” (כֶּה־סֵד), which means “loyal love.” (S11)
4. No matter Joseph’s circumstances, God is still with Joseph and loves him.
5. **Big Idea: No matter your circumstances, God is still with you and loves you. (S12)**
6. When God sends us on inconvenient detours, this is one of the lessons he's trying to teach us.
7. No matter how much pain you feel in here, God hasn’t forsaken you.
8. No matter how bad your circumstances look out there, God loves you with a loyal love.
9. In Hebrew, the very last word of the story is “success” (in ESV too).
10. What makes you a success (a victory) is if God is with you and loves you.

(No matter your circumstances, God is still with you and loves you.)

Conclusion:

1. I’m sure many of you have heard this story, but I think I think it’s a nice way to close.

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.

In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord,

“You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?”

The Lord replied, “The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you.” — Mary Stevenson, 1936

2. No matter your circumstances, God is still with you and loves you.

**2 Timothy 4:22** The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all. (NIV®)