Sermon Series Study Guide

Trusting God: When Life Doesn't Make Sense, Pt. 2

Pastor John Riggs

Sermon Summary:

This sermon explores the challenge of maintaining faith in God during life's most difficult and confusing seasons. Using the story of Joseph from Genesis, the pastor emphasizes that God is always at work for the good of His people, even when circumstances appear dire and His purposes seem unclear. The message encourages believers to trust in God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, particularly when facing trials that make no sense. Through Joseph's journey from favored son to slave, we learn that God never abandons His children and works all things together for good, even when we cannot see or understand His plan. The sermon underscores that God doesn't always remove us from our storms but walks with us through them, transforming us in the process.

Main Scriptures:

1. Romans 8:28 - "All things work together for good for those who love God"
2. Isaiah 42:16 - God leading the blind, turning darkness to light
3. Romans 15:4 - "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction"
4. Jeremiah 17:7-8 - Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord
5. Genesis 15:13-14 - God's covenant with Abraham about offspring being enslaved
6. Genesis 37:5-8 - Joseph's dream about sheaves bowing down
7. Genesis 37:21-22 - Reuben rescuing Joseph from his brothers
8. Genesis 37:25-28 - Joseph sold to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver
9. Genesis 42:21 - Brothers remembering Joseph's distress
10. Genesis 39:1-2 - "The Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man"

Alluded to or Referenced:

11. James 1:2-4 - "Consider it all joy when you face trials of many kinds"

12. Hebrews 11 - The "hall of faith" mentioned
13. John 1:1 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God"
14. Proverbs 3:5-6 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding"

KEY POINTS:

- God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)
- God is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipresent (always present with us)
- We are sojourners in this world; our true citizenship is in heaven
- God's plan is often much bigger than our individual circumstances, and He uses us as part of His greater redemptive purpose
- The stories in Scripture were written for our instruction, encouragement, and endurance
- God intervenes in our lives in ways we often don't recognize or understand at the time
- When we don't know what to do, we must return to the fundamentals of faith: God is faithful, God is with us, God's Word is truth
- God may not remove us from difficult circumstances, but He promises to be with us through them
- Our feelings are not always reliable indicators of God's presence or faithfulness
- Every believer is on mission every day, and God uses us in ways we may never fully comprehend

NOTES:

Question and Answer:

How does understanding God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence help you trust Him during seasons when life doesn't make sense?

Joseph's brothers caused him tremendous pain, yet God used their evil actions for good. How does this challenge our understanding of suffering at the hands of those closest to us?

The sermon mentions that we rarely recognize when God intervenes in our lives. Can you identify a time when you later realized God had protected or redirected you through what seemed like an inconvenience?

How does knowing that Scripture was written for our instruction and endurance change the way you read stories like Joseph's in the Old Testament?

What does it mean practically to go back to the fundamentals of faith when circumstances make you question God's presence or goodness?

Pastor John shared that God sometimes doesn't remove us from the storm but enters into it with us. How does this reality differ from what we typically pray for, and how should it shape our expectations?

Joseph was at his lowest point as a slave in Egypt, yet Scripture says the Lord was with him. How can we recognize God's presence when our feelings tell us otherwise?

In what ways might God be using your current circumstances, even difficult ones, as part of a bigger plan that extends beyond your individual life?

Pastor John emphasizes that we are sojourners in this world and citizens of heaven. How should this identity shape the way we respond to cultural challenges and personal hardships?

How does Joseph's story challenge the modern tendency toward a self-focused faith that expects God to revolve around our individual comfort and happiness?

Small Group Guide: Trusting God When Life Doesn't Make Sense

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by thanking God for His faithfulness and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and application of His Word.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when you had to trust someone or something you couldn't see (riding in the dark, following GPS through unfamiliar territory, etc.). How did that feel?

Key Scripture References

- **Romans 8:28** - "And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."
- **Proverbs 3:5-6** - Trust in the Lord with all your heart
- **Genesis 37-42** - The story of Joseph
- **Jeremiah 17:7-8** - Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord

Sermon Summary

Pastor John shared about trusting God when life doesn't make sense, using Joseph's story as a primary example. At 17, Joseph went from being his father's favorite son to being sold into slavery by his brothers. Yet even in Joseph's darkest moments—when he couldn't see God's plan—God was with him, working all things for good. The sermon emphasized three key attributes of God: He is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipresent (always present).

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. **The Bear Hunt Illustration**: Pastor John shared about riding horses in pitch darkness through the Wyoming mountains. How does this illustrate what it's like to trust God when we can't see what's ahead?

2. **Joseph's Perspective**: When Joseph was thrown into the pit and sold as a slave, he had no idea God was working a bigger plan. What questions do you think Joseph was asking God during this time?

3. **The Bigger Picture**: Read Genesis 15:13-14. God told Abraham 400 years before Joseph that his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt. How does knowing God's "bigger plan" help us trust Him in our individual circumstances?

Personal Reflection

4. **Current Circumstances**: Are you currently in a season where life doesn't make sense? If you're comfortable, share with the group what that looks like. (Remember: confidentiality is important)

5. **The Fundamentals**: Pastor John emphasized returning to "the fundamentals" when we don't know what to do:

    - God is faithful
    - God is with me
    - God's Word is truth
    - God hears my prayers

6. Which of these fundamentals is hardest for you to hold onto during difficult times? Why?

7. **God's Presence vs. God's Deliverance**: Pastor John noted that sometimes God doesn't remove us from the storm but enters into it with us (like the three Hebrew children in the furnace). Share a time when God didn't change your circumstances but changed you in your circumstances.

Going Deeper

7. **Romans 8:28 Reality Check**: This verse says "all things work together for good"—not that all things ARE good. What's the difference? Why is this distinction important?

8. **The Three Omni's**:

    - **Omnipotent** (all-powerful): How does knowing God can do anything help when you feel powerless?
    - **Omniscient** (all-knowing): How does knowing God sees the whole picture help when you only see confusion?
    - **Omnipresent** (always present): How does knowing God is with you help when you feel alone?

9. **Mission in the Midst**: Pastor John shared about witnessing to Mormons on his hunting trip, realizing God had a bigger purpose than just hunting. How might God be using your current difficult situation for His greater purposes?

Key Takeaways

✓ **God is always at work for the good of those who love Him**, even when circumstances are not good in themselves.

✓ **We are sojourners in this world**—this is not our final home; our citizenship is in heaven.

✓ **God's interventions often go unseen**—we rarely realize when God has protected or redirected us.

✓ **Scripture was written for our instruction and encouragement**—the stories of biblical figures like Joseph teach us how to endure.

✓ **God's presence is guaranteed**—even when we don't feel Him, He has promised never to leave or forsake us.

✓ **You are part of God's bigger plan**—your life is being used by God in ways you may never fully understand this side of heaven.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one or more of these action steps:

1. **Create a "Fundamentals Card"**: Write down the four fundamentals (God is faithful, God is with me, God's Word is truth, God hears my prayers) on a card to carry with you. When you face confusion or difficulty, pull it out and remind yourself of these truths.

2. **Journal Your Joseph Moment**: Reflect on a past difficult season. Can you now see how God was working even when you couldn't see it at the time? Write it down as a testimony for future struggles.

3. **Study Joseph's Story**: Read Genesis 37-50 this week. Note each time Scripture says "the Lord was with Joseph" or "the Lord gave him favor." Count how many years passed from pit to palace.

4. **Memorize Romans 8:28**: Commit this verse to memory. When anxious thoughts come, recite this truth.

5. **Share Your Story**: Like Pastor John did with the Mormons, look for an opportunity this week to share how God has been faithful in your life, even through difficult times.

6. **Pray for Perspective**: Each day this week, pray specifically: "God, help me see my circumstances from Your perspective, not just my own."

Prayer Prompts

Praise: Thank God that He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

Confession: Confess areas where you've doubted God's goodness or presence during difficult times.

Intercession: Pray for group members who are currently in seasons where life doesn't make sense.

Petition: Ask God to help you trust Him fully, even when you can't see the path ahead.

Commitment: Dedicate yourself to trusting God's character over your circumstances.

Closing Thought

"The Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2). Whatever you're facing today, this same truth applies to you. God has not abandoned you. He is with you, working all things—even the painful, confusing things—for your good and His glory.

For Next Week

Continue in the series "Trusting God When Life Doesn't Make Sense" as we see how God elevated Joseph and fulfilled His purposes. Come prepared to share how this week's discussion impacted your perspective.

Additional Resources

- Book recommendation: *Trusting God* by Jerry Bridges
- The church's Ephesians study for men begins this week (Stand Firm study)
- If you need pastoral care or prayer, visit the lodge after service or contact the church office

Remember: We're all learning together. Don't be afraid to ask questions or admit struggles. That's what community is for.

NOTES:

Sermon Transcript:

Trusting God when life does not make sense.

Anybody ever have any seasons of life where life just at this point does not make any sense?

If you're not in one now, you will be sometime in the future.

And so this study hopefully will give you some tools to help you better know how you navigate those seasons and those periods of time where life happens and then those circumstantial things.

create in us a misunderstanding or an inability to see or discern how we should move forward, what we should do, those kinds of things.

And so I want to begin this morning as we continue to look at this with Romans chapter 8 verse 28.

And I just want to start with this verse to kind of set in your minds

um... this simple truth that the apostle paul writes here that is an outcome of our incredible salvation knowing that god the father is is in heaven and we have been adopted as his children by faith in christ and that christ our redeemer god the son he is that the father's right hand and he is interceding for us on our behalf to the father and then we also learn in this passage that the holy spirit

whom has been given to us, who indwells every single believer, who is God the Spirit, the third person of the one true God, He is also interceding and praying for us that the will of God would be done in our lives.

And so when you think about what really is happening to us and for us within the Godhead, it's really encouraging.

And in the middle of all of this, the Apostle Paul writes these words.

And he puts this in here for good reason.

Because not everything in life that you encounter or face, even after you come to faith in Christ, is necessarily good.

In other words, you wouldn't just say, hey, I love this experience.

I'm glad this has happened.

There's things that happen in life that are not good.

Maybe you lose a loved one or you've lost a child or a spouse has passed away or you've lost your job or you're having financial struggle or a health issue has come.

Whatever it could be, there's many, many things that could be filled in the blank here.

But they're not necessarily things that we would just want to raise our hands and say, hey, this is a wonderful experience.

They're not necessarily good.

But what Paul wants for us to understand as we continue in this short mini-series on trusting God when life doesn't make sense is that because God the Father is in heaven, because Christ God the Son, our Redeemer, who purchased us with His blood, is at the Father's right hand, who has had all power, all authority, all dominion, all things set under His feet, and God the Holy Spirit who indwells us is praying for the will of God to be done in your life,

Because all of this is true in spite of everything that we encounter in life.

Paul says, and we know that for those who love God, all things, you know what all things means?

All things, right?

All things work together for good.

for those who are called according to his purpose this is very important for us to understand because we know that God is working for our good even in the circumstances of life that we encounter that are not in any way shape form or fashion good but are simply a result of living in a fallen sinful world and so these are encouraging words for us to hold on to

I would like to thank Terry for teaching last week.

Terry, brother, thank you.

He's one of our elders here at our church.

And I want to thank you for standing in and teaching the Word of God last week.

Those of you that may not know, I was gone on a bear hunt in Wyoming.

And so, yeah, the weather was incredible, by the way.

30s at night, 70s during the day.

Yeah, I know, just pretty amazing.

And now you all hate me.

Let's move on.

No, just kidding.

Yeah, what an incredible time.

So I was up in the mountains of Wyoming bear hunting and just a little bit of what we experienced there.

Every day we would leave our campsite that we were staying in and we would drive about an hour and we would go to where our horses were and then we would saddle up our horses and we'd get a pack horse and we'd put the panniers on it and we'd stuff our packs in there and we'd load up and then we would head back into the mountains where we were actually gonna hunt for the day.

And then once we get to the location that we're going to be hunting for the day, we tie up our horses, put our packs on, and we hike now to the location where we'll be spending the day that we're going to be trying to hunt and harvest one of these mature black bears.

And we would hunt until dark because the mature bears a lot of times don't come out until right before dark.

And so we would hunt until it was basically pitch black.

I could no longer see through my optics.

We'd put our packs back on.

We would hike back to the horses.

We'd fill the panniers back up with our packs, put guns, all that stuff on, and then we would saddle up, and then we would start the long ride back out to our pickup in the place where we'd be putting the horses for the night.

Something interesting, though, that I had not really ever experienced, I've ridden a lot of horses throughout my life, but I never have done much night riding.

Anybody here do a lot of night riding with horses?

Anybody?

You can raise your hand.

I mean, we're not going to throw a rock at you.

Not many people do.

Why is that?

Because we work when the light is shining.

We work when the light is shining.

But when I saddled up for that first night, the guy that I was with, we start riding off, and he says, hey, we don't need any lights or anything to ride.

Okay, all right.

So we begin to head out now, and it's pitch black.

We have no lamp.

We have no flashlight.

Nothing's on.

We're just starting to ride out into the darkness of these mountains.

And it's a weird feeling because you can't see anything around you.

You can hear the water that's roaring as you're getting ready to approach the river that you're fixing to cross.

And you can remember some things as you see a glow just in the west, barely, barely just slipping away at the last moments of light.

And then you're riding along there and it's pitch total blackness.

And then the stars themselves are out, and I was thinking even of our message a week before Sunday last, where we talked about God's immeasurable power and the greatness of His might in His creation.

Remember about the galaxies?

NASA says there's two trillion of them, and we looked at a few galaxies, including our galaxy, the Milky Way.

Remember I told you the stars, when you're in the mountains and it's completely black, how they just cover you like a blanket?

Well, that was my experience as I'm riding out, and I'm like, this is incredible.

I just preached about this a week ago, in fact, and I'm looking up at all these stars, and it's just incredible.

So the only light we had was the blanket of stars above us and the occasional sparks that were coming off of the horses' shoes as they would strike against the rocks.

But I got to thinking about trusting God when life doesn't make sense.

And there are moments in life that are much like this.

You're riding along and it's pitch black.

You don't know where you're going.

Things that have happened to you have brought a misunderstanding and an inability to truly understand how to navigate what's going on.

and you're unsure of your surroundings.

I mean, we're riding up incredibly steep mountain ridges and down the other side, and there's deadfall everywhere, and the horses are having to step over deadfall, and there's these big rocks, and there's drop-offs, and you're just in your mind, you're thinking, well, I know horses can see well at night, but how well can horses really see at night?

And then not only that, but there's grizzly bears in that country.

So in my mind, I'm processing things in advance, thinking, well, what happens if at night here we come across a grizzly bear on the trail?

We don't see it, but the horses smell it and see it.

This could be a really interesting experience.

Yeah, very much so.

But as I was riding along there, I couldn't help but think about trusting God, putting my full trust in God, not leaning on my own understanding.

But in all my ways, knowing God, trusting God, believing in God, even when I cannot see.

And here I am riding through the pitch blackness of the Wyoming Rockies and this experience I'm having in real time.

And so I'm riding this animal or these animals, different days I rode different horses, but I'm riding different animals and I'm thinking to myself, you know, this is what it's like in life often for us.

And how do we really truly trust in the Lord with all of our heart?

As I'm riding along there, it's a long ride out of there, and in my own mind, I'm just having to just, hey, we've got to put trust in these animals that they know where they're going and they can see what they're walking in and around and their surroundings.

And that's the reason I can put my trust in them, because the horses can see at night.

And because these horses knew where they were going.

It's one of those things that God has given these animals.

You could ride 15 miles back in the mountains, drop the reins on a horse, be hunting around, whatever, come back.

If you lose that horse, nine times out of ten, if you will walk back to your truck, that horse will be standing at your trailer.

How do they do that?

God.

That's how they do it.

And so I was just trying to think about this as I was writing out just the clip-clop and the sparks of the shoes and the darkness of the night.

And I'm thinking, Lord, this is exactly what we're covering in church right now.

God, how can your people know that they can put their full trust in you when they go through experiences in life that they don't understand at all?

We can do that because God sees everything.

and because God knows everything, and because God is all-powerful.

He is all-powerful.

We use these words in terminology within Christianity, words like omnipotent.

It's just a big word that simply means a descriptive element of God's character.

He is all-powerful.

And then we use words like omniscient.

It's hard to believe and understand this with our finite minds because we're limited, but God simply means that God is all-knowing.

There's nothing that God does not know.

He does not learn, nor does He need to be taught.

He knows everything.

He knows the end from the beginning.

He knows absolutely all things.

And then the last one is God is omnipresent.

God is ever-present with us.

And by the Spirit of God, He is ever-present.

So these three things alone help us to be able to put our full trust in God because He is omnipotent, because He is omniscient, and because He is omnipresent.

And when you're in your situation and you're finding yourself asking God questions like, where are you, God?

You know God is with you.

When you say, God, why did you not or why are you not intervening in this situation?

Where are you, God?

Why are you not acting right now?

We know God is always at work, and we know that God always works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

God knows everything.

So this is what we're looking at today in this continuation of this study.

Let me give you a few verses for encouragement today.

And we're going to look at several of them as we go through here.

And then we're going to look at a life of a young man that we read about in Genesis.

A young man by the name of Joseph.

Many of you are familiar with Joseph.

You know that he was one of the 12 sons of Jacob, which God gave the name Israel.

And that Joseph and his brothers would then from them be the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel.

But as we read the story of Joseph, and we will, we'll look at aspects of that, you're going to learn that God was up to something much bigger in and around Joseph's life that Joseph did not understand, and yet God was bringing about fulfilling his perfect plan.

Here's what's true in our life.

You may face many, many different things that are difficult, hard, things that you go through that you don't want to experience, all of that.

And although they may not be an act of the will of God, it was allowed by God in your life.

And what we know by this is that God still will work all things for our good.

Those that love him, those that are called according to his purpose, no matter what we face or encounter, God will work for our good.

That is a guaranteed fact that you need to know.

Because when you go through these times, you're going to question the goodness of God.

You're going to question the presence of God.

You're going to question maybe even your faith in God.

But for those who keep their faith and trust in Christ, going through these difficult things, you will not lose your faith.

Your faith will actually be strengthened along the journey.

So let's look at a few of them.

Isaiah chapter 42.

You're going to spend a little time here in the Old Testament.

Turn with me back to the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah chapter 42, I want to give you a few moments to find that.

Some of you may not be that familiar with your Old Testament or maybe your Bible.

So we really encourage you here, if you please would, bring your Bibles every single week because that's really what we're here about is we're here to learn the Word of God together.

And so I want to encourage you to bring your Bibles and then navigate your way through it.

Listen, if you don't know Job from Job, it's no big deal.

we are all learning together, and don't worry about not getting to the spot quick enough.

And if you need to turn to your concordance, you can do that.

Or I could give you the page in my Bible, but you don't have my Bible, so it probably won't work.

You may not have my exact Bible.

Isaiah chapter 42.

We're going to look at verse 16.

Speaking of God's work in our life,

We read these words, Do you notice the I's in there, the personal pronouns of God speaking about what God will do?

God is going to do these things.

Not only will He lead the blind in the way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known, not only will He guide them, notice He says, "'I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground.

These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.'"

This is very encouraging for us to know about the nature and the character of our God.

Speaking here, yes, to the Old Testament saints, but this is a reminder, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He never changes, and we now are the people of God.

Same is true for us.

Romans 15, 4.

We looked at this briefly last week, but this is important for us to know.

People say, well, why would we read these stories in the Old Testament or the New Testament?

Why is this important for us?

Because we often forget that these are real people we're reading about living a real life in real time.

And we have a tendency, I think, to over-spiritualize their experiences with God as if somehow they had no questions about God or no concern for their situation or they knew God 100% was going to pull them through whatever they were going through.

No, these were real people just like you sitting in here this morning.

They had the same kind of life that you have, not in the same time, but they had the same worries, the same concerns, the same struggles, and they were having to, what, live by faith just as we are experiencing some very challenging things in life.

And so Paul writes in Romans 15, 4, he says, "...for whatever was written in former days."

The things written prior.

They're important.

Why are they?

Because Paul says they were written for our instruction.

So when we today later look at the life of Joseph, we're learning that God recorded the stories in Scripture for our benefit, for our instruction.

So we go there.

And we not only learn about the nature and the character of our God, but we learn about the response of God's people, the lives of God's people, how they lived, how they responded in faith, whether they did their sin.

They learn all these things.

And it's written for our instruction.

Notice, this is such an important thing, that through endurance, you know what endurance is?

Endurance is persevering through adversity, right?

And we need faith, perseverance, or endurance.

That's what James 1 talks about.

Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you face trials of many kinds.

For you know the testing of your faith produces endurance.

And endurance must finish its work so you become complete, mature, lacking nothing.

We're building up and growing faith, endurance, and these stories are written for our instruction so that through these stories, we too will have endurance knowing that we are going through the same things that many people of God have gone through throughout the millennia.

And it encourages us to know that we're not alone.

How many of you, when you go through a really difficult time, have a tendency to think that no one else is going through anything like you experience?

We all do.

We become self-focused and say, yeah, but they don't have my problems.

No, no, your problems are pretty common, really.

In fact, men of God and women of God throughout history have undergone some incredibly difficult things, and we are encouraged and we find endurance, the ability to endure through the adversity that we face in the stories that we read, when we hear about stories like Joseph and Shadrach, and we can go down the list of all these people in the Old Testament,

We read their stories, and we are so encouraged, and we continue in perseverance and endurance because we see what these people before us have endured.

And you go to Hebrews, read Hebrews chapter 11.

Man, you'll find great encouragement when you read through the hall of faith, if you will, and you read what all the men and women of God endured throughout the history and the millennia of God's people, and we find great endurance in that encouragement there.

And through the encouragement of the Scriptures, also, we might find what?

Hope.

We need hope, do we not?

We have great hope, and our hope does not disappoint us.

Our hope is not in something fictitious.

It's in the object.

It's in a person.

Our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all creation.

That's who our hope is in.

And we are living in a world without hope.

Do you not see that today?

Yes.

We're living in a world without hope.

And I'm telling you, from what Scripture teaches, there's going to be hopeless days in the last days.

But we Christians have hope.

And this is going to be a great opportunity for you in these times to share with people the hope you have in Christ.

Or have you ever had someone say, listen, I know you're going through a really difficult thing, or I've been watching you as I've watched you navigate the death of a child or a spouse or a physical thing, a health issue, whatever, and someone comes to you later and says, man, how did you go through that like that?

You didn't even know they were watching, but they were, and they were encouraged, and they were watching you, and they're like, wow, how in the world were you able to endure that?

How did you keep a good attitude?

How were you able to have joy?

What's this all about, and what do we do?

We tell them about the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

He is our hope, amen?

All right, Jeremiah chapter 17.

Jeremiah chapter 17.

I'm gonna read two verses here for you.

We're gonna look at verses seven and eight here.

Jeremiah 17.

You're real close to it there in Isaiah.

Jeremiah chapter 17.

I like to hear your pages whipping around over there.

It's good.

Jeremiah writes these words, "'Blessed is the man or woman who trusts in the Lord.'"

Man here is obviously speaking.

We've got men and women both here.

"'Blessed is the man and woman who trust in the Lord, who trust in the Lord.'"

Notice it's blessed is the one who does that.

"'He is like a tree, or he or she is like a tree planted by water.'"

that sends out its roots by the stream and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.

There is a great blessing for those who put their full trust in God, regardless of what you're going through.

These are the results of what you're going to find.

Your roots will grow down deep.

Doesn't matter how dry it may be.

You're going to flourish.

You're going to produce fruit.

You're not going to worry about things.

Why?

Because your faith and your trust is in the Lord.

These challenges that we find in the Old Testament and even in the New Testament of these ordinary people of God, they teach us about how we can respond and should respond when we go through very similar things in our own lives.

And then we're also gonna witness the faithfulness of God to his people.

How many of you here know that God is faithful?

How many of you know that people are not always faithful?

Yes, but God is.

It's His very nature.

He's faithfulness itself.

Now, if you would, would you flip all the way back to the very beginning, to Genesis chapter 37?

We're going to pick up a story here of a young man at the age of 17.

This young man, Joseph, is what we're going to look at here.

There's a lot of other stories that we could have used for our illustration this morning, but we're going to use the life of Joseph today to begin to kind of look at some of these things about how we trust God even when things are completely going the wrong direction in our life.

Now, Joseph is just 17 years of age, and we find him here on the pages of Scripture.

I mentioned to you earlier that he is one of the 12 sons of Jacob.

He is the grandson of Isaac, and he is the great-grandson of none other than the father of the faith, that is, Abraham.

And so now we're just now, Joseph being the fourth generation here away, we're reading about this young man, and no doubt Joseph would have grown up hearing some incredible stories about the God of Abraham, his great-grandfather, the God of Isaac, his grandfather, and the God of Jacob, his father.

No doubt he would have heard these stories as they were passed down to him, and they would share these words of encouragement.

It's awesome for us to have the opportunity to share with our own children these God stories that God has done in our life and to share with others for encouragement.

And we learn here in Joseph's story a great example of trusting God when life does not make sense.

I know that we're very limited in our own ability to understand what God is up to, His eternal purpose.

In other words, God's got a plan that he set forth in Christ before the foundation of the world.

God's plan is still happening in our modern day.

God is moving his plan to the day that he has established that he calls the day of the Lord.

And it is the culmination of all God's plan, bringing redemption throughout history, culminating it in Christ and then the kingdom of God being established and set up.

And as we look at what it will be here in the future, as we with Christ will rule and reign with him throughout all eternity.

This is something coming in the future, not yet.

Christ is ruling over his church.

He is ruling over his church from heaven, but yet we are waiting for Christ to set up and rule on the earth where scripture speaks about a future event where we will rule and reign with him as well, where he rules with a rod of iron.

That time is coming in the future.

But until then, we're learning to live and trust and walk with Christ and be obedient to his word as we live this life of faith here on earth.

So go with me to Genesis chapter 15.

We're going to open up with verses 13 through 14.

The reason I'm doing that is because I'm trying to show you a little broader picture of what God is up to here.

Joseph had no way of knowing that what he was getting ready to experience in the end would ultimately be bringing about the will of God and God's bigger plan.

He didn't know that.

But we're able to look back and get instruction from this.

Just like right now, whatever you may be experiencing, you don't understand or know the outcome of how this will work.

But Scripture tells us that God works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Even if you are experiencing at the hands of another individual, like Joseph, things that you didn't do, but you have to reap the consequences of those things.

Yes, it's horrible.

But...

God is God, and He has not left you.

He is with you, and He is working for your good in the midst of something that is very, very bad.

And that's what we're going to see God doing in the life of Joseph as well.

Notice this is part of a bigger plan of God.

In Genesis chapter 15, God is reconfirming or making a covenant with Abram, whom He gives the name Abraham.

The name Abraham actually speaks of being the father of nations.

I mean, he's fatherless.

He has no kids, and yet God says, no, I'm going to give you another name.

Your name's Abram, but I'm going to call you Abraham because I'm going to do something in you that is miraculous that only I can do.

Your wife is barren.

You are not going to have any children in your own posterity, in your own way.

But see, God is powerful.

He's all-powerful.

And in Abraham's world, there would be no way for this to happen, but yet God can do all things.

And so God makes a promise in a covenant with Abraham.

Abraham believes God, and he is counted as righteous because of his faith.

God's confirming this covenant, and this vision is happening here.

Now he's going to speak this for Abraham, and notice what it says here.

And it says, Then the Lord said to Abram,

Know for certain.

Don't you love words like certain, fact, guaranteed?

Don't you love that?

Because we're living in a time of what?

Uncertainty, untruth.

We're living in things that are flip-flopping and changing so fast and dramatically right now.

We know we love words like this.

God says to Abram, know for certain.

You can count on this.

Let me tell you something, Christians.

You can count on God to be faithful.

You can, for certain.

He says, know for certain that your offspring, oh, you mean those offspring that I don't have?

Yes, those offspring.

They will be sojourners.

In other words, they'll be travelers through.

They won't be their land, won't be their place, but they're going to be sojourners.

Did you know that you and I are a sojourner right now as Christians?

Men and women of God who have been rescued from the domain of darkness, transferred into the kingdom of the glorious Son, that we are now citizens of heaven, and this world is no longer our true home.

Do you know that?

Because we are awaiting for Christ to come.

That is our blessed hope.

The coming of our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So although we live in this world, this world is not our final home.

We are passing through.

And it's neat that you can understand that we are citizens of another country.

I get this every time I travel out of the United States.

When I show up in another country, I know immediately that I am not a citizen of that country.

I don't even drive on the right side of the road in many of those.

I don't speak their language.

I don't understand their government.

I don't understand all their religions.

But I realize when I fly into another country, I know immediately when I go through customs, I am not a citizen of this country.

But when I fly back home, there are two things that happen to me.

Number one, if it's been a 12, 15, however long flight it's been, we come in and I land in my wheels of the plane touch in DFW.

There is a calm sense that comes over me and a realization in this physical realm that I have landed at home.

And then when I go through customs, there's this big sign that is ahead that you walk through there.

And there's people from all different nationalities and countries coming through customs.

And you're walking through there and they're having to go off here, non-citizens and so on and so forth.

And there's a big sign ahead of me that says U.S.

citizen.

And dude, I get to march straight to that line.

Why?

Because I'm home and I'm a citizen of this country.

Same thing is true of us as Christians.

We are sojourners in this country, in this world.

This world's not our home.

That's why you don't feel at home in this world.

Anybody not feel at home in this world anymore?

Well, three of you do.

I'm really thankful for that.

No, we don't really, right?

There's many good things we enjoy in this life.

This world is good.

God created some incredible things for our enjoyment.

But as this thing continues to get more depraved and everything of these days, don't you just feel like you're not really at home in this world anymore?

There's a reason for that.

Because our citizenship is not here.

It's in heaven.

And from it, we await a Savior who is coming.

That is why.

So anyway, back to this.

God told Abram that your offspring, they will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs.

In other words, they're not going to be owners of that.

In fact, it doesn't get better.

It gets a little worse.

Notice what he says.

They will be servants there.

That word servants, actually, it is the Greek word avad, and it literally means enslaved, to be in bondage.

You know that great nation of people I promised you, Abraham, that would be part of your lineage, your posterity?

You know those offspring?

They're going to be sojourning in a land, Abraham, that is not their own.

And let me go ahead and tell you what else is going to happen.

They're going to be enslaved.

How would you like to hear that about the future of your children and grandchildren?

Well, we already are in this country, but that's another message.

Moving right along.

We're enslaved in many ways to so many things, but moving along, here we go.

And so he says that, that they're going to be enslaved and they will be afflicted.

Gee, that sounds like great things to hear about my future offspring.

He says they'll be enslaved and they're going to be inflicted for how long?

A week?

400 years.

400 years.

400 years.

Your children, Abraham, your offspring, are going to be enslaved in a foreign land that's not their own, and they are going to be afflicted for 400 years.

Wow!

But notice, God has a purpose in what He's doing.

Notice what He says, though, as God continues.

But I, God says, I will bring judgment on the nation that they are enslaved to.

God says I'm going to do it.

I'm going to judge the nation who enslaves your children's children's children's children's children.

I'm going to bring judgment to that nation.

And then notice what he says.

And afterward, they who, your offspring Abraham, who have been enslaved for 400 years, shall come out with great possessions.

Isn't that awesome?

And so in the bigger economy of what God is doing for his plan of redemption...

Abraham, who has a barren wife, who is now 75 at this point, I believe.

He's going to be almost 100 here when he gets ready to have his son, Isaac.

God does this miraculous work in this ability for Sarah to be able to bear children.

And now your posterity, all the offspring that I promised you that are coming, they're going to be enslaved for 400 years.

They're going to be inflicted for 400 years by this nation.

But I'm going to bring him to judgment and your kids, your posterity are going to come out of this place with all kinds of wealth and possessions.

Well, that's what brings us here to where we are now in Genesis chapter 37.

Don't forget that God is working a much bigger plan than you.

We get into the selfie mentality that it's all about me, all about I, all about me, oh my, oh why.

Like the old Toby Keith song.

We kind of get that mentality.

And yes, God loves and he is focused and he cares desperately about every individual.

It's very true.

He cares about you.

He extends grace to you.

He gives favor to you.

He blesses you.

He loves you.

He provides for you.

He instructs you.

He indwells you.

You're one of his children.

God cares greatly for you.

But God is up to something so much bigger than you.

But here's the other thing.

God is also using you as a small part of his much greater plan.

Your life will be used by God in a way that will tie together much of his bigger plan.

You're part of that.

You're part of that plan.

Is that not incredible that God would do that?

I was up there on this bear hunt and...

I come to find out as I'm just making communication because I talk to people, and there were several people there in that main camp, and I just begin to talk to them.

They ask me all kinds of questions, and we're talking, and all of a sudden they keep using the word bishop.

Well, my bishop, my bishop, and I'm thinking, okay, we've got a couple things here going on.

Either we're looking at a Greek Orthodox church here, or we're looking at a Mormon church, one or the other.

Well, come to find out that about 80% of the people that I was actually interacting with on a daily basis up there actually were Mormons.

And then the other 20% were just nothing really.

And man, by day two or three, I started realizing that God, I don't think you sent me up here to kill a bear.

Because I'm sure having an awful lot of conversation with people about you.

And these people are good people, but they're lost.

They believe in a false gospel.

They are deceived greatly.

And those long rides out at night, the guy that I was with, man, just how we start having these conversations.

I mean, it's pitch black.

And you just click clack and the stuff and just going along.

And then we start getting into these conversations.

And I've spent all day with this guy.

Now we're starting to open up and now we're starting to talk.

And now things are coming out.

And now God gives me the open door to start sharing the gospel with this guy.

It's pitch black, man.

We're riding along in the expanse of the mountain skies and the stars.

And they know words like Jesus Christ and God's son.

And they know words about crucifixion and resurrection.

And they know about sin.

And they know all these different words.

And they even believe Jesus is coming back again.

And, man, we're just covering everything.

And then God gave me the opportunity to just now I step in.

And now I'm able to just start addressing the false realities of their false religious system.

And I'm just be able to use scriptures and say, well, let me take you here to Romans or to John chapter one.

See, you all, they don't like to tell you this, but they believe that there's heavenly father, which was once a flesh and bone man.

Also has heavenly mother, his spouse, whom they have spirit children with Jesus just being one of them.

They don't tell you these things.

See, these are all these hidden things about these cults that are never brought in.

And I said, well, here's the first point we need to settle.

Is you all don't believe that the Bible is inerrant and infallible.

That it's the true word of God.

That you can trust it is all truth.

Well, he had to confess and say, yeah, that's true.

So you're putting all your trust in the Book of Mormon.

We have a problem here because if your whole religion is based off a man's vision...

What about the vision of Muhammad?

We have another whole religion based off and a Quran written from some vision that supposedly Muhammad had.

And we start getting into talking about scriptures and that Jesus Christ is God.

He's not just the Son of God.

He is God incarnate.

He's God in flesh.

He says, well, what do you mean He's God?

I said, well, let's go to John chapter 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God.

He was with God in the beginning.

And we just start going along there.

And God just gives me opportunity after opportunity, and we're just rolling through there.

Get back to camp, and people are just, it's just like, okay, God, I get it.

I came up here to kill a bear.

That's what I came up here to do.

But you had a bigger plan.

See, this is what I mean.

Joseph had no way to understand.

Even though God gave him some dreams, Joseph did not know that he would be the one, through all the hardships that he endured, to bring the rest of the twelve tribes down to the nation of Egypt.

And they would become a nation of people there, enslaved there for 430 years.

And then God would send Moses to come.

And God would lead his mighty nation of people out from the slavery of Pharaoh of Egypt.

Joseph had no way of knowing when his brothers literally sold him as a slave to some Ishmaelite travelers.

That God would use this to bring about his promise to Abraham and we are part of the very promise that he gave Abraham.

And what Joseph went through, we are beneficiaries of his experience.

You Christian have no idea what God is doing through you in the world and where you live and work.

where you play and have hobbies and where you take your kids and where you go, you don't know what God does in your life around you, but he uses you.

In your horrible experiences that you face, you don't know how God will use that.

Yes, it's horrible, and they're terrible, some of those things, are so painful to experience, but for those who trust the Lord, God uses these things for his glory.

You don't know how God will work that in someone's life.

You don't know.

This is the case of Joseph.

He's just 17 years old.

Do you remember when you were 17?

Dude, we were all just, oh my word, at 17.

And so here at 17, we meet this young man.

He has no idea what's going on.

In verse 21, we won't get through this today, but let's at least try some of it, okay?

I want you to be encouraged.

I want you to be encouraged, and here's what I want you to always remember.

Trust God no matter what.

If you don't understand, it doesn't matter.

Trust God anyway.

Trust God.

You can trust him, by the way.

You can trust him because of who he is.

In Genesis 37, 21 through 22, as we look through this story of Joseph here,

In fact, let me back up a little bit.

I want to show you a few things.

Let me make sure that... I'll make sure I don't have it down here and I'll cover it twice, but I don't think I do.

Yes.

So when you look here at the very beginning here of Joseph, you're going to find something interesting.

Joseph happened to be his father's favorite son.

Now, this is not a good thing, parents, to have favorites for your kids.

It creates problems, okay?

And so Joseph is very favored by his father because he's born late in his father's life.

And so his father actually makes for Joseph a very unique and special coat.

They wore these cloak things that covered them.

But it was so unique that it distinguished him from all of his other brothers.

In other words, every time his brothers saw him, because he's wearing this vibrant outfit that his dad had made for him, every time they saw Joseph, they saw their father's spoiled favorite son.

And it created all kinds of animosity between the brothers.

And they hated their brother Joseph.

They hated him.

And then Joseph gets these dreams.

God gives Joseph a couple dreams.

Now, there's something to note about having this.

This is not something Joseph conjured up.

This is actually a dream that God gave Joseph.

And Joseph being 17 does not use a whole lot of wisdom.

We don't share everything with everyone, folks.

in our lives.

We just don't do that.

So, here we go.

Let's look at the actual dream here.

Go with me to verse, chapter 37, verse 5.

I want to show you this dream.

Now, this is from God.

This is an important dream.

But this is from God, and dreams really meant something to people back in the day, as you're going to learn, that obviously not all of them probably were true.

They have dreams like we did, but this is a very specific dream that God gave to Joseph.

But listen to what it says in verse 5.

Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

He said to them, "'Hear this dream that I have dreamed.

Behold, we were binding sheaves in a field.'"

And behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright.

And behold, your sheaves gather around it and bow down to my sheaf.

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 for his words.

Probably not a good thing that Joseph shared that dream with his brothers.

Probably didn't go well.

They didn't appreciate that dream at all.

We know that for fact.

And then Joseph's father, Jacob, sends all his boys off to go take care of the sheep.

Sends them out.

They're out pasturing sheep somewhere, and they're away from home.

Been gone a while, but you know Joseph's not with them.

He's actually at home with his dad.

17 years old, he's plenty old to be out with the brothers tending sheep.

In fact, they would have done that at a very young age.

But he stayed home as a favorite of his father.

His dad says, hey, I've got some concern about the sheep.

I want to know whether the brothers are actually doing their job.

Are they doing their job taking care of the sheep?

Are they going to town?

What are they doing?

Come on.

Go check on the boys and go check on my sheep.

Come back and give me a report.

So Joseph does as his father says.

He goes off.

And as he makes his way where his brothers were, his brothers could see him coming a long way off and it must have been that stinking jacket that he was wearing.

It stood out like a sore thumb because it says they looked and they saw him coming and man, they conspired that they were going to kill their brother.

You talk about hatred, man, and animosity.

Now these are going to be the 12 nations of Israel, by the way.

Isn't that incredible?

God uses some pretty flawed folks, folks.

If you don't believe so, just look in the mirror.

Just look in the mirror.

Absolutely.

And so Joseph shows up.

They actually grab Joseph.

They strip the stinking jacket they hate off of him.

And there's this big cistern, and they throw him in the cistern, pull out the ladder if there is even one, and now he's down in this big hole.

He has no way to get out.

And the Bible even records, and there was no water in there.

Well, he has a brother, an older brother.

We have Reuben, and Reuben's supposed to be the keeper of the family here.

And so Reuben, he actually steps in and says, hey, whoa, listen, I know you hate that little runt, but let's not kill him.

Let's not kill him.

Let's do something else here.

Let's not kill him.

We don't want to do that.

And what you find here in this situation, Reuben may have been trying to protect his tail, being the elder brother, because he don't want to show up to dad and say, well, we killed the boy.

We lost the boy, whatever the story would be.

But God intervenes in his life, in Joseph's life here, through his brother.

And where these guys wanted to kill their brother, this intervention was a God intervention.

You know that.

Here's the thing about our interventions.

Do you know that very rarely do we ever get to see or understand when God truly intervened in our life?

He does it so often when you don't even have a clue that God has done it.

Whether it's your car didn't start, you get a flat tire, whatever happens, it's something goes on.

And we get all frustrated and think, man, I gotta get there, I got time.

Listen, you don't have a clue when God intervenes in your life.

That tire that was flat or whatever, that could very well have been an intervention by God to spare your life for something that could have happened that God sees the whole picture.

God intervened in Joseph's life here.

Why?

Because Joseph is part of God's plan, and so are his brothers.

God's working his plan, man.

Anyway, his brother Reuben here steps in.

We read about him.

In Genesis chapter 37, 21 through 22 says, but when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands saying, let us not take his life.

And Reuben said to them, shed no blood, throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father.

It's not because he loved the little runt, it's because he didn't want to get in trouble by the father.

In Genesis chapter 37, we're going to continue on here.

Verse 25 to 28 says, look what his brothers do next.

I mean, these guys are pretty heartless.

I know we have sibling rivalries, but this is pretty low.

His brothers then sat down to eat and looking up, they saw a caravan.

It's like, let's just go ahead and eat.

No big deal.

We were going to kill the little guy, but let's come up plan B.

They sit down to eat, gonna have a little grilled cheese sandwich and some goat, a goat cheese sandwich and some goat milk for lunch.

And they notice that there is coming from Gilead with their camels bearing a caravan bearing gun balm and myrrh and they're on their way to carry it down to Egypt.

Just look at the circumstantial things here.

You have to realize the details here.

God is in the details, do you know that?

He's in the details.

This caravan just happens to be coming along at just that time.

And lo and behold, what direction is the caravan going and where are they headed to?

To Egypt.

That's where they're going.

Then Judah said to his brothers, what profit is it of us to kill our brother and conceal his blood?

Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and let not our hand be upon him.

For he is our brother, our own flesh.

Isn't he such a good guy?

And his brothers listened to him.

Then Midianite traders passed by and they drew Joseph up and lifted him up out of the pit and they sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver.

That is actually the medium price for a slave.

They didn't make out like a bandit.

That's not what they made out like.

Joseph was sold for the median price of a slave, and now the caravan takes Joseph to Egypt.

Now, we don't know really.

You can almost in your mind picture what's going on here with Joseph.

He's 17.

He's not a kid.

He's almost a young man here.

I'm sure there's fighting going on.

He's trying to get free.

He's screaming.

He's hollering.

He's not like, okay, guys, I know God's got this.

Just go ahead and sell me as a slave.

No, that wasn't it.

Not it at all.

Joseph didn't know God's plan, but God is at work for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose, even in things that are not good.

But there's a very interesting place that we can go to in Genesis chapter 42.

If you'll turn over there in verse 21, we have now here, this is going to be over 20 years later.

Oh,

20 years later, as God begins to bring this whole picture into its circle.

A little over 20 years later now, we hear this from his brothers.

In Genesis chapter 42, verse 21.

Then they said to one another, in truth we are guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the distress of his soul.

That's pretty serious.

When he begged us and we did not listen.

So Joseph was distressed to the soul here, being sold as a slave.

You can only imagine what was going through his mind.

And he was begging his brothers, don't do this.

Don't do this.

Please, please don't do this.

This is where we see Joseph had no concept of

That God was gonna intervene here and that this thing was gonna work out the way that it did.

Here's the thing, you don't either.

But this is where trust in God comes in.

This is where faith in God comes in.

This is where we know and understand that our God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we could ask, think, or imagine.

We know that God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit are working for the good of those who love Him and are called according to their purpose in spite of what's going on in your life, in spite of whether you understand or don't.

God is still God and God is still at work.

This is a fact for us as Christians.

And we know that he was in great distress and so we see that was going on.

And then they go on and say, we have had dreams and they're, oh no, moving along, I'm getting ahead of myself.

So Joseph now goes down in the caravan and they come to Egypt.

He's a slave in the caravan, not a great place to be.

Can you imagine what's going through Joseph's life or his mind right now?

I mean, sometimes we have to use a little bit of our own imagination here to think about it or we get stuck into being so just like this is like fictitious stuff here.

It's real.

Joseph is on a caravan as a slave now headed down to Egypt.

And so we can imagine in his mind what he must have been thinking.

He may have had all these questions.

Well, what about this God that my great-grandfather spoke of that he encountered?

What about that God?

Where is he?

What about the God of Isaac or the God of my father, you know, the one that wrestled with God, Jacob?

What about all these things?

What about the miracle that God performed with a barren great-great-grandmother?

What about all these God stories I've been hearing?

Why is God not working in my situation?

You ever been there?

Now he shows up in Egypt, and now they put him on the auction block again like some cow going through some auction.

And the auctioneer begins to start raffling off a price, just rambling along.

Who will give X amount of dollars for this young, ruddy, handsome slave?

He goes from the father's favorite to a nobody, unknown slave in Egypt.

Can you imagine the depth of how that must have felt?

His own brothers who were supposed to love him the most actually were the ones that actually caused him some of the greatest pain.

How many of you have ever experienced that in life?

the very people that should be loving you the most, the very ones that should be protecting you, the ones that should be really rooting you along and cheering you on and wanting you to do better than they even do, they're sometimes the ones that create and cause the most pain in your life.

It's not how it's supposed to be, but it happens.

It's this way for Joseph.

Well, lo and behold, Potiphar, captain of the guard of the Pharaoh of Egypt, happens to be there and he needs a slave that day.

He buys this young man, takes him home.

We have a tendency to not really think through some of these things, but these things that happened to this young man were very, very, very real.

Joseph's now in a foreign land

He's been stripped of everything he knows, all the uncertainty of his life, all the disillusionment of family that have destroyed his own faith and all of that, just everything he was experiencing, and now he's a slave.

No rights, nothing.

He does whatever he's told, but Scripture tells us something very, very important about Joseph in this situation.

I'm going to end with this because we're drawing near into our time.

Let's see if we can get there here.

Turn with me, if you would, to the 39th chapter of Genesis, and we're going to go ahead and we're going to wrap up for today's time.

We'll wrap it up next week, hopefully, as we get through this.

In verse 1 of chapter 39, I'm going to read just this and we'll close out for today.

Now Joseph had been brought down into Egypt and Potiphar, the officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard of an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

But I want you to notice this.

I guarantee you Joseph did not feel like God was with him.

And there may be some times in your life, and you may be even experiencing that right now,

I don't know your story.

I don't know where you're at.

I don't know what's going on in each of your lives independently.

But I want you to know something.

God does.

And at Joseph's lowest moment, I doubt he really thought, you know, yeah, God, I can sense your purpose and plan here in my life.

I think I'm good to go here.

No.

We're told something, though, about the nature of our God here.

And we're seeing the predicament of God's people here, just like yours, but we're seeing now we're being taught and instructed so we might be encouraged so that we have endurance in these things.

Why?

Because there's going to be times that you're going to feel like God is silent, he is distant, he's nowhere around.

You're going to pray and it's going to be as if my prayers feel like they just go on through eternity, but they're never reaching anywhere.

You're going to question your faith from time to time.

God, do you even care?

Why would you allow this to happen?

God, if you would have been here, intervened, this would never have taken place.

God, if you really love me, would you ever let this happen in my life?

All of these things flood through your mind.

Don't think it wasn't any different for this young 17-year-old boy.

He wasn't more godly or more spiritual than you and I are.

He's an ordinary 17-year-old boy.

That's what he is.

but I want you to see where God was.

Notice what it says next.

The Lord was with Joseph.

These are things you have to know.

These are called fundamentals.

And when you get to a spot you don't know what to do, go back to the fundamentals every time.

Go back to the fundamentals.

I know God is faithful.

I know God is with me.

I know his word is truth.

I know if I apply the word of truth to my life, it brings a beneficial outcome.

I know that when I pray, my father hears my prayer.

You have to go back to the fundamentals every single time.

You've got to know the fundamentals and go to the fundamentals every time.

Because your mind and the voices that come in, people around you, even well-meaning people,

They have their own inputs, things you might read on the internet.

You name it.

You've got to go to the fundamentals of truth, man.

And we learn here something about the nature of God.

Christian, you have to know this.

In Joseph's life, at the most uncertain point ever in the history of his life, never had he experienced anything even remotely close to what he's enduring here.

You have to know something.

God did not abandon Joseph, and God will not ever abandon you.

Never.

God the Lord was with Joseph.

And notice, and he became a successful man forever.

And he was in the house of his Egyptian master.

His circumstance did not change, but God changed Joseph in his circumstance.

And God was not removing Joseph from the storm, but God, like the three Hebrew children, he entered into the fire that they were in.

You need to know this.

We all say, God, take me out of this.

Remove this from me.

I don't want to go through this.

God, it's painful.

It hurts.

I don't like this.

It hurts my wife.

It hurts my kids.

You name it.

Please, God, take this from us.

Sometimes God does.

Sometimes God does not.

Sometimes God is just with you through those things.

But what you have to know is that God is with you.

You have to know it.

Even, you say, I don't feel it.

Well, your feelings are feelings, man.

It's not about your feelings.

It's about the faithfulness of your God.

He is with you.

He'll never, ever forsake you.

He's never going to abandon you.

You may not understand why these things happen, and God may have only allowed them to happen because...

That's just part of living in a fallen world and you're maybe at the hands of someone else and you're living the consequences out and you're thinking to yourself, I didn't deserve this.

I didn't even do anything to make this happen.

Joseph didn't.

You say, yeah, but he was a punk kid that was spoiled.

Was that his fault?

He was just living his life, doing what his dad said to do.

His brothers hated him.

But listen, he didn't do anything to merit this, and he finds himself here in Potiphar's house.

But you know what?

The lowest point of his life, here's what you can never forget.

God is with you.

And here's the other thing.

For those in those moments who put their full faith and trust in Christ, listen to me.

God will work in that situation.

And what we find is there is something happening to Joseph here, and there is the favor of God being poured out into the life of Joseph, not by taking him out of his circumstance, but by God being with him in the midst of it all.

This is our God.

So I don't know today where you are.

Some of you have been there.

Some of you are there.

And all of us at one time will be there.

You need to know these truths.

When the darkest of the night comes, you have to know where your God is.

And he is the one that turns the darkness to light.

He is the one.

Well, I don't have time to finish it this morning, but hopefully we'll get to that next week.

I really hope that you find some encouragement in these things.

Maybe right now your life is hunky-dory, and man, thank God for that.

Praise God for the seasons of life where life is just good, amen?

But that's not how life goes all life long.

But here's the thing we have to know.

Your God never changes.

And the attributes of who He is never, ever, ever change.

And He is faithful in all things.

We have to know this to be true.

Well, I don't know.

I'm going to open up.

We have our lodge over here for some of you already know this.

We have our lay pastors, elders that go in there.

If any of you are at a, I don't know, maybe you just need someone to pray with you today.

Why is it that we feel like we have to go through all this stuff alone when we have the body of Christ as being part of who we are blessed to know?

Maybe you need someone to talk to this morning.

Maybe you just need some encouragement.

I hope you found encouragement in the scriptures this morning, in the word of God.

But if you do, there'll be people in there that would love to pray with you.

They're waiting in there for you.

They'll pray with you.

Maybe that's where you are this morning.

If it is, we'd love to visit with you and pray with you.

For the rest of you, I hope that you'll take these words and hold them tight this week as you go out into this world.

And remember, we're on a mission.

Every one of you are on a mission.

Those Mormons were talking to me about just recently coming back from their two-year mission.

I think, wow.

Is your mission over?

You gave two years, is that it?

As a Christian, we're on mission every day.

Our mission never, ever ends.

And you don't know what God's using you for in your life.

You don't know the person you talk with.

Something very lightly was said.

The seed was sown.

You just don't know what God is doing because his picture is so vast.

And you're just one small, tiny piece of what God is doing because only God can do that.

So think about those things this week.

Let's pray.

Father God, we love you.

Lord, I want to thank you for your word this morning, and I want to thank you for your people, Lord, that have gathered here in this place today.

And Lord, I pray that, God, your Holy Spirit would bring great encouragement to each of their hearts, Lord.

Regardless of their current situation, Lord, these truths are so powerful to know.

God, I want to thank you that you are faithful in all things, and that, God, you are always at work, and that, Lord, your word is true.

And Lord, that we can walk in obedience to your word and we find blessings when we do and we're blessed by it.

We thank you, Lord, that we are adopted as sons and daughters of the most high God.

Thank you, Lord, that we have access to you in prayer anytime.

NOTES: