

Brent Alderman
240.818.3053

brent.alderman@capitolcom.org

LOOKING UP WHEN YOU ARE DOWN (Genesis 37)

For our next series of studies, we turn to the Old Testament book of Genesis to consider some life lessons from a well-known political leader named Joseph. The story of his life has many twists and turns, ups and downs, treachery, jealousy, sexual misconduct, and a meteoric rise to high political office. In fact, God's plan through Joseph saved the burgeoning nation of Israel from extinction.

The narrative of Joseph immediately begins on a high note that crashes quickly.

Genesis 37:3, 4, 23, 24 - Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him... So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

YOUR PIT MAY BE AN EARNED CONSEQUENCE

At the start, the seventeen-year-old Joseph enjoyed the partiality of his father, Israel (Jacob.) His mother, Rachel, was Jacob's true love, securing his preferred status. The gift of a fancy coat as well as some dreams that Joseph had (foreshadowing that he would rule over his family) did not endear him to his older brothers. The favoritism, the coat, and the dreams were not Joseph's fault, but he may have shown a lack of humility that enflamed the brothers even more.

We, too, can bring about a "pit experience" in our lives by choices we make. Accepting our role in the consequences we pay will help us learn from our mistakes for the future. Let's take a warning from these verses from the Psalms:

*Psalm 7:14, 15 - Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. **He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made.***

YOUR PIT IS NO ACCIDENT

Another important lesson to keep in mind is that God is at work at all times. Without Joseph's time in the pit, as we will see, he wouldn't have made it to his heightened role later. When in the pit, remember with God there are no accidents. He does as he pleases.

*Isaiah 46:9, 10 - Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose,**'*

*1 Peter 5:10 - And after you have suffered a little while, **the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.***

YOUR PIT WILL ALWAYS HURT

How deep was the pit? Who knows, but it couldn't have been an easy fall. The passage points out there was no water. And there had to be great loneliness. Imagine Joseph's cries to his brothers from the pit. Later in Genesis, we're told again how much Joseph hurt.

*Genesis 42:21 - Then they said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that **we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen.**"*

Pits, by their nature, hurt. Realizing that God is still at work, even though there is pain, is a crucial lesson to learn while we're going through a time in the pit. And we all face it at some point.

YOUR PIT CAN LAUNCH YOU UPWARD

Joseph didn't know it then, but God had huge plans for him. The moment was painful and discouraging, but God is faithful and won't let his purpose fall by the wayside.

*Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you **a future and a hope.***

When Jeremiah wrote this prophecy, the nation of Judah was in exile and would be for another 70 years. But in their pit in Babylon, there was hope. David also knew what this was like:

*Psalms 40:1, 2 - I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. **He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.***

The story of Joseph is in the Bible for a reason: to teach us to trust God and to trump evil. What Satan intends for evil, God, the Master Weaver and Master Builder, redeems for good.

- Max Lucado -

YOUR PIT CAN PRODUCE TRUST

Even though he was just a teenager, Joseph was on a faith journey that would deepen his trust in God. This wouldn't be his only time in a pit or experience the feeling of being forgotten. But in the pain, he let his trust in God's purpose grow. We need to do the same.

When was your time in a pit? Or are you in one now? I had a leg amputated about five years ago, which was a definite pit experience. Looking back now, I can see that, even though the loss and adjustment was painful (physically and emotionally), there was a true sense of drawing closer to God, because He reminded me often that I wasn't alone and He would cause something better to come from it. Even if the scars are permanent, the increased trust in God is worth the time in the pit.

Every adversity that comes across our path, whether large or small, is intended to help us grow in some way. If it were not beneficial, God would not allow it or send it, "For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men" (Lamentations 3:33). God does not delight in our sufferings. He brings only that which is necessary, but He does not shrink from that which will help us grow.

- Jerry Bridges -

YOUR PIT WILL ALWAYS EDUCATE YOU

Sometimes, learning is a painful process. Your time in a pit will teach you if you let it. The lessons may not all come while you're in the pit, but they will come. God shouts to us in our hurt.

But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone...

- C. S. Lewis -

Years later, Joseph would understand God's reasons for his brothers' decision to throw him in the pit. In the meantime, he submitted to God's plan and trusted Him through the difficult times.

I have never heard anyone say, "The really deep lessons of life have come through times of ease and comfort." But I have heard strong saints say, "Every significant advance I have ever made in grasping the depths of God's love and growing deep with Him, has come through suffering." Samuel Rutherford said that when he was cast into the cellars of affliction, he remembered that the great King always kept his wine there.

- John Piper -

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 153, House Office Building