

Behind the Scenes: God's Story Through Joseph

Part 1

Genesis 39

Robert Morris – May 1, 2022

Well, good morning, Grace. One thing you might not know about me is that I loved to watch movies as a kid. And as a kid who grew up in the 80s and early 90s, I think I might have grown up in the golden age of movie making.

Now if you're a young person, hang tight with me. I'm going to sound like a bit of an old man right here. Your Marvel movies are great, I get it—so hang tight. So, the reason that it was so exciting to me is that I think that special effects were kind of becoming a thing. And I started to see some things with my own eyes that I didn't know how to comprehend. I didn't know how it was happening. I would just watch a movie sometimes and marvel and wonder, *How do they do that? I just have to know that.*

And the internet didn't exist yet, so I didn't have any clues. And as a normal kid growing up in Louisiana I had no connections to the Hollywood movie industry, so no one could give me the inside scoop of how they did that.

You see, I think there was a big difference between what I was seeing with my own eyes and what the director and the cast and the crew might have been seeing. I could see the end result, I could see the polished product, I knew some of the lines, I could memorize some of the story lines. But I had no idea how it was being done. I had no idea what was going on behind the camera.

Luckily, Google exists now and it helps me go back and learn some of these things. I'm going to give you a few examples. Here are a couple of great examples. Remember the classic movie *Ghostbusters*? Okay, yeah ... this is what I saw: giant marshmallow man terrorizing New York City. Oh, my goodness!



This what it looked like behind the scenes.



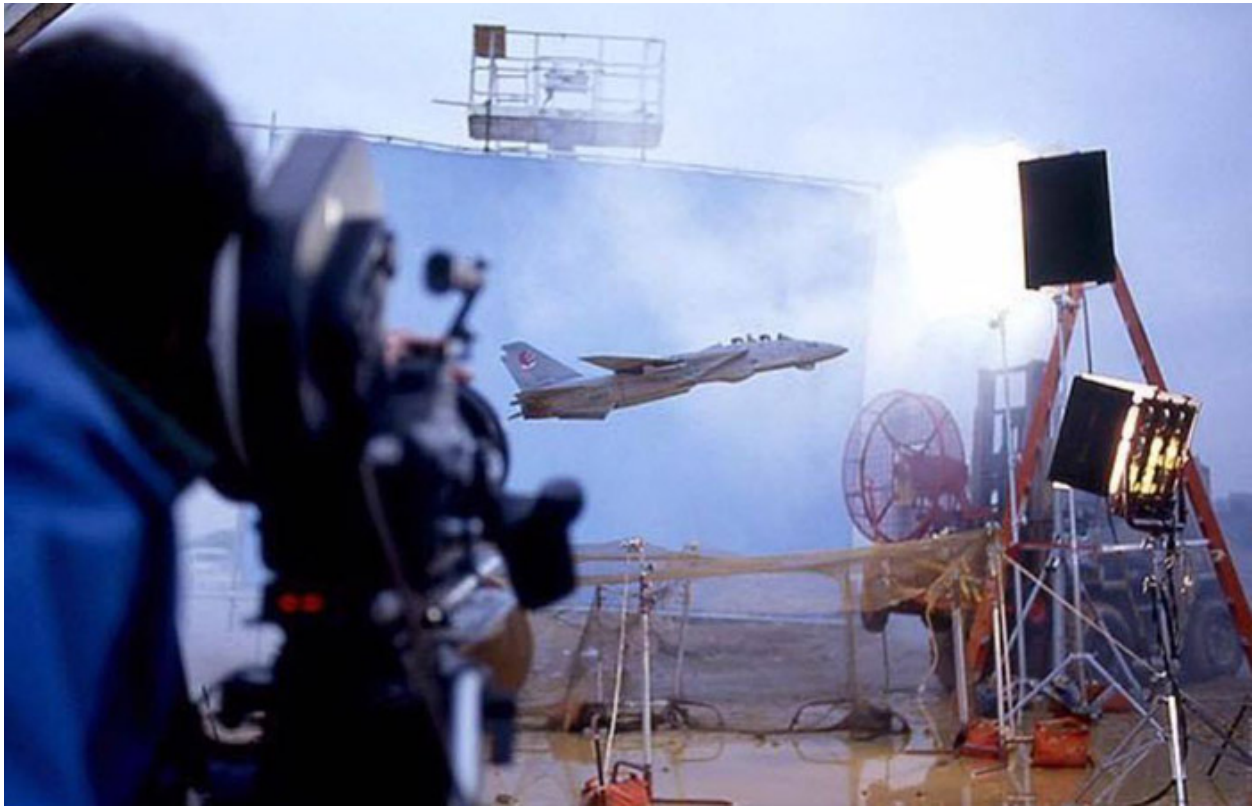
What about this cinematic masterpiece, *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*? This is what I had nightmares about.



Okay, but this is what it looked like behind the scenes.



Top Gun. Remember this, all these aerial maneuvers and dogfight scenes? All this awesome plane stuff?



Here's what it looked like behind the scenes:

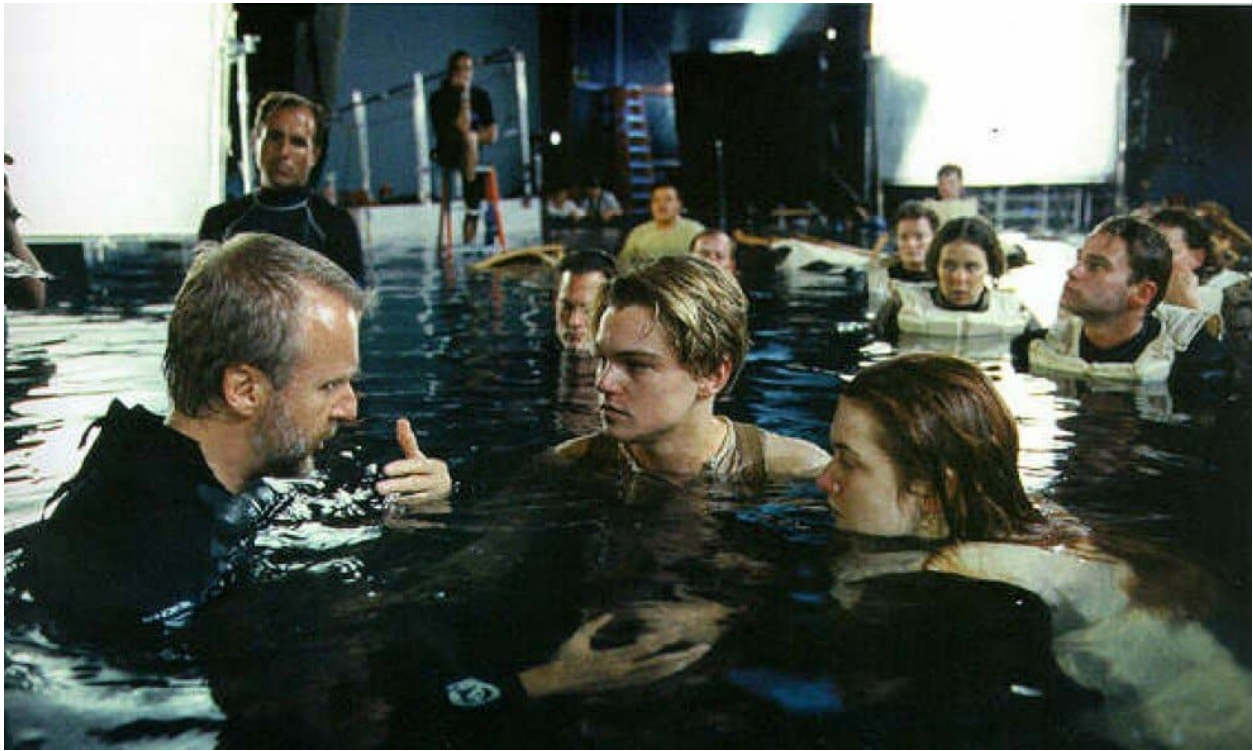


I know, we're losing some of the magic here. I'm sorry to be that guy with you here this morning.

Titanic—you may remember this epic scene:



This is what it looked like from a broader perspective: just a bunch of people in a pool.



By the way, Jack totally could have fit in the door, okay? That's just my opinion.

Here's the point. I had no idea how to comprehend what I was seeing. In some ways I was just ignorant to all the things going on behind the scenes that helped make what I was looking at.

And it's in that light that I want to spend the next few weeks together with you. We're going to go through one of the classic narratives of the Old Testament. It's probably one that you're kind of familiar with. But I want to spend a few weeks looking behind the scenes.

Personally speaking, this narrative is one of the hardest for me to get my heart around. My head gets it. I get what it's saying in principle. But my heart really does struggle with the full implications of this man's life, what it teaches us, and what it might mean for my life.

It's the Old Testament story of Joseph. Now this story, friends, is a literary masterpiece. It is full of callbacks and foreshadowing and word play and dramatic irony and symbolism all over the place. I mean, it is a fantastic story full of suspense and drama and generational sin and humor and secret identities and remarkable reversals of fortune. It really is a literary masterpiece and there's no wonder they've made movies and plays about this. It's this kind of riches-to-rags-to-riches-to-rags-to-riches back-and-forth kind of story.

But I need you to know right out of the gate that my conclusion is this. I'm going to let you in on what I think is the secret to this narrative; that this story is not about Joseph. As we're going to see, there is someone working behind the scenes. It's really a God story through Joseph.

And so, we find the story of Joseph. It starts in the Book of Genesis chapter 37 and goes through chapter 50. If you have your copy of the Scripture and you want to follow along with us today, that's where we're going to be. If you're not familiar with the Bible, Genesis is the very first book of the Bible.

Now this section, chapters 37 through 50, is fourteen chapters long. It is kind of a long narrative about God's continued dealings with the children of Israel and their establishment as a people. God has promised them some things; He's covenanted with them some things. And the really big question in the Book of Genesis is, How is this all going to work out? How is God going to get Himself out of this one? He's kind of painted Himself into a corner with these people, because as much as you I, they are terribly flawed. At every turn they keep trying to mess it up. It's almost like they are actively trying to ruin God's plan.

And every now and again in this long narrative, we get a real glance of what the main character is doing. It doesn't happen a lot. There's a lot of human activity here, a lot of striving, a lot of effort, a lot of manipulation, a lot of secrecy. But every now and again we get a glimpse. We get to kind of peek behind the curtain. We get to see what God is up to, what the main character is doing. What's He up to in all the midst of this human activity? God isn't mentioned that often, but when He is, we should pay attention. And we should realize, maybe at that same level, that the things He's doing in Joseph's life He may be doing in your life and mine as well.

So, I wish I had the time—I wish I had half a year to go down into all the awesome, wonderful tidbits and details of the story. We just have these three weeks together.

Now, before we get started, I have one ask, one request of you. And it's this. As we take this trip through the narrative, I would love it if we could fight the urge to kind of go to the end of the story. Many of you have read this, you've read it multiple times, you've heard sermon series on it, you're very familiar with this. And our natural tendency is to want to go to the end of the story. But I think it would be better for us to kind of sit in it today with Joseph.

There's this quote from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat* where the narrator is trying to encourage the imprisoned Joseph to not despair too much, because he says, "We've read the book and you come out on top." But you and I don't

have that benefit. Our stories are still being written, our books are still unfolding. So, I think it would be better for us and wiser for us today if we could sit in it with Joseph and maybe ask God to give us some new lessons or some fresh perspectives that we might gain as we travel through this narrative together over the next three weeks. I know that's going to be hard to do, but let's give it our best effort.

So, here's the plan. I'm going to go ahead and give it to you right out of the gate. Here's the big idea, the outline, for the three weeks that we're going to spend together.

There are three times in three different chapters in this narrative where God shows up. Only at certain moments do we get this peek behind the scenes. When God does show up in the text, what He's doing, His activity, is repeated multiple times so that we don't miss the point. The author is saying, like a flashy billboard, *Don't miss this. Don't miss this! Pay attention here to what God is up to in the midst of this story.*

It's actually one of the hallmarks of the Hebrew literary style that repetition is for the sake of emphasis and for the sake of heightening the message. So, we're going to spend time in three different chapters: chapters 39, chapter 41, and chapter 45.

So, let's dig in. Each week we're going to spend just a little bit of time—I'm going to try to catch you up as briefly as I can with some of the narrative things that are happening, some of the things that are happening in the human portion of the story. For example, what's happening on the stage in front of us? And then, as we come to the moments where God shows up we'll slow down and try to make sure we don't miss the point here.

Now when we meet Joseph in chapter 37 of the Book of Genesis, his family is full of conflict and dysfunction. We have a patriarch, Jacob, who has twelve sons with multiple different women. They all live and work in the same area. And the children of one particular wife, Rachel, are the favorites and get this kind of preferential type of love. It sounds almost like the start of this really bad reality show, but it's in the Bible. And it gets even worse from there.

Joseph is given special gifts by his father—again, this preferential type of love. And Joseph is the kind of young man who is giving bad reports about the work his brothers are doing. And he has these God-ordained moments when he has these dreams, these God-given dreams where he comes to believe that one day his entire family will come and bow down to him. One day he will rule over them in some way.

He has this sense of divine destiny, but he also has this total lack of self-awareness to actually tell his brothers about this. It's like this: *Hey, guys, gather around. Hey, I know our family situation is super volatile right now, like C4 and fertilizer and gasoline, but hey, here's some fire ... right into the middle of it!*

And so, envy and jealousy and strife and tension ... everyone's flaws are on display. Jacob is this loving father to some of his children, but he's kind of passive and indifferent to others. And friends, if anyone should have known the danger and the harm of parental favoritism in the life of a family, it should have been Jacob. That was his story as well. But the generational sin continues on and on.

Reuben is this firstborn son who's a failed leader of his brothers. Judah is cold and calculating. Joseph, although he's depicted as morally good, gives the impression that he's a little bit immature, maybe bratty. At minimum he's woefully unaware of how his actions are impacting other people around him. Hatred and deception are the traits of God's chosen family. It's not really a Christmas card kind of feeling.

And so, it comes to a head, this kind of growing family dysfunction and conflict. And Joseph's brothers devise a plan to kill him. But at the very last moment, one of the brothers steps in and says, *Hey, guys, I know we could kill him. I totally want to kill him, okay. But what if we made money off him?* And so, they sell him to a passing caravan of slave traders, they lie to their father, they grab his coat and cover it in blood and tell him an animal destroyed him. And he ends up in Egypt of all places.

And then, after kind of a brief narrative aside in chapter 38 about Judah, one of Joseph's brothers, and his own dysfunctional family, we get to the beginning of chapter 39. Joseph has been sold to an Egyptian official named Potiphar and he's serving as a slave.

And it's here that we get our first moment, our first behind-the-scenes peak at what God is doing. And the author does not want you to miss the point. And so, four times in this chapter he's going to repeat this one phrase so that you don't miss it.

Genesis 39:1-3

Now Joseph has been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. ² The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

And it starts this way in chapter 39. The first two times we get it right out of the gate. Chapter 39: “Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, and bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.”

Now, a few things of note here. The author wants to be really clear about who’s involved here. Those all-capitalized versions of the word “LORD” that you see in your Bible—that’s actually the very specific and very special word for Yahweh God. The author’s very clear that the God of the universe is with Joseph and He’s showing him favor because He’s with him.

The Lord is the one causing Joseph to succeed. And so, before you attribute this success to Joseph’s ability or talent, he wants to make sure you don’t miss who’s behind it all, who’s causing everything to succeed for Joseph. Because it’s going to appear as if Joseph has this kind of golden touch throughout his story. But it’s God doing this. He’s the one really causing it. It’s Yahweh God with him and His presence with him.

Now, I always find it especially powerful that even Potiphar could recognize that God was with Joseph. So, the outside world notices when the hand of God is on someone. It’s obvious. Even a pagan outsider can know and sense and see the presence of God with someone.

But as you keep reading chapter 39, the tables are turned. Joseph is kind of working his way up in the organization, and then all of a sudden, we have this account of a false accusation made against the morally upright man. Joseph does nothing wrong.

It’s the second time in his story that Joseph’s cloak or his robe is going to be used against him to lie about him. And he finds himself unjustly and undeservingly in jail. And I’m sure he

was wondering, *What about those dreams, God? Is this really what you had destined for me? Was that some kind of cruel joke?* I'm sure there were moments when he was full of anger and maybe resentment and bitterness and cynicism.

There have been these times in my own life when someone else's choices, someone else's sin, left this kind of wake of bitterness and despair in my heart, and it-doesn't-feel-like the-Lord-is-with-me kind of moments.

But you need to know that before you come to the conclusion that the Lord was only with him in the rise or in the success---the author makes sure you know that even after this false accusation (he faithfully runs from temptation, he honors God, he does the right thing)—before you draw the conclusion that somehow God deserted him, the end of chapter 39 also wants to make sure you know this.

Genesis 39:21-23

But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.²² And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it.²³ The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

In verse 21 of chapter 39 it says this, after he goes to jail: “But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.”

Now, chapter 39 as a whole ... four times, two in each bookend of the chapter, it's very clear that the Lord was with Joseph, and in very different sets of circumstances: in the kind of rise and success in the organization, and also in the fall, God is with him. And so, don't pass this over too quickly, because it's going to seem like there are years of a man's life wasted because of evil done to him. This is not a happy story right out of the gate.

And the most haunting part and maybe the most intriguing part to me, and the part that I'm having a hard time wrapping my heart around, still, as a believer after all these years, is in verse 21 when it says, "But the LORD was with him and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor ..." in jail. Those last two words were mine. The Lord was with him and showed him steadfast love and favor ... in jail. And that word "steadfast love" is a beautiful Hebrew word. It's one you're going to read all over the Old Testament. It's a beautiful word with a rich history. It's the word *hesed*. And it's this kind of loyal love, the loyalty of a covenant partner. It's this faithful, reliable, unfailing, unshakable kind of love.

God never left him. He showed him kindness and mercy and steadfast love. It's very clear. This book ends the chapter in both places, both in the ascension to a higher position and success that was evident to everyone around him, and also in the pit and dungeon of false imprisonment and no justice whatsoever. Yahweh God was with him. He was not alone. He was not left to fend for himself. God was with him.

So, I think this is one of those moments when we have to fight our urge and be really careful to kind of go to the end of the story and think, *Well, it all works out for Joseph in the end*. No, let's sit in this moment, friends. I know we tend to remember the middle of the story in light of the end of the story. That's our tendency. But that is not how Joseph experienced this. He spends a decade in slavery, faithful service, maybe, hoping for a way out, only to go to prison to waste away, his good years gone. We see these years, these slavery and imprisonment years, this whole saga of dreams, slavery, prison ... this was age seventeen to thirty of Joseph's life. Many of his prime years ... wasted. At least that's what it looks like on the stage. But the payoff—the only clue we have is that the Lord was with him causing him to succeed.

Now, here's the big question. It's kind of this idea of *What am I going to do with this flashing billboard, this kind of obvious message that the Lord was with Joseph? What do I need to learn here? What do I need to take away? How might I need to apply this in light of this clear message of chapter 39?*

And as I read and studied and thought and prayed about this passage, there were three things that came to mind: three truths from chapter 39 that I think we can hang our hats on, and then the corresponding applications that make sense in light of those truths.

Application #1: Believe That God Is with You

So, the first one is ... What if you could, friends ... what if you could believe that God is with you? What if you could believe that God was with you and you could let that truth sink deep, deep down into your souls?

Do you tend to see God as with you or do you tend to feel like you're walking this life all alone? Can you see the hand of God in your success in this life, if that's your story? Maybe it wasn't all you. And conversely, can you see the presence of God showing you His steadfast love and mercy in hard times that you're currently going through? Could you see Him in those moments? And He's given you glimmers of His presence with you.

Now, I don't have a story of thirteen years of slavery and prison, but I do have this story about four months in 2012. I know, it's not a long time, it's really a short amount of time. It's probably because the Lord knows who He's dealing with here and He knows how weak I am and how capable I am. I vividly remember this time in my life, the first four months of 2012. And I want to tread lightly here, because I know and love the people involved in this story and I still very much care for them. And one of the things that I've learned in my life is that most of the time, every bump up in leadership that I've gotten, I realize that the decisions made at those higher levels of leadership are always more complex and challenging than I thought they were from my vantage point down in the organization.

What happened was that after seminary I was serving in a church. And towards 2010 and into 2011 was probably one of the rockiest patches in this church's existence. There were some struggles and I don't have the time to go into all that. It was really tough sledding. And in the midst of those couple of years, a number of staff members and friends of mine kind of bolted and said, "That's enough. I'm out." And through this rough patch I stuck around and stayed. I attempted to serve well. I really did try to be as loyal as I could. But the damage of that tough season in this particular church and in this local body of Christ was done. And the trajectory of the church wasn't trending in the right direction. And what happened was, just financially speaking, the church couldn't sustain the level of staff that it currently had. And so, it came down to this moment where it was going to be me or the other guy—one of us was going to get the axe.

And, of course, ... right, friends ... this is all knowledge after the fact ... I would not have described this like this on the Tuesday that this all happened. They picked the other guy.

And there I am. It's January 2012. I've got a three-month-old baby, a wife of a few years, no job, having all of the feelings of *How does this make sense? God, is this how loyalty and longsuffering and faithful service going to be rewarded?*

But friends, the reason I tell you this story is because here's what I remember about those four months. I cannot point to many more times in my life when I felt the Lord's presence in real and unique ways than in those first four months of 2012. He was so kind to me in those next few months as we had to figure out what we were going to do with our lives and how we were going to buy diapers and formula, when the money was going to run out, how we were going to pay the mortgage, if we were going to have to move cities or not move cities, what jobs were we going to have ... all of these things.

And again, I don't remember many of the details. It was a blur, probably because we had a newborn in the house. But I will never in my life forget the sense of peace that God was with me in unique ways. He was real to me in those four months while our life was in complete upheaval. He was with me. He made a difference. It was just a small taste. I've got countless stories of this in my life, and you probably have countless stories of this in your life as well.

And it's ironic, but there's this truism (at least in my life) that we tend to feel the Lord's presence most when we're in the most difficult seasons. It just seems to be the reality. I think it's because in those seasons we're more desperate for that, or maybe we're just more attuned to that need in our hearts, our hope that we're not alone.

Friends, what kind of confidence could you live with if you knew that God was with you? That right now, if you're having success, if things are going well for you, God is with you? He's causing that. He's showing you steadfast love and favor. And you're going to be tempted to live like it's your doing or that you don't need His presence. That's just your brokenness coming out.

And right now, if you're in a season of pain or hurt or despair or trouble or injustice, He's with you. And I know it doesn't feel like it. But maybe there might be some glimmer of His steadfast love or His favor peeking through. He's with us on both sides of that coin, the very same God. He hasn't left. He's still where He's always been.

And so, my encouragement to you is that if you're having a hard time believing that the Lord your God is with you; if you're struggling to believe that right now, I think there's maybe one application that I would ask you to do, one thing I'd like you to do this week. Just do this. Just do a quick search of all the verses in the Bible about the Lord being with His people. Get on

Google and type in “verses about God being with us.” It will take you a long time to exhaust the list, friends. It will take you a long time. You will be overwhelmed. It’s almost as if the God of the universe knew that would be a truth that we would need to hear over and over and over again. And so, He put it all over the Scriptures for us.

In success, believe the Lord is with you. I know it looks like you’re doing awesome. You’re doing all the heavy lifting, right?

And in hard times, believe that the Lord God is with you. I know it’s hard because of all the lies, because of all the heartache and the pain, and you’re struggling to sense His nearness and His presence, but the Scripture is clear. We have a God who says, “I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.” We have a Savior who promises us that He will be with us even to the end of the age.

And so, believe that God is with you, friend. Believe that God is with you and live your life accordingly.

Application #2: Trust God for Success

And then as you do that, the second thing you could learn to do, the second application is to trust God for success. Trust God for the success. I think one of the reasons we’re so enamored by the Joseph story, why so many of us love it, is because it’s a story of faithfulness and longsuffering and serving these evil masters well in spite of injustice. And when I think of Joseph’s story, I think of how easy it would have been to just give up after this false imprisonment and being lied about, or just giving it up in year two of slavery, or year five, or year seven.

And frankly, I’m not sure how Joseph didn’t succumb to massive amounts of despair in that thirteen-year journey that he’s going on. I have no concept of how he stayed trusting during all of those days.

Because the hard truth of this story is that Joseph did not get the results—at least in the short term—that he wanted or that he deserved. But he held onto his integrity, he held onto his faithfulness. And it was not rewarded in the short term. It was not rewarded on his timetable.

Faithfulness is always worth it. We learned this last week with Pastor Matt. “Do not grow weary in doing good ... at the proper time, you’ll reap the reward if you do not give up.”

Faithfulness is worth it, even if it does not pay off in all the ways we think it should pay off. God doesn't forget. You're not alone.

I love Joseph. He never trades away his integrity. Integrity with God is always better than compromise without Him. Integrity with God is always better than compromise without God, so keep being faithful, men and women of Grace, one foot in front of the other, one day at a time. Trust God for the result.

And your application this week if you're feeling the Holy Spirit say, *Yeah, that's the one, Robert*, might be this. Would you just ask yourself this question and give yourself the time to reflect this week sometime, maybe on a car ride somewhere, maybe in the shower, maybe in your normal quiet time with God. Maybe ask this question: *Where do I need to keep being faithful to God?* Or the question I like, the other part of that, the flip side of that is, *Where am I close to giving up because I'm not seeing the results in the short term? And where do I need to trust God for that result?*

Application #3: Rest in His Steadfast Love and Mercy

And so, friends, if you can believe the Lord is with you and you can learn to trust God for the results, I think the final consideration or application for this morning is this. Could you just rest in His steadfast love and His favor and His mercy to you? Could you rest in that? This is a question that's haunted me as I've read Joseph's story, and I'm still working through it. And I want to share this with you. Would you be willing to gladly welcome and accept that you would rather have a painful, hard life with God than an easy, comfortable, safe life without Him? Would you rather have a painful, hard life with God or a comfortable, easy, safe life without Him? Maybe you can consider that question with me this week.

Here's one of the things that I've noticed in my short time on this earth, that the saints with the depth of relationship with God that I admire the most, the ones with the richest and most vital spiritual lives, almost to a person, have stories of sitting in the metaphorical prisons of this life. They may have lacked resources, but they never lacked spiritual power. They may have lacked notoriety or fame or the " 'atta boy's of this world, but they received heavenly ovations that would deafen you. They may have lived with pain, but they know this simple joy of having God with them. They may be dealing with lifelong battles of some sort, but they know that His

grace is sufficient. They have no clue what God is doing in their life, and yet they sleep really well in His arms knowing that He's in control.

The saints I admire, some of whom are still with us, and some who have met their Creator already, have this deep sense of knowing that God is with them. It fuels them, it's what they want. They'll go anywhere, they'll do anything just for one more hit, one more taste of God being with them.

Most Christians prefer the better life of God's blessing over the better hope of his presence.

--- Ken Boa

There's an incredible quote that Ray shared with me this week while I was talking about this message and going through what my plans were. And it's hasn't let me go yet, and so I'm going to share it with you. It says this: "Most Christians prefer the better life of God's blessing over the better hope of His presence."

And it begs this question: What do you want out of this life? All the blessings of God and none of the pain? Here's the thing. We get that sometimes. God is so gracious to us that we live in relative comfort and ease some of the time. Or would you rather have His presence with you and that's all the blessing you need? I'm saying yes, I'd like both, please. Okay? But I hope that if it came down to picking, I want to be the kind of man and I want us to be the kind of people, Grace Covenant Church, that pick His presence with us over His blessings toward us.

And so, in chapter 39 of Joseph's saga, we get this, *Oh, I see what's happening here moment. I see what's going on. I'm supposed to take away something here, that God was with Joseph.* And so, believe, friends, that the Lord is with you. And trust Him for success. And if you're in a hard time or a prison-like time in your life, rest in His steadfast love and His mercy.

So, we have this man Joseph, right? So much promise, selected from an early age to lead, given a vision of his life in these dreams. But he's betrayed by his own family, he's spent more than a decade in slavery and prison. And friends, Joseph has no clue why this is happening. He doesn't know all that's in the works. And he doesn't know the end of the story.

He's had all of these amazing dreams of what he thinks is to come for his life, and yet he's met with this set of circumstances for almost a decade and a half of his life. He's a character in this play. He hasn't read the full script. And he sits, not knowing, having no clue what's happening behind the scenes. But the one thing we do know is that the Lord was with him. The Lord was WITH him.

And I'll plead with you today, men and women of Grace, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and you're one of His disciples, Jesus Christ himself promised you that His Holy Spirit is with you; that He can indwell you; He can come alongside you; He can help you.

And I know that many of you—I don't even know how many—are in dark places, the dungeons and prisons of this life, the slaveries of this world, sometimes by your own choices and sometimes by the choices of others. And you sit in it. And I want you to believe that the Lord is with you. And I want you to believe and I want you to live like it's true. In the highs and lows of life, in the rise to prominence and promotions, and also in the dungeons of hardship, the Lord is with you. His steadfast love and His mercy can sustain you.

And friends, you want His presence. More than anything this world can offer, you want His presence.

And so, for next week, Joseph, God's in jail—or, not God's in jail, Joseph's in jail. Well, I guess God is in jail, right? He's with him. I think that works. I think I didn't mess that up too much theologically, right? God is with him in jail. He's not alone. But for how long? How long will the righteous suffer? *God, are you going to intervene in his story or not? I know you're the main character, but what are You doing in these bit characters' lives?*

And we'll save that for next week. Let me pray for us.

Father, we come before you, God, just humbled and amazed by the knowledge that You are with us. God, we dare not take it for granted and we dare not try to live this life apart from Your presence with us.

We ask right now, God, that Your Holy Spirit would take these truths and plant them deep within our hearts, so that we might live in light of these glorious realities and trust, God, both in the successes of this life and the prisons of this life, that You are with us.

We love You, Father. Thank You for the gift of Your Son who has purchased for us the gift of Your presence for us. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.

