

CLINGING TO HOPE

STUDY SIX

When God Gives Grace to Endure

Genesis 45:1–8; 50:18–21

God gave Joseph a long-range view and delivered him from the narrow tunnel of his past.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

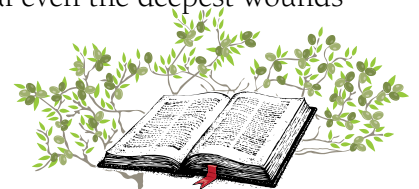
As a teen, Joseph had dreams—vivid, God-given dreams. They foretold that he would be a ruler someday and that his family, including his older brothers, would bow down to him (Genesis 37:5–11). But then, Joseph’s bright future seemed to vanish in a dark cloud of unimaginable abuses that swept over the young man’s life.

Consumed by hatred, Joseph’s jealous older brothers grabbed him to kill him. At the last minute, they decided to sell Joseph to slave traders instead. To cover their sin, they soaked Joseph’s coat in blood and led their father to believe a wild beast had devoured his beloved son (37:18–33).

Carted to Egypt, Joseph was auctioned off as a house servant. He worked hard and rose in favor with his new master, Potiphar. However, without provocation, Potiphar’s wife made sexual advances toward Joseph, and when Joseph refused, she spitefully accused him of attacking her. Potiphar had innocent Joseph thrown into prison (39:1–20).

How impossible Joseph’s dreams must have seemed to him as he sat day after day in his dingy, rat-infested cell . . . *nursing a grudge against those who had done him wrong and bitterly plotting his revenge*. At least, that’s what we’d expect him to do, right?

But, in fact, God gave Joseph grace to endure his abuses and even rise above them. This *Searching the Scriptures* study traces the rest of Joseph’s story, leading up to the redemptive moment when God made Joseph’s impossible dreams possible. It’s a thrilling account of how grace can heal even the deepest wounds and how God can turn offenses against us into something good.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Ask the Lord to reveal His care for you through the account of Joseph’s abuse and recovery. In the space below, write a prayer that He will redeem your past, heal your wounds, then help you see His perfect plan for your life.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Up to this point, Joseph’s life story was a downward spiral of injustices. Let’s see how God remained with Joseph even when all others abandoned him.



Observation: The Lord Was with Joseph

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method, a crucial first step is observation, which involves examining the text as if we’re looking through a magnifying glass. What specific abuses did Joseph suffer?

A Tragic Account of Abuse

Read the verses in the list below and write down what form of abuse Joseph suffered. The first two are filled in as examples.

- 1) Emotional and verbal abuse: “His brothers hated Joseph. . . . They couldn’t say a kind word to him” (Genesis 37:4)
- 2) Murder conspiracy: “Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns” (37:20).
- 3) _____: “His brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern” (37:23–24).



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- 4) _____: “Joseph’s brothers . . . sold him to [the Ishmaelites] for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt” (37:28).
- 5) _____: “The brothers . . . dipped Joseph’s robe in [goat’s] blood” and “sent the beautiful robe to their father” (37:31–32).
- 6) _____: “The Midianite traders . . . sold Joseph to Potiphar” (37:36).
- 7) _____: “[Potiphar’s wife] kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her. . . . She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, ‘Come on, sleep with me!’” (39:10, 12).
- 8) _____: “‘That Hebrew slave you’ve brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me,’ she said” (39:17).
- 9) _____: “[Potiphar] took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king’s prisoners were held, and there he remained” (39:20).

Joseph endured some of the worst forms of evil that humans can inflict on one another. Assault, fraud, confinement, kidnapping, human trafficking, sexual harassment, false accusation, and more. What impacts you most about this list? How would you have responded if you had been Joseph?

What a shock for Joseph to go from favored son to forsaken boy! From a pampered child to an enslaved, unknown, young man. How easy it would have been for him to nurse a grudge and lick his wounds as he rehearsed his abuses, none of which were deserved.

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An Inspiring Example of Character

And yet, as deep into the pit as Joseph descended, he never sunk into despair. What clue does the text give as the source of Joseph's stability during his storms? Read [Genesis 39:2](#) and [39:21](#).

Although people betrayed Joseph, God walked with him each painful step of the way. What character qualities did Joseph's closeness with God display? Draw your answers from Joseph's integrity while in Potiphar's household and while in prison ([39:2–9](#); [21–23](#)).

All the abuse, the wrongs, the false accusations. Joseph was forgotten in prison. Yet, not a word of bitterness came from him. He was saying, "I serve a faithful God who knows everything and has a plan beyond what I could ever imagine." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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A Providential Rescue through Dreams

Joseph’s dreams and their fulfillment played a crucial role in God rescuing Joseph from prison and, ultimately, rescuing Joseph’s family from famine in Canaan. They also testify to Joseph’s *intimate walk with God*, which is both the reason for Joseph’s survival and success in Egypt and the secret to his positive and indomitable attitude.

In the following chart, write down the elements of the dreams and the interpretations.

| Verses | Dream Elements | Interpretation |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Genesis 37:5–11</i> | | |
| <i>40:5–23</i> | | |
| <i>41:1–36</i> | | |

“Interpreting dreams is God’s business” (Genesis 40:8), Joseph told his prison mates. What did Joseph say when Pharaoh asked Joseph to interpret his dreams, according to *41:16*?

When he interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams, Joseph made it clear that he was merely God’s mouthpiece. Pharaoh, who was considered a god by the Egyptians, marveled at Joseph’s connection to the one, true God: “Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?” (41:38).



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God moved the hand of Pharaoh to rescue Joseph from prison and give Joseph a God-ordained mission. What was this mission, according to *Genesis 41:37–57*?

When famine struck, Joseph's brothers, humbled by hunger, came to Egypt for food. Fulfilling Joseph's prophetic boyhood dreams, his brothers bowed before the one they had abused. Instead of taking revenge, however, Joseph took his family under his care and gloried in the providence of God who had brought good from evil (chapters 42–46).



Interpretation: God Intended It All for Good

In the interpretive phase, we seek to understand the meaning and significance of Joseph's life story. The key to understanding is found in a statement Joseph made to his brothers after they moved to Egypt: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good" (Genesis 50:20).

What had just occurred before Joseph made this statement, according to *49:33–50:13*?



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What were Joseph's brothers afraid of after their father died, according to *Genesis 50:14–18*?

How did Joseph reassure his brothers, according to *50:19–21*?

What was Joseph's view of God that made it possible for him to forgive his brothers?

Joseph told his abusers, in effect, "You weren't in charge of my life; God brought me here, and His plan is right!" At the core of Joseph's faith was an unwavering trust in the grace and goodness of God.

This is the same man who was hated by his siblings. Same man who was abandoned and sold. Same man who was falsely accused of rape, thrown in prison, and left to die. He was the same man who had the chance to get even but said, "Am I God, that I can punish you?" . . . Grace was the one concept the brothers could not fathom.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: God Offers Grace

What do the following verses say about the healing power of God's amazing grace toward those who sin and those who suffer?

2 Corinthians 12:9

1 Peter 5:5–7

*Joseph offered to his brothers the same grace God gave him, and they struggled to receive it.
How long will it take you to reach out and accept God's grace? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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Application: Grace for the Abused and the Abusers

We began our study focusing on Joseph as a model for sufferers. If you, like Joseph, have felt the sting of other people's sins, what about Joseph's walk with God encourages you today?

What principle about God's redemptive plan for our lives can you apply from Joseph's words to his abusers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good" (Genesis 50:20)?

On the other hand, you may identify with Joseph's brothers—as one who struggles to receive God's gracious forgiveness. How does Joseph's attitude of restoration toward his brothers reveal God's heart toward you?



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Joseph's sojourn from the pit of prison to the pinnacle of the palace was nothing short of incredible. Joseph ended his days in right standing with God and free from the bitterness of his past. He faced death with no resentment toward those who harmed him. How can we experience this kind of peace? By daily embracing God's grace, no matter what our circumstances may be.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, God of grace and glory, master of my life, and planner of all that is good and best, hear my prayer of trust as I bring to You my pain and heartache. Relieve me of the guilt of my sin and heal me from the hurt caused by the sin of others. I release my resentment and bitterness to You, my Savior who loves me and walks with me through every trial I face. Amen.



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

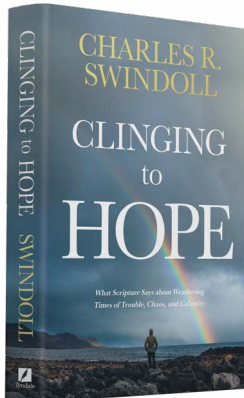
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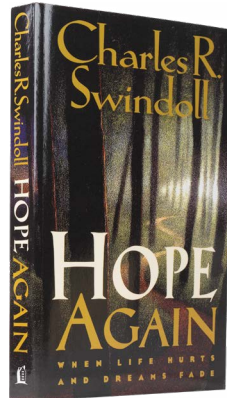
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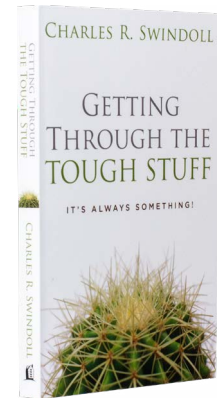
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2022 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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