Week 3: *Genesis 39:1–6*

**Hook**

![Image of multi-colored lines]

**Main Point:** God blesses those who are faithful and righteous, even when they are in lowly positions or difficult situations.

When you think of Cinderella, what comes to mind? For many, it’s the 1950 Disney animated film that captivated audiences. Although this movie is beloved, it is far from original. The story is found across many cultures; more than 500 versions of the Cinderella story have been found in Europe alone.¹

It appears that the origin of the story of Cinderella dates back to the ninth century and the Chinese fairy tale of Ye Xian, a young woman who is granted a wish from magical fish bones. She uses her wish to create a gown in hopes of finding a husband. Eventually, an emperor comes to own Ye Xian’s shoe and searches for the woman whose feet fit the small shoe. He comes across Ye Xian, finds that she is the perfect match and the two marry.²

This rags-to-riches story, the story of an underdog, continues to spark new art. The International Movie Database credits more than 100 films that either retell the classic Cinderella story or reshape it to fit new audiences.³

Today we will continue in the story of Joseph as he rises within the home of the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. We will examine the concept of blessing and discover that perhaps, it’s a little more involved than the movies.
Q: What is your favorite Cinderella or rags-to-riches story? Why does this story type capture the imagination?

Q: In what ways does the Bible characterize someone who is “blessed”? 
Week 3: *Genesis 39:1–6*

**Book**

**Main Point:** God blesses those who are faithful and righteous, even when they are in lowly positions or difficult situations.

**Text Summary:** Joseph was brought from very far north in Israel, all the way down to Egypt. He was a slave in the house of Potiphar, a very influential officer in Pharaoh’s army—the captain of the guard. God was with Joseph, He made everything Joseph did successful. Potiphar made Joseph overseer of all that he had, recognizing Joseph’s success. God blessed Potiphar’s house for Joseph’s sake.

*Genesis 39:1–6a* (ending with “the food he ate”) [Read]

**Talking Point 1:** God is with us every step of the way. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

**Q:** What made Joseph successful in Potiphar’s house?

**Q:** How did Joseph’s success affect other people around him?

The phrase “God was with Joseph” is repeated throughout this chapter (vv. 2, 3, 21, 23), reminding us of the theological theme of Joseph’s story. God is with him; God is in control; God is working it all out for good; and nothing can thwart God’s plan for his life. No matter where Joseph went—from the bottom of a pit to the palace of the king—God would be with him.

This was always God’s great promise to His people, that He would be with them (Ex. 6:7; 29:45; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 30:22; Ezek. 36:28, et. al.). Both Isaiah and Matthew said that Jesus would be called Immanuel—“God with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23).

God doesn’t promise to keep us from the storms of life, He promises to be *with us* through the storms. As David wrote in his most well-known Psalm, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” (Ps. 23:4). No matter where Joseph goes, God will go with him, bringing peace and blessing, using it all for good.

The two times in this chapter that Genesis reminds us that the Lord was with Joseph are when he is in slavery (vv. 2, 3) and in prison (vv. 21, 23). Both are certainly low points in his life. And yet, God turned them both into high points. Even in the most unlikely of places, the presence of God brought Joseph success.

**Q:** Have you ever experienced the presence of God in a particularly low point in your life? How did it make you feel?
Q: If God is with us everywhere we go, why can’t we always feel Him or “see” Him?

Q: What do you do when you don’t feel the presence of God? What should you do?

Talking Point 2: God uses the hard times in our lives to prepare us for the future.

Three things are said about Potiphar—he was an Egyptian, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard (v. 1), which literally meant “chief of the slaughterers,” which means he was in charge of the bodyguard of Pharaoh and keeper of the prisons. So he was well-connected, powerful and very close to Pharaoh—quite intimidating to anyone who tried to cross him.⁴

Q: What was Joseph learning to do in Potiphar’s house? How will this ultimately help him to rule Pharaoh’s kingdom well?

God is giving Joseph practice in the exact skills he is going to need to be successful in running Pharaoh’s kingdom later on—administration, leadership, organization, management. He is also learning Egyptian customs and language and business practices. God was training Joseph.

In a similar way, God used Moses’s time as a shepherd in Midian to prepare him for leading His people through the wilderness (Ex. 2–3), just as He used David’s time as a shepherd to prepare him for killing Goliath (1 Sam. 17), and just as God used the Israelite’s time in the wilderness to teach them to trust Him to provide (Ex. 16). God uses our times in “the wilderness” to prepare us for what is to come.

God uses everything that happens in our lives, the good and the bad, to train us in righteousness. To make us more like Jesus. To mold us into who He wants us to be. Scripture says that God is the potter and we are the clay (Jer. 18:1–4; Isa. 64:8). Sometimes the potter has to push pretty hard on the clay to get it to go the way he wants it to go. Sometimes, he even has to get out the knife. Sometimes it hurts. It can be a hard process, but it’s all in the effort to make something beautiful and useful out of our lives.

God is working everything in your life, even your sufferings, even your own sins, to accomplish His good work in your life (Rom. 8:28; Gen. 50:20). God doesn’t waste any of our experiences, He uses them all.

Suffering produces perseverance, which produces character, which produces hope (Rom. 5:3–5). Suffering makes us stronger, helps us grow and mature, helps us learn to trust in the Lord, and gives us a better perspective on life. God wants to use all of our experiences for good —the good, the bad and the ugly. Either an “inward good” or an “outward good”:

- To grow us, shape us, mold us to be more like Jesus (inward)
- To prepare us for the purpose He has for our lives (outward)

Either to change us or to change the world through us, or both.

Q: What do you think could God be training you for? How could your experiences right now be training you for the future?

Q: Have you ever been through something difficult in your life and later, looking back, realized God was using it to prepare you for something later? If you feel comfortable, share that story with the group.

Talking Point 3: God blesses those who are faithful.

Joseph was faithful with what God gave him to do, even in the lowly position of being a slave. And God blessed Joseph (v. 2). He was faithful with little and God gave him more (Luke 16:10).

In this story, God blessed Joseph, making Joseph very successful at his job. What does this mean for us? That if we are faithful to God, He will make us the CEO of our company and rich and powerful? What is “blessing” exactly?

Although the term is evidenced by many different things in the Scriptures (like material wealth, joy, God’s favor, etc.), Jesus gives us some very surprising descriptions when He talks about people who are blessed:

_Blessed are the poor in spirit,_
_for theirs is the kingdom of heaven._
_Blessed are those who mourn,_
_for they will be comforted._
_Blessed are the meek,_
_for they will inherit the earth._ (… and there are more – Matt. 5:3–10)

Why are those who mourn blessed? Because God will comfort them. If they didn’t mourn, they would never get to experience God’s comfort. Have you ever known anyone who said the time they felt closest to God was a time of great suffering or trial or struggle? Sometimes the hard times are when we experience the real blessing of God.

In Ephesians, Paul prays that they will be blessed with all of God’s glorious riches, but those “riches” have nothing to do with physical health, peace and prosperity:

_According to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know_
the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.—Eph. 3:16–19

God’s “riches” are the power of the Holy Spirit, of Christ dwelling in us. God’s blessing is being rooted and established in love, grasping just how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, knowing the love of Jesus that surpasses all knowledge. This is the “far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

Blessing can come in many forms—it can appear pleasant or challenging. Whatever it is that will help you to learn contentment and peace, whatever will bring you into God’s presence and help you to know His love for you, that is blessing (Phil. 4:11–13). Even if it’s hard.

Joseph went through some terrible things in his life and an outsider could easily look on him and think that God was cursing him. But Joseph saw that God was there with him all along and the thing that looked like curse to the world was actually blessing (Gen. 50:20). Because through it all, God was with Him.

This is blessing. Being near to God, being in relationship with God—having His face shine upon us (Num. 6:24–26).

Q: How can you be faithful to God in whatever situation you’re in right now—good, bad or ugly?

Q: How can you find the blessing from God in whatever you are going through, even if it’s hard?

Q: How can you see God’s presence around you, working in your life?

Talking Point 4: When God is with us, the world takes notice.

Q: Do you know anyone who radiates God’s presence so much that everyone seems to see Jesus in them?

Q: What do other people think of that person?

God made Joseph successful in all that he did as a slave in Potiphar’s house (v. 2). And Potiphar took notice, “His master saw that the LORD was with Him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands” (v. 3).

Potiphar recognized God’s presence and God’s hand in Joseph’s life. Don’t miss the significance of that sentence. Remember, Potiphar was an Egyptian and did not know Joseph’s God. Yet he saw Him in Joseph’s life.
This was God’s grand plan in choosing Israel to be His people. That through them, all the world would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). That every nation would look to them and see how powerful and how wonderful their God is and be drawn to Him. When God gave the law to His people before they entered the Promised Land, He said that if they followed His law carefully, other nations would look at them and say, “Wow, what an amazing nation, full of peace, love and joy. What a great God they must have!” (Deut. 4:6–8).

God desired Israel to be a light to the rest of the nations. They would reflect the image of God to the world. This is exactly what we are called to do in the New Covenant (1 Pet. 2:9).

When we reflect Jesus’s light to the world, people will give glory to God (Matt. 5:16). People will see how good God is and will want to know Him, too. When we live lives of integrity, when we work hard at our jobs, when we are kind to everyone, when we seek justice for those who cannot speak for themselves, when we reach out to the sick and the hurting, when we love the unlovable, when we do the right thing even though it’s hard, people will take notice.

Q: If all believers around the world truly reflected God’s love and light and peace and joy, how would it change their communities? How would it change the world?
**Week 3: Genesis 39:1–6**

**Took**

**Main Point:** God blesses those who are faithful and righteous, even when they are in lowly positions or difficult situations.

If you were to look at the two parts of a Cinderella story (rags to riches), which section would you label as blessed? Just as Joseph was blessed by God’s presence in both the challenging (rags) and comfortable (riches) times, you, too, are never alone. Consider your story and determine that no matter what part of the journey you are in right now, you will shine the light of Jesus and be blessed by it.

**Q:** The world often defines being blessed as having health, wealth and happiness. How would you describe being biblically blessed?

**Q:** In what ways has God blessed you?

**CHALLENGES:**

**THINK:** *How can you be faithful in what God has given you to do?* Maybe you feel your life isn’t where you want it to be. Maybe things are really hard or just aren’t what you ultimately want. How can you be faithful even though you aren’t in your dream job or living in your dream place or in your dream relationship?

*If you are in your dream job/place/relationship,* how can you stay faithful to the Lord? How can you thank Him? How can you pay it forward to others? How can you shine His light?

**PRAY:** *For strength and wisdom* – That God will give you the strength and wisdom to follow Him, to be faithful to Him, even if your life isn’t ideal right now. That He will show you His presence, fill you with His Spirit, and guide you in righteousness.

**ACT:** *Encourage someone this week.* Whether your circumstances are ideal or not, make an effort to encourage a fellow Bible Fellowship member this week who is walking through challenges. The Scripture emphasizes the power of encouragement:

*But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* — Heb. 3:13
http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/resources/multicultural


https://www.comingsoon.net/movies/news/402597-list-of-cinderella-movies
