

THE STORY

Chapter 3

Upper Story / Lower Story

Romans 8:28 (NIV84)

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

The story of Joseph is one of the best examples of God working in both the Lower Story and the Upper Story.

- The Lower Story is what is happening in the now. It your personal adventure.
- The Upper Story is what God is doing in History.
- Many times we are only focused on the Lower Story, but when we see our story in the context of HisStory our struggles find greater value.

Family Issues

- I believe that every family has certain issues. And the most serious family issue is yours, because you have to deal with it.
- How you deal with your family issues will shape your destiny.
- God works for good, no matter how difficult your family issues.

I. Joseph is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers: Genesis 37

- A. Joseph, age 17, was “the favorite” of his father Jacob.
- B. Joseph had dreams of his brothers and parents bowing down to him.
- C. Joseph’s brothers sell Joseph into slavery and tell Jacob that Joseph was killed by a ferocious animal.

(transition: Joseph is sold to Ishmaelites who take Joseph to Egypt)

II. Joseph is put into prison while in Egypt. Genesis 39-41

- A. Joseph is sold as a slave to an Egyptian administrator named Potiphar and Potiphar’s wife tries to seduce Joseph and falsely accuses Joseph of assaulting her.
- B. While in prison Joseph gets a reputation for correctly interpreting dreams.
- C. “The LORD was with Joseph” is a repeated refrain in Joseph’s story.

III. Joseph is promoted to Deputy Pharaoh in Egypt. Genesis 41

- A. Pharaoh has troubling dreams that none of his wise men and magicians can interpret for him.
- B. Joseph is called to Pharaoh and correctly interprets Pharaoh’s dreams and counsels Pharaoh to prepare for the fulfillment of his dreams.

1. Dream #1- Egypt will have 7 years of bountiful harvests
2. Dream #2- Egypt will have 7 years of famine.

IV. Joseph is reunited with and forgives his brothers. Genesis 42-50

- A. Joseph's brothers come to Egypt and do *bow down* to Joseph, now age 39, and ask for food.
- B. Joseph does not take revenge and our question is "Why?"
 1. Joseph is captured by the upper story where God is working his purpose within the ups and downs in Joseph's story. Genesis 45:3-8
 2. God was at work in the new nation and God will reveal himself through it. God made provision through Joseph to sustain the new nation during severe famine. Genesis 50:19-20

Dealing With The Why In Your Life

Whether you feel wronged, abused, falsely accused, forgotten or _____ (you fill in your blank). God is able to work his plan for your good. The key is knowing that :

- (1) you are loved by God
- (2) you are called by God
- (3) God has a purpose.
- (4) God is working His purpose.

- C. Joseph was God's agent to save the new nation by bringing the new nation to Egypt.
 1. The Israelites in Egypt were shepherds. The Egyptians considered shepherding an abomination. In Egypt there was no intermarriage to dilute the new nation. Intermarriage was a threat in Canaan: Genesis 38.
 2. Within Egypt the Israelites grew to a great nation of over a million people. Joseph had 21 years of a hard life, but 71 years a blessed life.

Forgiveness is crucial:

a. for God to be able to achieve His purpose in you others.

Remember God's over all purpose in everything is to bring reveal his Glory, His beauty. You were created to demonstrate and share in the beauty and marvel at God's handiwork. It is only as we move into grace where God forgiveness reigns that we can see the handiwork of God, his beauty revealed in spite of our ugliness.

b. for you to enjoy the goodness of God.

you can never truly enjoy God's work until you let God's forgiveness rule in your heart.

Upper Story/Lower Story

Let me return your thinking to the Upper Story and the Lower Story. Consider this:

1. Joseph was able to forgive his brothers because he saw that God was up to something; he had captured the upper story, God's bigger plan. What the brothers did was wrong, but God used their sin and jealousy to accomplish his overall purpose, his upper story.
2. The famine would have killed the little fledgling nation of Israel naturally, but supernaturally God made a provision for their salvation by putting Joseph in the right place at the right time.
3. Why didn't God just thwart the famine? It wasn't time yet for the nation of Israel to take ownership of the land of Canaan. And, they needed to be prevented from intermarrying with Canaanites, so their move to Egypt got them away from the Canaanites and living amongst the Egyptians who thought it was an abomination to marry shepherds. In Egypt they were given the incredibly fertile land of Goshen where they thrived.
4. Joseph had 22 years of a difficult life, but 71 years of a blessed life. He saw the upper story and it made his life in the lower story richer. It made all the junk that happened to him in the lower story survivable.

Application

Point: The trials we go through test us and cause us to trust God and to see his power in desperate situations, and equip us for the very thing he wants us to do that we're not yet equipped to do, so that others will see not us, but God.

Huge consequences come to us when we do things in the lower story to hurt other people, even though God often uses our sinfulness to accomplish his overall will.

For those whose life isn't turning out like you had envisioned it, you need the perspective of Romans 8:28. But this incredible promise of God is not applied to everyone. First you have to be a Christian, and not only a Christian, but one that loves God, and has aligned their life to the purposes of God, or to the upper story of God. This should invoke one of three responses:

1. If you have never entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you would do so today.
2. If you are a Christian and you love God, you would align your life to God's purposes, not your own. Instead of asking God to bless your big ideas in

your lower story, turn it around and adjust your entire life to what God is up to so that the Romans 8:28 promise might be yours.

3. If you are a Christian and it is not going well at all for you, things are not making sense in your lower story, get through this by abandoning your will to God's will. Remind yourself daily of God's upper story while enduring the lower story issues.