

HOW CAN I KNOW GOD'S WILL?
#5 THE SURPRISING WILL OF GOD:
THE JOSEPH PRINCIPLE
GENESIS 37-41

Intro: Life seldom happens like we hope and expect. Even doing God's will can take us in surprising directions – not all pleasant. The surprising will of God (we'll call it the Joseph Principle) takes into account five factors:

So (Israel) said to (Joseph), "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron... So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. Genesis 37:14, 17b-18

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?" ...So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. Genesis 37:26, 28

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. Gen. 39:1-2

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" Gen. 39:6b-7

One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." Gen. 39:11-15

When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. Gen. 39: 19-20a

I. Contains the Overpowering Detours in Life [Genesis 37:14-39:19a]

- Life can suddenly take us into _____ that we did not plan for and could not image. Often they are negative: job loss, death, health issues, betrayal, etc. They do not make sense.
- Joseph had "life detours" when he was sold into _____ by his brothers, and later thrown into prison unfairly.
- The good news is that God is not caught by _____, even though we are. Through foreknowledge, He has taken our "life detours" into account, and uses them to accomplish His will. (Rom. 8:28)
- It may seem like we are _____ by God, but He is there behind the scenes – though seemingly hidden.

II. Considers the Overwhelming Wickedness of Man

- We, like God, must consider the overwhelming _____ of man. No matter the person, great pain and upheaval can occur in our lives through their wickedness.
- Joseph _____ in his family, but it was his brothers who considered

murdering him, then sold him into slavery. Mrs. Potiphar lied about attempted rape, and Potiphar sent him to prison. All of these were people he had not hurt. Joseph got a raw deal.

- Like with Joseph, God _____ about how we are treated, and does not let the wickedness of man keep Him from accomplishing His will in our lives.
- We must not allow _____, defeat, bitterness, and unforgiveness to keep us from being used by God.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. Gen. 39:20b-22

III. Consists of the Overseeing Providence of God [Genesis 39:19b-22]

- Amazingly, through all the trials and tribulations of Joseph, God was _____ the events. He was even protecting Joseph from worse harm.
- God is always with us, and _____ for our needs and His plan, even though it is not evident to us.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." Gen. 41:15-16

IV. Counts on the Overcoming Faith of Joseph [Genesis 41:15-16]

- Considering the many years of betrayal, slavery, and prison Joseph faced, it would have been easy for Joseph to _____ faith – even turn his back on God.
- Did he? _____! There may have been days of anger and doubt, but Joseph's overcoming faith saw him through; and God could use him.
- For the Joseph Principle to work, we must have _____ faith, in spite of the circumstances.

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. Gen. 41:41-43

V. Climaxes in the Overruling Plan of God [Genesis 41:41-43]

- _____ of Joseph's life – every event was allowed, planned for, even caused by God to accomplish His will and plan. There was nothing that could happen that could destroy His plan.
- God is _____, and is ultimately in control over all. The same is true for our lives.
- God's will and plan will not only bless us, but will also, more importantly, _____ Him and further His kingdom and plan for the world. It is not all about us!

We can be prepared for the surprising will of God by living the "Joseph Principle".

Answers: I. Detours; slavery; surprise; abandoned. II. Wickedness; trusted; cares; anger. III. Guiding; providing. IV. Lose; no; overcoming. V. Every event; sovereign; glorify.