

## 8.31.08 Joseph - *What do I do with the upper hand?*

-morgan young, [www.oakbrookchurch.com](http://www.oakbrookchurch.com)

I like to think of the story of Joseph as one of the first documented **dysfunctional families**.

Think about it---you have a father (Jacob) that loves **one** of his TWELVE sons so much that he dresses him in a **\$2,000 Hugo Boss suit** and dresses the other eleven brothers in **Wrangler jeans and plaid shirts**.

You don't need a psychology degree to know that there's a bit of a problem here.

Also it tells us in Gen 37:2 when Joseph was 17, he **worked for** his half brothers and then came back to his dad and tattled on them—"*reported some of the bad things they were doing*" the text says.

And if you remember back to his first dream that symbolized that everyone in the family would **bow down to him**---God never told Joseph to **tell everyone** about his dream. It was clear to everyone what the dream meant---so Joseph was basically TAUNTING his brothers (15 yrd penalty!)

So that's Joseph's dysfunctional past.

Well like Karl said, today we find Joseph as the second most powerful man in Egypt—at a time when Egypt was a superpower. And now Joseph is about 30 years old (aprox 13 yrs later from when the story began).

And not only is he 30—but he's had a cultural makeover---a kind of like "**Egyptian Eye for the Jewish Guy**" kind of thing.

His name is no longer "Joseph," now he has an Egyptian name: **Zaphenath-penea** (ZAF-eh-nath pe-NAY-a)

Now he has an Egyptian-style **shaved head** versus a more "hairy" dark curly hair and beard Jewish look. His favorite band is now the [Bangles](#).

He **doesn't** speak Hebrew any more—now he exclusively speaks the Egyptian language.

Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian wife, **Asenath**, who was from a very honored and aristocratic Egyptian family.

Not just anyone could marry a woman like this. So this marriage made him a **naturalized Egyptian** and made him part of a **very elite** and **esteemed** Egyptian family.

Needless to say he now has **wealth** which is reflected in his **palatial home, gold jewelry, GPS-equipped [Maybach](#) chariot**. And wherever he went, people were required to bow down to him.

So at this point he no longer walks, talks or looks like **Hebrew Harry** but exactly like **Egyptian Eddie**.

And we're going to pick up the story at the **famine**. People everywhere are hurting for food—which includes **Joseph's family** back in Canaan.

So the stage is set—**set for revenge**. Zaphenath-penea (Joseph) the **2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful man** in the **most powerful country** will come face to face with **lowly Jewish shepherds**-- the brothers who nearly killed him but decided on selling him into slavery instead.



One spouse regardless of gender can power up on the other spouse---make decisions that the other spouse is helpless to stop.

**Power in marriage is something either person can take, any day.**

Kids **power up** on their younger brother or sister. Physically and emotionally.

At **work**, we power up on people **below us** or **on our own level**---we treat them like they are their job, instead of a person of equal value.

We power up on our **grown-up siblings**---we take advantage of the reality that we're an adult now and there's no mom & dad to set it all straight---so I'm going to tell you what I think...

I want us all to be clear that: **(MS BUILD)**

\* **Power** (or influence) **is something I have.** (repeat??)

\* **How I use power** (or influence), **makes or breaks relationships.**

\* **Relationships are what God uses to redeem the world.**

Religion can make Christianity appear **complex**. But simply, Christianity is all about **relationships**:

It's God wanting to be in relationship with us so badly that He sends His Son to die on a cross and rise again in three days---so that you and I can come into relationship with God.

And then it's **us**—after being **relationally infected with the Jesus virus**, relationally infecting other people with the Jesus virus, relationally forming a **revolution of people** who are sold out to trying to live lives where God IS WITH US.

Ever wonder why **relationships are so accident prone**? And they are: look at Joseph's family thousands of years ago. Look at the divorce rate of families in our community (of which I am one).

Relationships are accident prone because there is a temptation to:

**hurt people who hurt us,**

**to fight fire with fire,**

**to give people what we think they have coming.**

And how does that **always end**?

Separation---Divorce.

People who used to be our friends.

**Broken relationships.**

And a funny thing about broken relationships:

God can't use a connection that's no longer there. If that relational bridge is "out"—that's just one more relational connection that God can't use.

And the other funny think about broken relationships:

Both parties pretty much feel like poo. (eventually)

A simple way to say this: We can do relationships **our way** or **God's way**.

Our way is **selfish**.

Tries to get even or get back.



The brother who had been wronged, chose grace and **brought a family back together**.

And in my own story, I realized that if God had chosen to bring me into the world **through an affair**, who was I to argue with God? Who was I to say, "This isn't how *I* wanted it to go, God.?"

So the brother who's family had **kept it a secret** chose grace, and reconnected his family.

And **in this auditorium** there are countless numbers of Joseph stories—**you've been wronged**—and you have the power to restore relationships.

Your **spouse** has wronged you---and you have the power to respond with grace.

Your neighbor, your brother, your sister, your aunt, your coach, your \_\_\_\_\_(fill in the blank.)

You have the power.

You have the power to **sit in it**.

To **stew**.

To **become bitter**.

To be **enslaved** to it.

Or.

To set you free.

To set them free.

To heal brokenness.

To reconcile.

To find God in the midst of it.

Only YOU have the power to give grace to the person in your mind right now...will you?...

(((♫ Only Grace –Matthew West))  
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I think the most amazing thing about Joseph's story is the **bigger story** that God was orchestrating the whole time:

In other words, it's easy enough to get caught up in the story of this family and their personal drama and struggle.

But this phrase, "**But God was with Joseph**," was bigger than Joseph.

God wasn't with him *just to help Joseph* through all these tough situations he kept being thrown into. And it wasn't until the **end of the story** that even Joseph saw the bigger picture.

God used Joseph to save Egypt and the surrounding area from famine.  
God used Joseph to save Jacob's family from dying out.

And even the bigger picture?

The brothers of Joseph—these guys who were ready to leave their own brother for dead & sold him into slavery?

God saved them from starvation so these guys with **questionable resumes** would become the **powerful leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel**.

**God chose this motley band of 12 brother to lead the entire nation of Israel.**

And when God used Joseph to **save Judah**, he was saving the **family line in which Jesus Christ would be born**. Jesus is a direct descendent of Judah. That’s why one of Jesus’ names is the “Lion of Judah.”

And when God brought **Jesus** into the mix through Judah—Jesus was able to make a way to **graft you and me and everyone who is willing**, into the family of God eternally.

**From the family of Jacob—to the family of God globally---that’s the story God was orchestrating through Joseph!**

And let’s be clear: When we come into a relationship with Christ, the phrase, “**God is with us,**” **isn’t a maybe—it’s a promise.**

**MS**

“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *Romans 8:38,39 nlt*

And so the mysterious question is this:

What does God—who **is with us**—want to do in the relationships in our lives? What **bigger picture** in **your life** is God trying to orchestrate—but perhaps we’re blocking because of a broken relationship?

God loves to **show off** by working miraculous plans through a dysfunctional family of shepherds...

By working through a guy who works at Chrysler. Or Cracker Barrel. Or Wal-Mart.

By working through your little family.

By working through wherever it is that you go—and whoever it is that you know.

Life is not about us. It is about **God’s fame** and **His plan** for a **world in need**.

Life doesn’t flow from us---it’s flows from God, to us, through us, to work in ways we can never fully imagine...let’s stand and sing to One whom life flows.

**( (( ♪ You are God -Charlie Hall ))))))))))))))))))))))))**

Challenge people to read Gen 37 to end. Challenge them to right a relationship—today—this week.