

# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

**Sermon Series:** Overcome: Living Beyond Your Circumstances

**To be used with:** Session One: Overcome Betrayal

**Sermon Title Possibilities:**

Beating Betrayal

Beyond Betrayal

**Scripture:** Genesis 37:19-27; 39:1-2

**Connection to Unit Theme:** *Overcome: Living Beyond Your Circumstances* is a character study on the Old Testament hero, Joseph. In spite of periods of significant opposition and personal crisis, Joseph's faith led to international leadership and the preservation of God's people. He is an amazing example from Scripture of what it means to overcome difficult circumstances.. These sermon outlines cover the same topics and scripture passages as are being studied in small groups. This will allow you as a pastor the chance to reinforce what learners encounter in small group Bible study and influence the growth of your church body. Session 1 is called "Overcome Betrayal" and the Point is, "God is still at work, even when it isn't obvious."

## Introduction:

Betrayal is not new. Betrayal is not limited to the pain associated with it. Backstabber. Judas. Benedict Arnold. These are just of a few of the references made to describe betrayal. Consider the last time someone betrayed you. It is likely still a painful memory despite the forgiveness that was offered or the relationship that was restored. Now consider the last time you betrayed someone. There is likely a great deal of pain associated with that memory as well. The kind of pain associated with remorse.

Betrayal is also not uncommon. Why? Because people are sinners. And relationships are real. Scripture paints a picture of a great many betrayals. The Bible does not attempt to whitewash the forefathers of our faith or mask with rose-colored glasses their great failures. The outcome of Joseph is one that all of us might like to emulate, but the journey is one none would envy. It's in that story that we encounter an opportunity to overcome during this Bible study series and sermon emphasis.

## What Betrayal Does

### I. Betrayal does indicate relationship. [37:19-22, 27]

The very idea of betrayal indicates a relationship. That is why it hurts so much. Betrayal doesn't come from total strangers. Strangers might cut you to the quick but their darts don't sting nearly as much as the child who runs away, the friend who tells the lie, the partner who leaves the business, or the spouse who commits the sin. The closer the relationship, the stronger the sting of betrayal is.

Joseph's relationship with his brothers was strained for two primary reasons: Jacob's favoritism and Joseph's boastful character. Jacob was the younger twin but the chosen brother. He outplayed his brother Esau for the elder brother birthright and Isaac's blessing. [Genesis 27] He wrestled with God and lived to tell the tale. [Genesis 32] Joseph had a series of dreams in which he always ended up ruling his brothers, which of course sparked jealousy. [Genesis 37]

The story of our ancestral line of faith is riddled with betrayal. In each case, it was a close family relationship committing the act. At its core, betrayal is an indication of significant relationship. Without relationship, it doesn't qualify as betrayal. Those closest to you have the ability to hurt you the most. William Blake said that it is "easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend."<sup>i</sup> Why is that true? The friend was supposed to stick by you no matter what. Your brother is supposed to always have your back.

Your sister should always be trustworthy. When someone you are close to betrays you, the wounds are far more deadly.

Rachel Simmons, Co-Founder of the Girls Institute says that there is a myth regarding relationships, especially among girls. “There is very little that can bring a girl psychologically to her knees like a lost or threatened relationship.”<sup>ii</sup>

Many people retreat from relationships [authenticity and vulnerability] for fear of being hurt. We must be warned that God created us to be in relationship with one another. Being betrayed should not incite us to reject relationships but to strengthen them and protect them. Experiencing betrayal indicates relationship. The greater the pain, the more valued the relationship.

## **II. Betrayal does involve great loss. [37:23; 39:1]**

Genesis 37:23 as a stand-alone verse doesn’t necessarily offer a great deal of insight as to the severity of Joseph’s loss. After all, it was just a coat, right? Or was it something more. Joseph’s coat was a gift from his father. As a younger son, he would not enjoy the status or privilege that came with being a first-born elder brother. But Joseph had something his elder brothers did not, the affection of his father. This coat represented Jacob’s love for Joseph. It represented Joseph’s place in the family, despite his lowly birth order. The coat represented everything valuable to Joseph, his faith and his family.

There was another great loss perpetrated by the act of betrayal. Jacob lost his treasured son. Because our relationships are not isolated on islands, we are interconnected. One act of betrayal can cause a ripple effect that strains other relationships in our lives.

[Read Genesis 37:34-35]

When a father rejects his son, mom and sister are caught in the middle. When a husband destroys a marriage, kids are left in the wake. So are in-laws and even friends who lose the connectivity and blessing of a once fruitful relationship. Our acts of betrayal always involve undesired side effects in other areas and other relationships in our lives. When Joseph’s brothers sold him, their father and entire extended family and friends felt the magnitude of that betrayal.

### **What Betrayal Does Not**

## **III. Betrayal does not define your story. [39:1-2]**

“My life is over,” said every tween girl since the dawn of history at one point or another. As a culture, we do have histrionic tendencies to exaggerate an issue, don’t we?! How about, “I wrecked the car. My parents are going to kill me!” There may be a significant punishment lurking in the wings, but the chances of capital punishment are fairly sparse.

Putting yourself in Joseph’s sandals, your cry likely would have been shocking. If being beaten, stripped, and sold aren’t enough to make you think life is over, something could be wrong. Readers don’t have to venture deep into the Joseph story to understand that God had a plan that was far greater than this single act of betrayal, no matter how dire.

The Bible says that God was with Joseph. [Genesis 29:2] Even in our darkest moments in our farthest journeys from what is comfortable and safe, our stories are far from over. For Joseph, this journey was many miles into a new country and culture.<sup>iii</sup> What could have seemed like a huge detour from his dreams of family lordship were really just a chapter in the piece God was penning.

#### **IV. Betrayal does not undermine God's plan. [39:2-3]**

Are there moments when you are paralyzed by the fear that you might thwart the will of God? Don't give yourself that much credit. Are there relationships in your life, which you give the authority to challenge God's will and activity in your life? Don't give others that credit either. Nothing that Joseph did or didn't do could have caused God to press pause and brainstorm a plan B. Nothing that his brothers did or didn't do to Joseph could have caused confusion for God either.

So many times, in our effort to take responsibility for our actions, we might forget the sovereignty of a God who is in complete control whether we err or not. No act of betrayal, no matter how significant, can disturb God.

Genesis 39:3 goes on to say that God gave Joseph favor and success in Potiphar's house. God's plan to redeem his people Israel wasn't hindered by the brothers' betrayal. In fact, the betrayal became part of the story of God's ultimate glory. Fast forward to Genesis 50:20 and see how Joseph came to understand that fact.

Overcoming betrayal means adopting a bigger picture, Godlike perspective on how that pain might be purposed in God's plan.

#### **Conclusion:**

Consider again whom you have betrayed and whose betrayal has scarred you most. What will it take to be an overcomer? A shift in your perspective toward understanding what betrayal really is and what it is not will do the trick. It will not offer you an easy solution free from effort or even pain. It will, however, offer you the chance to see Christ move in your life in ways you only imagine possible.

First, consider the value of your relationships. Because betrayal indicates closeness and love, determine in your heart to fight for restoration the way that God fought for you.

Second, weigh the various points of loss. Sure there is pain associated with the act of betrayal. But what of the pain of losing that friend or loved one and perpetuating the ripple effect of the strained relationship on others?

Next, look at the arch of your story. How has God brought you through painful times before? Is this particular act of betrayal outside the bounds of God's ability to help you recover? When you understand that there is nothing God can't do, you might be more willing to take a stab at restoring your brother or swallowing your own pride and seeking forgiveness.

Finally, consider God's great plan. As you might know from the Joseph story, God used his circumstance to save an entire people group including his own family. The act of betrayal became something God leveraged for His miraculous purpose and ultimate promise fulfillment. Is the betrayal you are dealing with outside of God's ability to move and work? Can you take a step of faith and trust that He is still working even when it's most difficult to see; when it isn't so obvious?

We serve a risen Savior who overcame intense betrayal to save us. Any amount of betrayal you have endured or committed must pale in comparison to what Christ suffered. Yet, He didn't withhold forgiveness and He didn't stray from God's plan. You can overcome betrayal in the same manner through the same power and maintain Godly purpose and perspective.

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<sup>i</sup> Web source: <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/betrayal>

<sup>ii</sup> Web source: <http://tedxwomen.org/speakers/rachel-simmons/>

<sup>iii</sup> Web source:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=distance+between+Canaan+and+egypt&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&channel=sb>