

## **The Story: Chapter 3 Joseph and the Upper Story**

### **Movement 2:**

God builds a brand-new nation called Israel. Through this nation, he will reveal His presence, power, and plan to get us back. Every story of Israel will point to the first coming of Jesus-the One who will provide the way back to God.

Through the nation of Israel, we are going to learn about the presence of God, the power of God, and His plan to get us back.

**Reminder of the Huge Point:** The Upper Story and the Lower Story

- Our goal is to learn to live in the Lower Story with an understanding of the Upper Story.
- I'm reminding you of this because by the end of the message today you will see what I believe is one of the best examples in all of Scripture of someone who really gets the Upper Story and Lower Story.

Today we're diving into the story of Joseph.

### **TIMELINE!**

Abraham has died at a good ole age.

Their son Isaac marries Rebekah and they have Jacob and Esau.

Jacob is the one that God changes his name to Israel.

- Quick discussion of Jacob: You can easily see him as a manipulator, cheater, and a stealer of the blessing.
- So why in the world does he get to be the one that God chooses to lead the nation of Israel and his brother gets to lead the enemy nation, the Edomites?
- Because God has a view of the Upper Story!
- When He changed Jacob's name there was a change in Jacob.

**Genesis 35:9** Isaac died and Jacob and Esau buried him.

**Genesis 37** – Jacob (Also called Israel) was living in the land of Canaan.

**And this is where we see the beginning of the story of Joseph:**

Joseph's story starts with a dream:

### **Genesis 37:3-7**

<sup>3</sup> Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. <sup>4</sup> When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: <sup>7</sup> We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

Key: His story begins with this dream. Even though his brothers hated him and his Father questioned it, he still had this in his mind.

So, in the Lower Story he sees himself as one day being King, or ruler, or whatever where his whole family bows down to Him.

Then, just a few verses later this happens:

Jacob sends Joseph to the fields where the other brothers are working to check in on them.

- They see him coming and make a plan to kill him.

### **Genesis 37:28**

<sup>23</sup> So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—<sup>24</sup> and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

<sup>25</sup> As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

<sup>26</sup> Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? <sup>27</sup> Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. <sup>28</sup> 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.

How do you think the Lower Story is going for Joseph?

Look what happened next:

**Genesis 39:1-2**

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.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.

The Lord was with him and he prospered (even as a slave).

**First thing we can learn from this story:**

1. The Lower Story might not go as planned. But that doesn't mean God has missed on His promise.

Then this happened:

Potiphar's wife wanted Joseph to sleep with her but he refused. She got tired of him saying "no" so she made up a lie about him and told her husband, Potiphar.

**Genesis 39:19-21**

<sup>19</sup> When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. <sup>20</sup> Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, <sup>21</sup> the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

2. Your actions, even when righteous, don't always determine the direction of the Lower Story.

Joseph had done everything right in the eyes of God, and now he's in prison.

Even in prison Joseph was faithful to the Lord and the Lord continued to be with him.

But look what happened, again...

The Kings chief baker and cupbearer are put in prison with Joseph.

- Both of them had dreams and asked Joseph to interpret them.
- When he interpreted the cupbearers dream he told him that soon he would be restored to his former position.
- Then we see this:

### **Genesis 40:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. <sup>15</sup> For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.”..... <sup>23</sup> The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

Forgotten again!!!

Can you imagine?? All he’s done is be faithful and trust the Lord and he keeps getting the ugly parts of the Lower Story.

**LISTEN:**

### **3. God does not forget you!!**

Then, in Genesis 41, He gets his place as leader of all of Egypt.

How:

- Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret
- The cupbearer finally remembers Joseph and they call on him.
- Joseph, with God’s help, interprets Pharaoh’s dreams.

Pharaoh is so impressed that he puts Joseph in charge of all of Egypt.

Now, here’s where we go back to the brothers...

- There is a famine in the land.
- The brothers have to come before Joseph to get grain so they don’t starve to death in Canaan.

This story is covered in chapters 42-44.

- We’re not going to go into the story today.

- Basically Joseph recognized them but they did not know it was their brother that they had sold into slavery.

But I need you to see how he handled this when he revealed himself to his brothers.

- Remember, it's been about 20 years from the dream to reality.
- He's been sold into slavery.
- Thrown in prison
- Forgotten and left there for years

Needless to say, THE LOWER STORY HAD BEEN ROUGH!

But what we see next is one of the most amazing pictures of an understanding of the Upper Story that we have in Scripture:

### **Genesis 45:3**

<sup>3</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

They were terrified.

- And you and I would say they should have been.
- If I was Joseph they would have needed to be.

But look...

### **Genesis 45:4-6**

<sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! <sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. <sup>6</sup> For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. <sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup> "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

1. It was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you
2. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.
3. It was not you that sent me here. It was God!

**Do you see what he's telling them???**

He says, ["Don't worry! It was all part of God's upper story!"](#)

Do you see it??? He gets it!! He understands the Upper Story!!

**Here's what I believe:** If you and I could live in the Lower story with an understanding of the Upper Story, it would change the way we live.

We would...

- Trust Him more
- Worry less
- Have more hope
- Experience much more joy!

So, remember as we do the best we can here in the Lower Story, there's always an Upper Story that we can't see. But we can sure trust the God that does see it. And we can live differently because we know that!