

Bible Studies for Life: January 23

The Pitfall of Betrayal • Genesis 37: 1-5, 19-24, 26-27

By Paula Smith



Smith

"All things work for our good though sometimes we don't see how they could.

Struggles that break our hearts in two sometimes blind us to the truth.

Our Father knows what's best for us. His ways are not our own. So, when your pathway grows dim and you just don't see Him, remember you're never alone.

God is too wise to be mistaken. God is too good to be unkind. So when you don't understand – when you don't see His plan – when you can't trace His hand... TRUST HIS HEART"

(Babbie Mason – Trust His Heart Lyrics | Genius Lyrics)

Babbie Mason expresses so well in her beautiful song a reminder of how to live in this world. The life story of Joseph shows us how to manage in this world. Through this new unit, How to Avoid Pitfalls, we learn great lessons from Joseph's life that instruct and encourage us to continue to be obedient and trust God when it doesn't seem to make sense.

Joseph's story has everything an award-winning movie would have – betrayal, temptation, injustice, tough times, bitterness, guilt, grudges, and a surprise ending.

Joseph was born into a pretty dysfunctional family. He was the eleventh son of twelve and his daddy's very favorite. Unfortunately, his dad did not try to hide that fact from his family and Joseph used it to his advantage, being somewhat of a tattler on his brothers.

Even though Joseph had some exceptional qualities – handsome, a good manager, and gifted of the Lord with dreams and their interpretation – he was set up for challenging relationships and harsh circumstances. His brothers hated him.

Joseph's dad, Jacob, sent him to go check on his brothers who were tending sheep about a two-day walk away. I'm guessing the brothers could easily see him coming because of the special multicolor coat his dad had given him.

They had time to plot and plan as he approached. They even discussed murder with a backstory to tell their dad. Jesus taught us if we hate, we have already murdered in our heart. So, murder is not such a drastic leap for them. However, after consideration and a plan from the oldest brother, they instead decided to put him in a pit and just let him die there.

I think it's that part of the story that always rattles me. We know from later in the story (Genesis 42:21) that the brothers were so callous they sat beside the pit and enjoyed a meal all the while hearing Joseph scream and beg for mercy. He could even hear them change their plans and decide to sell him to the Egyptians.

I say to myself that I cannot imagine how anyone could even think to do such a thing, but the Lord opened my eyes. My memory went back when I first moved to Costa Rica as a missionary and for the first time lived in an area with a lot of poverty.

I remember the first time I was with a friend in a small café enjoying sweet bread and coffee. A little, dirty child who could not have been more than six years old came inside to beg

but the owner ran him out. The child then stood beside the window where I was sitting, looking at me with those huge, hollow pleading eyes.

I could not continue to eat. I bought something for him and left the café.

The begging happened more and more often. Soon I noticed that I could turn away and finish my whole meal before buying them something. Eventually, I didn't even realize they were there. I had become so callous and accustomed to this begging that it no longer bothered me. I had rationalized my comfort zone.

This made me ask myself, do I relate more to the one betrayed or to the betrayer? I'm ashamed to admit that at times I can relate to both.

Either way the solution is to call out to the Lord!

"I called on your name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help!' You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!'"
(Lamentations 3:55-57 ESV)

"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'" (Luke 18:13 ESV).

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