

# The Life Challenge

*"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10*

**Series:** Live by Faith...Dream for More

**Title:** Keeping the Dream Alive

**Text:** Genesis 49:29-50:21

**Speaker:** Matt Ewert

**Date:** June 2, 2019



## WARM-UP

Share one personal "take away" from this past weekends worship service.

## DISCUSSION

Read Genesis 49:29 - 50:21, paying particular attention to 50:21. Then read Romans 8:28, keeping the Joseph story in mind—reading it specifically in light of Genesis 50:20.

Read the following comments:

*"Last night we had a group of students in our home for dessert after class. One of them asked what is my favorite book in the Bible (the answer is Ecclesiastes) and then what is my disabled wife's favorite book. I am not aware that she ever had one, but she had a favorite text, which is that "for people who love God, he makes all things work together for good, for people who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). It is quite a statement for someone who knew she had a potentially devastating illness but didn't know that she would end up year after year unable to do anything or even to speak. Thinking about it now, I realize Paul's words have different implications from the ones I would have realized a decade or two ago. What I see in Ann is that being called according to God's purpose means being called to a role within God's wider purpose; it does not refer merely to her individual relationship with God. In her disability she has a strange ministry to people (including me), a kind of calling. God brings good out of the bad thing that is her disability.*

*Joseph is the first great embodiment of Romans 8:28. While his experience in Egypt brings good to him in the power and prestige it gives him, it is at least debatable whether that makes it worthwhile to be thrown into the cistern, sold into servitude in a foreign country, and put into jail. But the good that God brings out of these experiences is not merely the good it brings to Joseph (even in the possible maturing of his character) but the good it brings to his family. And that is not the end of it. The point is that this is the family through which God is going to bring blessing to the world. It is important to keep this family alive rather than letting the famine starve it to death, because they are called according to God's purpose in a special sense. We as twenty-first-century readers owe our salvation to the fact that God kept this family alive (so that Jesus could be born from it) and uses Joseph's suffering to that end. If you are Joseph, then, God's doing such an extraordinary thing through your suffering is what compensates for what you went through. It is a pattern that will be repeated in Jesus' story." John Goldingay*

**How do John Goldingay's comments help illuminate the truth of Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28?**

- What does God's promise to work all things together for good mean?
- What does it NOT mean?
- What kind of perspective is required on our part in order to find the kind of encouragement that Romans 8:28 is meant to bring?

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## DISCUSSION

**Pastor Matt suggested that the Joseph narrative demonstrates that in His sovereignty, God can even use YOUR evil and do good with it for YOU.**

- How do you react to that statement?
- What about it is difficult to accept?
- In what way is it astoundingly good news?

**Have you ever considered yourself disqualified from being empowered by God for some task of life direction because of sin in your own life?**

- If you feel comfortable, share about that with the group.
- In what way does the Joseph narrative, and God's inclusion of the brothers in God's dream to give life stand as an encouragement to you to keep holding onto God's dreams for you in spite of your imperfections?

**Here's what our families are discussing together this week:**

*We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. **Colossians 1:9b-10***

**Warm - Up:** Think about Joseph's life. What were the ups and downs? How do you see God working in his life? How is God working in your life -through the good and bad?

**We HEARD:** Watch the Wrap Up Video from Facebook and Parent Email.

**We KNOW:** God had a plan for Joseph's life. He allowed Joseph to suffer to rescue a whole nation. In a greater way, God planned for Jesus to suffer so that many— people from all nations—would be saved from sin. Describe the similarities you see in Joseph's and Jesus' lives?

**We LIVE:** How did God use evil for good? • When someone wrongs you, do you choose to forgive or to seek revenge? Have you experienced God's grace as He forgives you and helps you forgive others? What can you "Dream for More" of as you follow God's leading in your life?

**We PRAY:** Lord Jesus, allow us to see how You are working all around us. Help us to deepen our faith and follow You with boldness. Help us to tell others around us about the incredible gift of forgiveness and grace that You give.

**Family Activity: Bad to good** -Talk about a potentially negative scenario they might face. Discuss ways that situation could turn out to be for their good. See the example scenarios: *(You stub your toe on the couch ... when you move the couch, you find a lost toy. You are last in line for the cafeteria at school ... when you get to the front, they bring out a fresh batch of cookies. Your pet gets sick and dies ... your friends comfort you and share happy memories about your pet.)* It can be hard to see the good in a situation that is sad or frustrating. The Bible teaches us that God can use hard times to grow our faith and make us more like Jesus.