



Show Love to A Stranger

Genesis 37:18 - 28 Joseph's brothers see him coming and plot to kill him (v. 18). Reuben persuades them to throw him into a pit instead (vv. 21-24), planning to rescue him later. Then, while they sit down to eat, Judah proposes selling him to the Ishmaelite traders. Joseph is sold for twenty shekels of silver and carried off to Egypt (vv. 26-28).

Leviticus 19:33-34 NKJV And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. [34] The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

If you moved to Canada recently, you know what it is to leave the familiar behind: your language, your family, your work, even your name for yourself. Joseph knew it too. Today we look at his story through three words: stress, solitude and sacrifice.

Let me begin with a question: **has anyone here ever had to start over?** A new country, a new city, a new job, a new language, a new church? Raise a hand if you have.

Then you know something about today's story. **Joseph did not choose to leave home.** He was thrown into a pit, sold for silver, carried to a country where he knew no one, and then forgotten in a prison. If anyone had a right to say, "God has abandoned me," it was Joseph.

But the Bible says something else about him again and again: **the Lord was with Joseph** (Genesis 39:2, 39:21). That is the word of God today: **God is with you in the pit, the prison and the palace.**

1. The Stress

The pit is where the stress begins. Joseph is stripped of his coat, his family, and his future, and he has done nothing to deserve it. Many people know this feeling after leaving home, losing what was familiar, or being treated as if they don't matter. Joseph's stress started with the people closest to him. His own brothers hated him. They stripped his robe, threw him into a dry cistern and sold him to traders for twenty pieces of silver. He was about seventeen.

Stress is not only a bad day. It is a weight that follows you into every room. For many newcomers, stress looks like:

- paperwork, deadlines and fees that never seem to end
- a degree or a career that nobody here recognizes
- sending money home while struggling to pay rent here
- children caught between two cultures
- 2a language that makes you feel smaller than you are

And for those who have lived here all their lives, stress looks different, but it is just as heavy: bills, health scares, family conflict, and a world that feels like it is moving too fast.

Here is the first truth: God does not wait for the pit to be over before he shows up. Notice that Genesis does not say Joseph was rescued from the pit. It says he was carried through it. *Genesis 39:2 says that in Egypt, as a slave, "the Lord was with Joseph." He was with him in the middle of it.*

Name your pit today. You do not have to pretend you are fine. Bring it to God, and bring it to this church family.

2. The Solitude

Joseph did the right thing and was punished for it. Potiphar's wife accused him falsely, and he went to prison. Then he helped a fellow prisoner, the cupbearer, and asked just one thing: **"Remember me."** *Genesis 40:23 tells us the cupbearer did not remember him. Two more years passed.*

That is loneliness. Not only being alone in a room, but being forgotten by people who could have helped.

Many of our newcomers know this. You left behind your parents, your friends, your church, the people who knew your name and your story. Here, nobody knows your family or what you accomplished. You can sit in a crowded room and still feel invisible.

And to the rest of us: we may also be lonely in different ways. A widowed neighbour. A student far from home. A parent who is always giving and rarely asked how they are.

Solitude is not proof that God has left you. *Genesis 39:21 says that even in prison the Lord was with Joseph and showed him kindness. He gave him favour with the warden. God was working in the quiet years.*

Solitude also teaches something. Joseph learned to trust God without applause. He learned patience. He learned to serve where he was planted, even in a prison.

If you are lonely, take one step this week: introduce yourself to someone, accept an invitation, join a group. If you are not lonely, look around and ask who in this room might be.

3. The Sacrifice

Eventually Joseph's life turned. He interpreted Pharaoh's dream and became second in command of Egypt. He married, and he had two sons. Look at the names he gave them (41:51-52):

- **Manasseh**, meaning "God has made me forget my trouble"
- **Ephraim**, meaning "God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering"

Joseph did not say that the suffering was good. He said God made him fruitful in the very place where he had suffered. For immigrants, that is a hope worth holding: ***the place of your hardship can become the place of your harvest.***

Then the hardest moment came. His brothers arrived hungry and afraid, bowing in front of him. Joseph had power, and every reason for revenge. Instead, he wept, forgave them, and fed their families through the famine. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20).

That is sacrifice: giving up the right to get even, using what you have been given to protect others.

God uses our sacrifice to bless people we may never expect. The years of pain became the preparation for provision.

And this is exactly where Joseph points us beyond himself to Jesus. **Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, went down into the pit, and was raised up to save the very people who rejected him. But Joseph's story is only a shadow. Jesus is the substance.**

Go with me to the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46). Jesus knew what was coming. **Luke says he was in such anguish that his sweat fell like drops of blood.** That is **stress**. He asked his closest friends to stay awake and pray with him, and they fell asleep. That is **solitude**. And he prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done." That is **sacrifice**. Then he walked to the cross for us. *Philippians 2:5-8 NKJV Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, [6] who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, [7] but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

Joseph could tell his brothers that what they meant for evil, God meant for good. **Jesus says it to the whole world from the cross: what humanity meant for evil, God used for our salvation.**

- Joseph saved a nation from famine.
- Jesus saves us from sin and death.
- Who has hurt you?
- Who might God be asking you to bless instead?
- **Sacrifice may look like forgiveness, generosity, hospitality or patience.**

Closing Blessing

May the Lord Jesus, who went through the pit for us, redeemed us and brought us into his family, go with you into your Monday. May he carry you through the pit, keep you in the quiet of the prison, and use you in the palace to bless many. And may you leave knowing: **God is with you in the pit, the prison and the palace, because Christ is with you.**

Faithful one, so unchanging

Ageless one, You're my rock of peace

Lord of all, I depend on You

I call out to You again and again⁴

You are my rock in times of trouble

You lift me up when I fall down

All through the storm, Your love is the anchor

My hope is in You alone