



# Pitiful Joe

## Bragging to Begging to Blessing

February 22, 2026

**Today we're looking at the unfiltered, adult version of Joseph!**



**Do you know God's stories uncensored?** Most adults don't. And those who do, mostly only think they do cuz they heard 'em in Sunday school. Well, the first 11 chapters of Genesis cover 2,000 years. But the last 39 chapters focus on **Joseph's great-grandpa Abraham, grandpa Isaac, father Jacob, and Joseph.**



The dysfunction of one family takes up 78%! Cuz it's packed with graphic violence, brutality, sexuality, duplicity, and treachery. Cuz **these people are deeply damaged!** And they repeatedly rebel against God. Cuz **they're not super-heroes, they're super-normals.** And as such, their faith isn't a formula to follow. It's a showcase of how **God's grace rescues and restores us from our brokenness.** If you've only seen the heavily censored scenes, it's okay, unless you assume you know 'em without seeing 'em as an adult. Because:



When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, [and] I reasoned like a child. [But] When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now [unless and until we do likewise, ladies and gentlemen] we see but a poor reflection ... [and] [only] know in part – 1 Corinthians 13:11-12 NIV

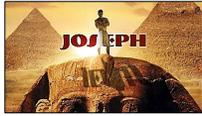


For the next few weeks, we're gonna dive into the uncensored unpleasantness of God's stories, as curated for us by the Lord Himself.

Joseph's horrific journey highlights **God's purpose, peace, and power against a dark backdrop of abuse, neglect, and abandonment.** And we get to watch it gradually play out in the lives of those who trust Him – and those who don't. Because it reflects our own hopes and fears, desires and disappointments, and unhealed and hidden shame. And above all, **it's one story of the One who creates from nothing by calling and healing the ungodly.** Children's teachers edit these stories into simple narratives with clear moral lessons. But the truth is, **these stories are complex and messy.** Because people are pretty messed up. And **the only real hero is the Lord!** And that's the point. Over and over the Lord's collection of stories validates the wisdom to:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; [if it leads you away and astray from His will, His Word, or His ways; but let go of control and] in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. – Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV*

Which doesn't mean you stop thinking. It means that **you stop fretting and devising plans that violate His nature.** It means we yield our will to His will whenever the two are not in unity. And yet, each story also illustrates how **our Father has factored all our messiness into His eternal equations.** And all He asks is that we enjoy His stories, and put ourselves in 'em, so He can speak to us through 'em. And thus, **Genesis isn't a resource to be referenced, it's a reality to be entered.**



And so, although my *goal* is usually to see *how much* we can get *out* of God's Word, in *this limited series*, I want us to see *how much* we can get *into* it! Cuz, **the more we get into it, the more we'll get out of it.** And the more we get out of it, **the more clearly we can hear God speak to our heart.** Previously on the *dysfunctional drama* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: **Abraham favors Ishmael over Isaac.** And then **Isaac favors Esau over Jacob.** And then **Jacob favors Joseph over Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, and Zebulun!** The sons who become the tribes of Israel. And Joseph's epic journey epically foreshadows Jesus: called by God but rejected and betrayed by his own; sold-out for the price of a slave; unjustly convicted and descends into an underground dungeon, and though thought to be dead, is raised to rule in power and glory at the right hand of god (with a little "g"), to save his people and a dying world, as the only source of the bread of life; and **though tempted, remains true;** and **though falsely accused, remains faithful.** And, just like Jesus:

Joseph is a fruitful vine ... because of the Shepherd, the Rock ... the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above ... [and] the deep that lies below ... all these rest on the head of Joseph ... the prince among his brothers. – Genesis 49:22-26 NIV

[And 1,900 years later, another] Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. – Matthew 1:16 NAS

And the Good Shepherd, the Rock of Salvation, and the Prince of Peace. And yet, little Joe lives on as a shining example of the promise of the Almighty.

[For] We know [not feel, hope, or think] that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son – Romans 8:28-29 NIV

And the heart of the story comes at the end, in the form of grace, when Joseph concludes:

"You [brothers only] intended to harm me, but God intended it [your harm] for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." – Genesis 50:20 NIV

How we react to those who hurt us is far more important than how we've been hurt. Because **our response reveals where our trust really lies.** If you want peace that passes understanding, you gotta know – not feel, hope, or assume – He's taking the sin of the destroyers and haters and abusers, and making it the means of their salvation and our eternal best! Because, **His light lives to break into brokenness,** to bring total eternal healing – **no matter how much hate is in our heart, or how profoundly we've messed things up.** And that's the Gospel of Jesus, according to ...

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his [older] brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, [two of] his [107-year-old] father's [three living] wives, [Joseph's mom had died] and he brought their father a bad report about them. [Cuz they spoke hatefully to him] Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age [90!] – Genesis 37:2-4 NIV



And when *Jacob's #1 son*, Reuben *slept* with Jacob's #3 baby-mama Bilhah, **Jacob stripped him of his birthright, and skipped over sons 2-10**, and gave Reuben's *authority and privileges* to son #11.



And [Jacob] made a *richly ornamented robe* for him. [And *made things so much worse* for him, cuz] When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they *hated* him and could not speak a *kind word* [lit. *shalom*] to him. – Genesis 37:2-4 NIV

Know when they *first saw*, with *soul-shattering certainty*, that their *dad* loved #11 more than #1-10? When **he made them expendable human-shields to protect little Joe's life**. The *family caravan* was about to *collide* with Jacob's twin Esau, who'd been *murderously stewing* for 20 years after Jacob *manipulated* him into *forfeiting his birthright* for a *bowl of stew*, and then *deceived* their father, Isaac, into giving him *Esau's blessing!* So, there *might* be *blood*. Because:

There was *Esau*, coming with his *four hundred men*; so [Jacob] *divided* the children among [their mothers] *Leah*, [with *six sons*] *Rachel* [with *Joseph*] and the two *maidservants*. [Bilhah and Zilpah with *four* and] He put the *maidservants* and *their children* in *front*, *Leah* and *her children* *next*, and *Rachel* and *Joseph* in the *rear*. [Can you *imagine* being pushed *out front?*] ... But [the *good news is*] Esau *ran* to meet Jacob and *embraced* him; he *threw his arms* around his *neck* and *kissed* him. – Genesis 33:1-4 NIV

The *bad news* is that **those ten disposable sons never forgot the rank their father assigned to them that day**. And when they saw how he *favored* little Joe, they *hated* him; and *then*, when Jacob *skipped over* them and “made a *richly ornamented robe* for him”, it wasn't so *much* a *robe*, as a *fuse* ... and it's *lit* ... and if it was *soaked* in *gas* it wouldn't've been more *volatile*. And *then*:

Joseph had a *dream*, [they're sheaves of wheat *bowing to him*] and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. [And] He said to them, “*Listen* to this *dream* ... *your sheaves* gathered around mine and *bowed down* to it.” ... And they hated him all the more because of his *dream* and *what* he had *said*. Then he had *another* dream, [they're now *stars*, but still *bowing to him*] and ... when he told his *father* as *well* as his *brothers*, his father *rebuked* him ... [but] His brothers were jealous of him – Genesis 37:5-11 NIV

Because **the brothers are now believers**. Because, as *Joseph* later *explains* to *Pharaoh*:

The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in *two forms* is that the matter has been *firmly decided* by God, and God will *do it soon*. – Genesis 41:32 NIV

Which *means* the *ten* need to *act fast* and take *drastic action* to keep #11 from becoming #1.

Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near *Shechem*, and Israel [Jacob] said to Joseph ... “I am going to send you to them.” [55 miles as the *bird flies*, 20 hours as the *man walks*; *alone*; through *rough* country; wearing a *richly ornamented robe*] “Very well,” he replied. [Seems he can *hold his own*; so he *readily* puts himself in *harm's way* for the *sake* of those who *hate* him. That's so like *Jesus!* But, how *so* is it like *you?*] So [Jacob] said to him, “Go and see if all is *well* [lit. *shalom*] with your brothers ... [the *very thing* they *refused* to even *speak* to him] and bring word back to me.” – Genesis 37:12-14 NIV

Shechem *today* looks like *this*. But *back in the day*, it looked like *this*. And *this* is *where*:



Two of Jacob's sons, *Simeon* and *Levi* ... attacked the unsuspecting city, [cuz *Shechem's Prince Shechem had raped their sister (Gen 34:1-2)*] killing every male. ... [and] The [other] sons of *Jacob* came ... [and] *carried off* all their *wealth* and *all their women and children* – Genesis 34:25-29 NIV



So, when Joseph's story *begins*, *his family includes these women and children whose husbands, sons, brothers, and fathers were murdered by Simeon and Levi* – about whom *Jacob* says, "*Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and ... so cruel!*" (Gen 49:7) *Quite the family dynamic!* So *Jacob's a bit concerned for the shalom of his sons in Shechem*. And his *new #1 son* is on his way to *check on them*. And *his cold and cruel brothers* are *fully aware* of what it *means* if his *dreams* are *fulfilled*.



[And] They saw him in the *distance*, and before he *reached* them, they plotted to *kill him*. "*Here comes that dreamer!*" they said to each other. "*Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these [underground water] cisterns* and say that a *ferocious animal devoured* him. Then we'll see what *comes of his dreams*." – Genesis 37:18-20 NIV

But understand, *their sinful reaction stems from their unredeemed, unresolved wounds*. We're *all wounded* and we're *born selfish*. *But we choose to respond in Godly ways or selfish ways*. And *how we respond* is *more significant* than *how we've been hurt*. Because, *in the end, sin is how we express our hostility toward God*. And so, though *#1 son Reuben* had his *status taken and given* to the *arrogant kid* in the approaching *flashy coat*, of their father's *favor* ...



When *Reuben* heard this, *he tried to rescue* him from their hands. "*Let's not take his life,*" he said. "*Don't shed any blood.*" ... [But] when *Joseph* came to his brothers, they *stripped* him of his *robe* ... and *threw* him into the [empty] cistern. – Genesis 37:21-24 NIV

How do you *think* he *reacted*? It doesn't say. But 22 years *later*, in their *own dungeon*:



[His [guilt-ridden] brothers] said to one another, "*Surely we are being punished because of our brother*. We saw how *distressed* he was when he *pleaded* with us for his *life*, but we would not *listen*; that's why *this distress* has come upon us." – Genesis 42:21 NIV

You see, this *isn't* the *story of a super-spiritual super-human*. Just the *regular kind: bleeding and pleading and snot-running-sobbing*. And *praying like he's never prayed before*. "*Come on, God! Where's Your goodness and power and purpose and love?!*" And, if *you've put childish ways behind* you, you *know* (and *dislike*) the *answer*. *It's in the pit*. Cuz He says He'll never *leave* us or *forsake* us. And He *means* it. Which *means*, like *little Joe*, *our journey will require a few pit stops*.

[And] As they [uncaringly] sat down to [calmly] eat their meal, [while Joseph begged for his life] they looked up and saw a caravan of *Ishmaelites* – Genesis 37:25 NIV

*Jackpot!* For the *brothers*, and the *Ishmaelites*. But *that's a story in and of itself*, for *next week*.