

Our Derails Are God's Detours!

In Genesis 50, we learn about Joseph of the Old Testament. He was a devout dreamer. Even at the tender age of seventeen, he had been assured by God through dreams that he would one day be a ruler and that his older brothers would be subject to him. Joseph was foolish and naïve enough to tell his brothers about his dreams. They hated him for it because it exalted him over them. One day, when they were out in the fields, they saw him coming and decided to kill him. However, the oldest brother, Reuben, prevented the murder. Instead, they sold Joseph like a common slave to some traders in a camel caravan headed toward Egypt. Just imagine yourself as Joseph. Your hands are tied behind you as you are transported as a helpless hostage in the hands of uncaring strangers toward a foreign land. You would be thinking, where is God in all this?

Almost everybody has had at least one derailed dream, and we can understand the silent tears that must have rolled down the face of that teenager Joseph, whose dreams faded as he was carried farther from home. Fortunately, Beyond Every "Dead-End" Sign Is God's Detour Sign! When the world says, "Dead end, give up," God says, "Stand firm and see the deliverance of the Lord." When the world says, "It's impossible," the Word says, "with God all things are possible." When the world says, "There is no way," Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." When you face a dead-end, God can always find a good detour.

Down in Egypt, God helped with the first detour as Joseph was sold to Potiphar, who turned over to him the management of his household. Joseph had two major gifts: management and the ability to discern God's purposes through dreams. Unfortunately, Potiphar's hot-blooded wife harassed Joseph morally, and when he would not agree to an affair, she accused him falsely of assault. So, off to jail he went. Another dead-end! But even in jail, God helped him find a good detour. The jailer put Joseph in charge of the prison. Joseph interpreted the dreams of two inmates who had worked in Pharaoh's household. One of them, Pharaoh's cupbearer, was released and returned to Pharaoh's employment. He promised to remember Joseph and help him. But he promptly forgot. Another dead-end. But two years later, Pharaoh had a dream and desperately needed someone to interpret it. His cupbearer suddenly remembered Joseph. Joseph, filled with God's wisdom, interpreted the dream. He also advised Pharaoh on wise policies for the nation. Pharaoh was so impressed that he elevated him to second-in-command. Once again, God transformed a dead-end street into a good detour.

From the age of seventeen, Joseph knew he would one day be used in a powerful way by God. But it took twenty-three years for that dream to become reality. When a terrible famine threatened to destroy Joseph's family back in Palestine, he was able to save them because of his position of power. The entire family was brought down to Egypt and resettled. The brothers were reconciled with Joseph. God's covenant community was preserved. Yet, following the death of Joseph's father Jacob, the brothers thought that once Jacob died, Joseph would get even, so they came to him, saying, "Your father left these instructions to Joseph: Forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed against you." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them." Joseph knew that each derail was just a detour to God, and that what others meant for evil God had used for Good.

May we each trust God in that way with our lives! May we, like Joseph, never give up; use what we have; and trust that God will find a way! May we trust that each derail we face is just a detour to God, and that what others might mean for evil God can use for Good.