

Meant for Evil, Used for Good

Have you ever had a “Joseph moment”? I had one the other day.

By Joseph, I’m referencing the biblical character—Abraham’s great-grandson—who was the second youngest of 12 brothers. Although favored by his father, he was hated by his brothers, who soon sold him as a slave to Egypt. (What a great family, huh?)

While in Egypt, he rose to the top as the employee of a prominent man, only to be falsely accused of raping the man’s wife. This offense landed him in prison for years. But these prison years were not wasted, for events that happened there soon catapulted Joseph to second-in-command in ancient Egypt, where he orchestrated a plan to save that country—and many others—from death by famine.

Joseph’s story finally wraps up when his brothers come to town to buy food, and learn that the brother they treated terribly now has power to make their lives miserable. But he doesn’t. Instead, Joseph chooses to see the providence of God in his life circumstances—both good and bad—and forgive, telling his brothers, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”

We all have difficult things in life. A friend betrays us, a family member explodes in fury and refuses to interact for months, we’re falsely accused at work—even the government and society in general seem to go after us with unjust taunts of racism or fascism. And when those things happen, it’s easy to let our hurt and betrayal get the best of us, consuming our thoughts and actions for months.

I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if Joseph wrestled with those same feelings. At some point, however, he was able to rise above those wrestlings, forgiving those who wronged him and seeing God’s fingerprints in their actions, despite how

terrible they were. And as I began to realize the other day, getting glimpses of God's fingerprints in the difficulties of life puts a whole new perspective on things.

So often it's easy to view God as the meanie up in Heaven who doesn't hear our prayers or give us what we want. But the reality is that those things we view as mean or difficult or uncomfortable or mistakes are really just His way of looking out for us and seeking our good, even if it might not seem like it right away.

Twentieth-century minister A. M. Overton said it best in his poem "He Maketh No Mistake":

My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I'm glad I know,
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead
For He doth know the way.

Though night be dark and it may seem
That day will never break;
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.

There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll simply trust
And leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift
And plain it all He'll make,
Through all the way, though dark to me,
He made not one mistake.

Are you going through a difficult time? Or is there something in your past you just have difficulty forgiving and forgetting? Or maybe you're overwhelmed with the direction of the world, wondering how anything good can come out of the increasing evil we see swelling around us.

Look for the ways God is using those evil things to accomplish His good. It will change your perspective to realize that the things we think are mistakes, are really just the plot twists to make the good seem all the more delightful and surprising when it comes.

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