



**STRUGGLES - TEACHING SERIES
LESSON 3**

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Lesson 3: God Turns our Struggles into Victory

Bible: Quick overview of the struggles Joseph faced (Genesis 37-50)

Bottom Line: When life doesn't turn out as expected, continue to be faithful because God is always doing something in and around you.

IN-PERSON OPENING GAME: Adjective Scribble-ish

In-person Game (supplies):

- Paper and Pencils

In-person Game (prep and set-up):

- Split up the group into teams of 5 or 6, depending on the size of your group. It is okay to have odd numbers in teams.
- Each team will need pencils for each player and a piece of paper. The paper can be small like a sticky note or notecard.
- Have the team sit in a circle.
- Call one person from each team to come up and get the secret Adjective.

In-person Game (how to play):

- The team member with the secret Adjective will go back to their team.
- They will not tell anyone what the Adjective is and instead, will draw what it is. (No words allowed)
- Then they will pass their picture to the next player and that player will write down what they think the picture is.
- Then they will pass it to the 3rd person who will draw what Adjective was written down by the second player.
- It will continue to the last person, who will either get a word or a drawing.
- If they get a drawing, they need to write down what they think it is.
- If they get a word, they need to draw it.
- At the end of the round, the team member who had the secret Adjective will tell their team what the secret Adjective is.
- The team can look over the pictures and words and see how well they were able to figure it out.
- You can play multiple rounds of this game-changing up the secret Adjective and who goes first depending on how much time you have.
- Examples of Secret Adjectives:
 - Healthy
 - Loud
 - Happy

- Macho
- Funny
- You can find more examples online.

ONLINE OPENING GAME: Adjective Gif Scramble

Online Game (supplies):

- Ability to text or message one or more youth member

Online Game (prep and set-up):

- Get permission from a parent or guardian to text one youth member privately from the rest of the group on their phone or parents' phone.

Online Game (how to play):

- Text this youth member an adjective. (see list of adjectives in the in-person version)
- Then they will post a gif onto the chat area of the app or site you are using to meet.
- Then the first person to guess what the Adjective is by the gif wins.
- You can play multiple rounds of this. It's more fun if you have permission to message more than one youth, so they can all take a turn choosing the gif for the adjective.

TEACH

That game can get totally twisted around when you aren't in on the secret adjective, but isn't funny to see what everyone was guessing?

In the end, it's always interesting to see how the adjective got all turned around.

You know Joseph's story from the Bible is a long journey of twists and turns.

At every turn, Joseph is up against a new challenge, but he perseveres in times of trouble because he relies on God.

Genesis 37-50 tells the story of Joseph his brothers and the very twisted journey that he goes on.

Joseph was the son of Jacob.

He was his Dad's youngest son and his favorite.

Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful coat.

Joseph's brothers were envious of their father's affection for Joseph, and they hated him.

Joseph's brother's hatred grew even worse when Joseph had two dreams.

In one dream, Joseph and his brothers were out in a field and his bundle of grain stood up.

His brother's bundles of grain bowed down before his bundle.

In the second dream the sun, moon, and stars bowed to Joseph.

Imagine how the brothers might have been feeling.

Not only does their father already favor Joseph, but based on the dreams, it seems God favors him, too.

God does love Joseph very much and has huge plans for his life because Joseph has a good heart.

Both dreams were prophecies of what God planned for Joseph's life.

Not only was Joseph the youngest but he was also not a royal.

It seems far-fetched for him to be in any role of leadership.

But that is how God works.

He often uses the underdog.

Joseph's brothers plotted to kill him, but they were worried about how their father would react.

Instead, they sold him into slavery and made it look like he was eaten by a wild animal.

Spoiler alert: This is just one of many struggles Joseph faces.

Slavery is pretty much the opposite of being a leader.

It's hard not to consider what Joseph might have first thought when he was sold.

This is the boy who was to be a leader.

When Joseph got to Egypt, he was sold to Potiphar, who was an officer of the Pharaoh.

Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph and that everything he did was successful.

Potiphar made him a personal attendant in charge of his home.

Joseph's brothers didn't know what was going on with him in Egypt, but I am pretty sure they weren't expecting Joseph to be given any position of power.

Has there been any time in your life where you felt like the underdog?

Like everyone was rooting for you to lose.

It surely does not feel good to be considered the underdog.

Be ready. Joseph's story has a plot twist.

While Joseph was attending to Potiphar's home, Potiphar's wife took an interest in Joseph.

She accused Joseph of being inappropriate with her, and Joseph was sent to jail.

Poor Joseph.

It surely seems that he's bound to stay the underdog, but God has bigger plans for Joseph's life.

While in jail, Joseph became close to the guard and the guard trusted him and placed him in charge of the whole jail.

No matter what happened to Joseph, God was at his side changing things and working on his behalf.

When we are struggling with something, we can't always see how God is working on our behalf.

This is where it takes faith and trust in God to allow Him to work on our behalf and change our struggles into victories.

During Joseph's story, Joseph couldn't see how God was working, but you can see how Joseph trusted in Him.

While Joseph was in prison, he interpreted two dreams: one for the Pharaoh's cupbearer and the other was his baker.

The cupbearer was later released from jail and one day the Pharaoh had a dream.

The cupbearer remembered Joseph and told the Pharaoh that he could interpret dreams.

The Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Joseph interpreted the Pharaoh's dream.

The Pharaoh was very pleased, and Joseph was put in charge over Pharaoh's entire court,

Only, the Pharaoh was above him.

Joseph ruled all over Egypt, and the Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name and a wife.

Under Joseph's care and God's guidance, the land is very fruitful.

Joseph had enough to store up grain and supplies.

After seven years, there was a famine in Egypt.

Joseph, who had listened to God, was able to help the Egyptian people by feeding them with the food that had been stored up.

Joseph went from a slave to being second in command over all of Egypt.

We have a great opportunity to read about Joseph's story after it all happened.

Since we can read his story, we can more easily understand how God was working out each struggle of Joseph's life so he could be who God called him to be.

There's more to Joseph's story.

You might be wondering what happened to Joseph's brothers.

Well, Joseph's brothers ended up having a really difficult time back at home.

They struggled with famine and almost starved.

Their father had another son, younger than Joseph, named Benjamin.

Joseph's brothers heard about the grain that was being given out in Egypt.

They traveled to Egypt to get food so that they and their families wouldn't starve.

When Joseph's brothers came to Joseph for the grain, they bowed down before Joseph, whom they did not recognize.

But Joseph recognized them.

Joseph imprisoned his brothers but after a few days, he released all but one brother.

He sent the rest back home with bags full of grain.

He also returns all their money.

Joseph told them if they brought back Benjamin, he would release their brother.

At first, Joseph was a little harsh to his brothers by imprisoning him.

In the end, he ended up being gracious to them by giving them all the grain for free.

I do not know how all of you would have reacted in the same situation as Joseph.

But I can imagine that some of us might have wanted to keep the brothers imprisoned for much longer for what they had done.

Because Joseph had a relationship with God, he knew that even though his brothers didn't make good choices, God was good, and he should be good to them too.

Let's go back to the time when I asked you to think about when you were an underdog.

How did you feel towards the people who were calling you an underdog?

I am sure we have a lot of various feelings.

Maybe some of us would be angry, and maybe some of us would think they are right.

I am sure glad Joseph did not believe his brothers.

Instead, he trusted God that even though he was an underdog, he was capable of great things.

Joseph's brothers did end up returning to Egypt with their youngest brother Benjamin.

Joseph kept his identity a secret at first, but in the end, he told his brothers who he was and embraced them.

He even sent them back home with more grain and the money they brought.

Later Joseph had permission from the Pharaoh to move his whole family to Egypt.

Wow!

What a great journey of twists and turns!

But wait...the journey isn't quite finished yet!

With Joseph's family living in Egypt, he was still in charge of Egypt.

The famine continued to get worse.

Eventually, the storehouses were out of grain.

The people of Egypt went to Joseph for help.

Joseph had them give over their livestock in exchange for food since they were out of money and all the money was in the pharaoh's treasury.

Once the people of Egypt ran out of livestock, they sold land to Joseph.

Everything was given to the pharaoh.

In the end, the people of Egypt became slaves to the pharaoh.

Joseph had the people give $\frac{1}{5}$ of their seed to the Pharaoh and keep $\frac{4}{5}$ th for themselves.

The people of Egypt were happy with Joseph and how he took care of them throughout the famine.

We can learn from Joseph's story that we might not always be seeing God at work when we are in the thick of trouble.

But we need to have faith that God is going to work things out for us and that He will make things even better than we can imagine when we trust in Him.

We can also learn that even though we might be considered an Underdog, it doesn't mean that God won't use us.

Joseph's brother counted him out.

But because Joseph trusted God, he overcame all the obstacles put in his path.

In our small groups, we are going to discuss being the underdog.

We can't always see God working in our lives until we get the bigger picture.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a story from one of your favorite books about an underdog?
Examples: *Harry Potter*, Luke from *Star Wars*, *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*
2. What made these characters underdogs? What did they have to overcome?
3. Would the story be as exciting if it ended before we ever knew what happened to the underdog?
4. When have you ever felt like the underdog? (Do not make anyone answer if they do not feel comfortable sharing, but be ready to share your own story).
5. Why do you think God uses underdogs? Example: Underdogs can't rely on their own abilities but on God's.
6. How do you think the brothers felt after they saw what Joseph had become?
7. What kind of struggles do we see right now in the world? Examples: Covid, oppression, hunger
8. Can we see God working in any of these areas? Examples: medical workers, new laws, food banks
9. Do you think God causes all the struggles of the world?

Example Response from a leader: No God doesn't, we live in a fallen world where sin and bad choices cause struggles and we can see that happening in Joseph's story by the brothers' choices and the wife of Potiphar, but we have the assurance that God will use our struggles.

10. What can we do in the midst of our struggles? Example: Pray and lean into God.