

LESSON 2

How Could This Happen to Me?

LESSON HIGHLIGHTS

All of us will experience mistreatment in this life. When it happens, we have two options: give in to the temptation to blame others and complain to God or let go of the offense and leave it in God's hands. If we choose to trust Him and not to be offended, we'll come out of it better, not bitter.

No human on earth and no devil out of hell can ever take you out of God's will! He holds your destiny securely in His hands. The only one who can take you out of His will is you.

Our heavenly Father is never surprised, shocked, or shaken by what we go through. His plans for us are solidified—not shattered—by the enemy's schemes.

God has already laid out the master plan for our lives. Before Earth's foundation, He chose us as His secret weapon for this time. He has a specific life mission for each of us to complete but training always comes before a mission.

Often, what looks like an abortion of God's plan can actually be the road to its fulfillment—if we stay obedient to Him and free of offense.

STEPS TO FREEDOM

STEP 6 - CHOOSE TO TRUST GOD

Trust the Lord completely; don't ever trust yourself. In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success. —Proverbs 3:5-6 TLB

Have you ever played "The Blame Game"? Sadly, we all have. It's a terrible tendency each of us can fall into when things don't turn out the way we planned. Adam and Eve were the first to play it, and it's possible Joseph played it while he was in prison. Maybe he wrestled with thoughts like, "If it weren't for my brothers, I could be home right now, enjoying a great life with my father. Have you ever thought like that? How would you fill in the blanks to complete this sentence?"

"If it weren't for _____, I'd have a better _____ (job, marriage, family, selfimage, social life, bank account, or something else you want but don't have)."

What long-term effects will likely result from a mindset of blaming others?

What healthy shift in perspective would serve you better?

For help, check out Psalm 34:9-10 and 37:1-9; Proverbs 3:5-8; Isaiah 26:3-4; and Jeremiah 17:7-8.

Do all things without grumbling and faultfinding and complaining [against God] and questioning and doubting [among yourselves], that you may show yourselves to be blameless and guileless, innocent and uncontaminated, children of God without blemish . . . —Philippians 2:14-15 AMP

The people of Israel, whom God had miraculously delivered out of Egyptian bondage, were frequently offended with Moses and God because of their hardships. They constantly blamed them and complained about the circumstances they were experiencing.

What happened because they refused to deal with and let go of their offenses? 15

Check out Numbers 14:20-35; Psalm 95:8-11; and Hebrews 3:16-19. What can you personally learn from this example and apply to your life?

STEP 7 - STAY THE COURSE

God, teach me lessons for living so I can stay the course. Give me insight so I can do what You tell me— my whole life one long, obedient response. —Psalm 119:33-34 MSG

God’s Word says, “Many evils confront the [consistently] righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19 AMP). Our lives are held securely in His hands, and no one is able to snatch us away from Him (see John 10:28-29).

The only one who can take you out of God’s will is you. How? One major way is through holding on to offense. The longer we choose not to forgive, the more resentful and bitter we become. The more bitter we are, the more vulnerable we become to the temptation to get even.

Carefully read Romans 12:17-20; 1 Peter 3:8-9; and Hebrews 10:30-31 and explain what God says about getting revenge.

If you take matters into your own hands, what will not happen? What will you hinder?

With His strength, how does God want you to respond to the people who hurt you?

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.” —Victor Frankl

Joseph stayed the course! He chose not to harbor hatred or take revenge on his brothers, and he was rewarded. What’s God’s promise to you for staying the course? Read Galatians 6:9; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:6 and 10; and Mark 10:29-30. What’s the Holy Spirit showing you in these passages?

. . . Trust the Lord; and remember that other Christians all around the world are going through these sufferings too. After you have suffered a little while, our God, who is full of kindness through Christ, will give you His eternal glory. He personally will come and pick you up, and set you firmly in place, and make you stronger than ever. —1 Peter 5:9-10 TLB

STEP 8 - BELIEVE GOD IS PRESENT

God doesn’t miss a thing—He’s alert to good and evil alike. —Proverbs 15:3 MSG

When we go through dark, difficult times, it’s encouraging to know that God is with us. He’s promised to never leave us. Nothing in our lives comes as a surprise or shock to Him.

Many people, both Christian and non-Christian alike, ask questions about God. Here are three common ones. Carefully read the Scriptures for the answers and write what the Lord shows you.

Question: “Is God involved in my life?”

God ANSWERS: Psalm 37:23; Proverbs 16:9 and 20:24; and Hebrews 13:5-6.

Question: “Is God aware and does He care about what concerns me?”

God ANSWERS: Psalm 139:17-18; Isaiah 49:15-16; Matthew 6:25-34; and 1 Peter 5:7

Question: “Does God love me and have a good plan for my life?”

God ANSWERS: 1 John 3:1; Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 29:11; and Psalm 40:1-5

King David ruled Israel for forty years and lived about 1,000 years before Christ. Through many highs and lows of life, he was moved by the Holy Spirit to declare:

“O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. You go before me and follow me. You place Your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

“You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in Your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.” —Psalm 139:1-6 and 13-16
NLT

Slowly reread this eye-opening passage. What aspects of your life is God aware of? How do these verses breathe new life and hope into you?

STEP 9 - COOPERATE WITH GOD'S REFINEMENT

. . . God's correction is always right and for our best good, that we may share His holiness. — Hebrews 12:10 TLB

God, our heavenly Father, loves us beyond description and wants the absolute best for our lives. So like every good dad, He brings us correction when we need it. In Scripture, correction is sometimes described as troubles, trials, tribulation, hardships, and discipline. Regardless of the name, God has one primary goal in mind—to refine us.

Charles Stanley, seasoned pastor and insightful teacher of over forty-five years, has experienced his share of God's correction. Adversity, as he describes it . . .

“. . . is not simply a tool. It is God's most effective tool for the advancement of our spiritual lives. The circumstances and events that we see as setbacks are oftentimes the very things that launch us into periods of intense spiritual growth. Once we begin to understand this, and accept it as a spiritual fact of life, adversity becomes easier to bear.”

Are you enduring a difficult time in your life right now? It could be that God is correcting your course to ensure you reach the destination He's planned. Take a moment to describe the season of life you're in.

One question often plagues us when we suffer: “Did I do something wrong to deserve this?” Keep in mind Jesus suffered, but never sinned. Read and ponder the description of His rejection and suffering in Isaiah 53:2-5. What reason(s) for suffering is God showing you from His example?

Also check out Joseph's response to his brothers after he had suffered in slavery and imprisonment (see Genesis 45:4-8).

What is God's purpose in discipline, and what blessings can you expect when you surrender to it? Carefully read Hebrews 12:5-11 and 1 Peter 1:6-7 and write what the Holy Spirit shows you.

Consider also Zechariah 13:9 and Malachi 3:1-3

. . . Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever. —1 Timothy 4:7-8 MSG

STEP 10 - HOLD TIGHTLY TO YOUR DREAM

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise. —Hebrews 10:23 NLT

Joseph had a dream, but it took over twenty years for it to become a reality. In the middle of all his struggles and pain, he didn't know the end of his story any more than we know ours.

What's your dream? What ideas and desires has God planted in your heart? How can you harness your gifts and talents to bring the life and love of Jesus to your world? Take time to write it.

Then the Lord answered me, "Write the vision. Make it clear on tablets so that anyone can read it quickly. The vision will still happen at the appointed time. It hurries toward its goal. It won't be a lie. If it's delayed, wait for it. It will certainly happen. It won't be late. —Habakkuk 2:2-3 GW

Carefully read Habakkuk 2:2-3 above, along with Numbers 23:19 and 1 Kings 8:56. What does God remind us of again and again? How do these promises encourage you?

David Jeremiah has served as a pastor, author, and teacher on radio and television. As a survivor of two bouts with cancer, he shares the candid details of his journey in his book *When Your Life Falls Apart*. Here's a bit of his insight on God's timing:

"The same God who has been there for you in the past is the God who is going to be there for you in the future. He will bring resolution in His own time, according to His own purposes. We become preoccupied with our circumstances; God is preoccupied with our character. He will allow the tough times for the higher good of our character until He is finished with the great work that is invisible to our earthly eyes."

Indeed, character is crucial in God's eyes. That's what was forming in Joseph through all the twists and turns of trouble he faced. How can we tell that he was truly free of offense when his dream finally came true? Carefully read how he treated his brothers when he revealed his true identity (Genesis 45:1-15) and after their father died (Genesis 50:15-21). What did he not do that he certainly could've done? What did he give his brothers that they didn't deserve? What does his example show you about your own character?

In this lesson, we shared a lot about Joseph. He was sold as a slave—by his brothers nonetheless! —, accused of rape by his boss, and spent over a decade in jail. Yet when looking back on all that took place, Joseph concluded:

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. —Genesis 50:20-21

Joseph had learned this profound truth: Absolutely no man, no woman, no child or devil can get you out of the will of God. There is only one person who can get you out of the will of God—you!

God promises to work all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes—that promise includes the pains, disappointments, and betrayals of your past. Yes, God can even give them a beautiful part in your story. The question is, will you allow God to redeem and restore what has been stolen from you? Or will you make yourself lord of your pain?

Today, we challenge you to ask God to reveal the redemptive threads in your pain and disappointment. Ask Him for eyes to see your journey as He sees it. Write down what God reveals to you.

God is not cruel. He will restore and redeem anything that was taken or compromised. But you have to trust in the timing of His judgment and the power of His grace.

FINAL THOUGHTS

. . . Mistreatment always brings us to a crossroads. One trail is paved with blaming and complaining. The other is marked by trusting God and leaving offenses in His hands. When we choose to let go and believe God has our back, we grow better—not bitter—and stay on the path of our divine destiny.

Use this fork in the road to consider what offenses you've encountered on the way here. Which route would you have taken before you began this study? How about now? Take this moment

and ask God to open your eyes to the truth about your past and present struggles. Pour your heart out on paper, capturing the insight He gives you.