

You'll Get Through This: Session 1

You'll Get Through This

In large or small ways, we all come to moments of deep distress: a doctor's report, a broken engagement, a poor personal choice, a shift in the stock market, a relational betrayal, a corporate downsize, or one of a million other unexpected events. In these times, the blue skies of life can seem to disappear behind the clouds of our circumstances and a chilly uncertainty runs down our spine. We begin to wonder if there is a way through the pain and heartache of what's ahead. We look down at the fuel gauge on the console of our life and it registers "empty." We might feel emotionally depleted, physically exhausted, relationally hopeless, spiritually barren, or mentally fatigued.

In these times the enemy of our soul wants to whisper, with sinister intent, "You will never make it. This is the end of the road for you."

God speaks a radically different message. Through his Word, by his Holy Spirit, and through the lives of wonderful examples, God declares with heavenly wisdom, "You'll get through this. It won't be painless. It won't be quick. But I will use this mess for good. In the meantime, don't be foolish or naive. But don't despair either."

How are you doing today? Does your challenge appear insurmountable? If so, there is a story you absolutely have to hear. It is about a young man named Joseph who discovered that God is near even when it seems there is no way to make it through.

In the six sessions of this small group journey, you will learn that God is ready and able to help you, whatever your dilemma. If you don't believe it, just ask Joseph — you will find him at the bottom of a pit.

Watch video presentation / Followed by Questions to Ponder & Discuss

1. In the video, Max talks about the hard times we face on life's journey, and he says, God will use this mess for good." How have you experienced this in your life?

Read: Genesis 37:12 – 24

2. Tell about a time you ended up in a cistern and how you got there. How did you feel while you were in the cistern? How did you plead with God and even with people in an effort to get out of that painful situation?

3. If you are in a cistern right now, briefly share the situation (if you feel comfortable doing so) and how your group members can support and care for you in this time.

Read: Genesis 37:1 – 11

4. Some of the pain we face in life comes from the very people who should love and care for us — our family. This was certainly true for Joseph. What dysfunctions and unhealthy patterns in Joseph's family led to heartache and pain?

5. When you consider the road of life you have traveled thus far, how has your family (or maybe your church family) caused you pain and heartache? (Please refrain from using specific names; simply share generally about the experience.) Why do these wounds pierce so deeply?

6. There are many ways we can respond when thrown into a pit by family, friends, strangers, or life's circumstances. What are some of the typical responses?

Read: Genesis 50:19 – 21

7. Years after Joseph's brothers threw him into a cistern, their father dies and they fear that Joseph will at last exact revenge. What do you learn about Joseph's heart and outlook on life as you read his response in this critical moment? What can you learn from his example?

8. If you were in Joseph's shoes and came to a point where those who had hurt you were now under your power, how do you think you would have responded?

Now, replace the hypothetical scenario with a real situation in your life. How do you believe God wants you to respond to and treat someone who has hurt you?

9. Max talks about how God re-wove the evil planned by Joseph's brothers and redeemed it for heavenly good. How has God rewoven something that was done to you with evil intent? What good did he bring from it?

10. Joseph's journey from a cistern in his teenage years to finally becoming a man of influence in Pharaoh's court lasted about twenty years. How did walking a hard road over time shape Joseph's character and outlook on life?

How has God used a journey of struggle in your life to shape who you are today? How have you looked up and seen God and drawn closer to him through your times in a pit?

Closing Prayer

Spend time in your group praying in any of the following directions:

- Turn your voice and eyes upward in prayer and ask for the ability to see the face of Jesus looking at you as you do.
- Ask God to be with your group members in the cisterns of life and pray for an attitude of grace, even in the darkest pits.
- Lift up prayers of forgiveness for those who have thrown you into a cistern, whether recently or as far back as childhood.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to unleash his power to re-weave the evil intents of others and bring good from them.

Between Sessions

Look Back Down the Road

Reflecting on your life, identify as many as three cisterns in which you have spent time. Then ponder the person who had a hand in putting you there. Pray for a heart of forgiveness toward these people. Also, think about how God has used their intended evil and turned it toward his glory and good.

Cistern #1

What cistern was I thrown into?

How can I pray for the person(s) who put me there and grow in grace toward them?

How was God with me in that dark time?

What good did God bring through this bad situation? How has God shaped and formed me through what I experienced?

Cistern #2

What cistern was I thrown into?

How can I pray for the person(s) who put me there and grow in grace toward them?

How was God with me in that dark time?

What good did God bring through this bad situation? How has God shaped and formed me through what I experienced?

Cistern #3

What cistern was I thrown into?

How can I pray for the person(s) who put me there and grow in grace toward them?

How was God with me in that dark time?

What good did God bring through this bad situation? How has God shaped and formed me through what I experienced?

Let Vengeance Belong to God

If you have been harboring judgment, anger, or bitterness toward someone who wronged you in the past, reconsider Joseph's story as well as Romans 12:17 – 21:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Self-Examination

Family history can repeat itself. Far too often the abused becomes the abuser, the neglected becomes the neglecter, and sins are passed down to the next generation. Make a list of some of the patterns, sins, and dysfunctions that existed in your home as you grew up. Actually take time to write them down:

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Next, look over this list and do three things:

1. Pray that you will not repeat these patterns in your family.
2. Get help from a pastor or Christian counselor if you have already begun to repeat the sins of the past.
3. As the Lord leads, talk with parents, siblings, or other family members who have hurt you and seek to build bridges of restoration and healing.

"History is redeemed, not in minutes, but in lifetimes."

Journal

Use the space provided below to write reflections on any of the following topics:

- Ways you can extend grace and forgiveness, even to those who have thrown you into a cistern
- How God has shaped and formed you into the person you are today, even through the hard times (especially through the hard times)
- How God has been with you in the cisterns and pits of your life

Recommended Reading

As you consider what you have learned in this session, read chapter 1 of the book *You'll Get Through This* by Max Lucado. In preparation for session 2, you might want to read chapter 2.