

## CREW Bible Study

### Message – What To Do When You Don't Know What To Do - - Week 2

- **BOTTOM LINE:** When there's nothing you can do, God is with you.
- **GOAL:** To have students understand that when circumstances are out of their control, they can be sure God is with them. Even if things in their lives don't feel fixed or better, they can have confidence in God being present.
- **SCRIPTURE:**
  - *Genesis 37:18-32 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. 20 "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. 22 "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— 24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.25 As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.28 So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels[a] of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.29 When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. 30 He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"31 Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe."*
  - *Genesis 39:2 2 The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.*

### MESSAGE

How often do you use emojis when you text? Are you the friend who ends their texts with a string of them? Do you often use them in place of any text at all? Or maybe you prefer GIF's or memes. Do you?

Emojis, GIFs and memes are good for something. They help us talk about our feelings without having to use words. We can send a GIF from "The Office" or a "Tiger King" meme and make our point pretty clear.

Think about a time when you had no words for what just happened, because whatever it was, it shocked you. Think about the emoji, GIF or meme you would have used then. Whatever you have in mind, keep imagining it, because that sets the stage for what we're talking about today.

Have you ever experienced something in your life that left you absolutely speechless? Something that caught you completely off guard? Something that made your life feel uncertain, or caused you a *lot* of hurt?

- Maybe you felt this way when your mom or dad told your family you were going to have to move.
- Maybe you felt this way when you got injured at the start of your sport season and knew you wouldn't be back to play that year.
- Maybe you got a rejection letter from the program or school you were so excited about and you felt this way. It ruined all of the plans you had in mind for yourself.
- Maybe you felt this way when you got the news that your parents were getting divorced, or that your stepmom was expecting a baby.
- Maybe you got dumped. By a boyfriend or girlfriend, or just a friend. Or maybe you went to break up with somebody and they said they were relieved because it wasn't working out. And you were like, "Wait, what???"

Unfortunately, this list could go on and on. The thing about these shockingly painful moments is that they hit us out of nowhere. And because of that, there's no time to plan for them.

- **Sometimes we surprise ourselves by how well we handle it.** You think, "Wow, I figured news like this would break me apart, but I'm actually doing ok."
- **Sometimes we surprise ourselves by how much it tears us apart.** You think, "I don't even know why I'm so upset about this, but I'm a mess!"
- **Sometimes we draw closer to God, but other times we wonder where God is at all.** You think, "why would God let this happen?"

We're all wired differently, so we all experience hurt differently. But that doesn't change the fact that hurt, hurts. And when life hurts, we all find ourselves wondering what to do next. That's why we're doing this message series, "What To Do When You Don't Know What To Do."

We began this series last week talking about Joseph, and we continue his story today. Remember that emoji, GIF or meme you would use if you had no words for how shocked you were? That will absolutely apply to this story.

Joseph had some incredible family drama, and that created a ton of tension in his family. Last week, we heard the story of a dream Joseph shared with his family, one where everyone bowed down to him out of respect and honor. That didn't go over well with his brothers. They were NOT okay with him being their dad's favorite, and they were NOT okay with Joseph sharing his dream of ruling over them one day. So how did the brothers respond? Check this out from Genesis chapter 37, beginning with verse 18.....

*"But they saw Joseph in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him."*

Well, that just went from 0 to 100 really quickly! The story continues.....

*"Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."*

Now, despite his anger towards Joseph, one of his brothers actually had a conscience in this moment. It was his brother Reuben.....

*When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue Joseph from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— 24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.25 As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.28 So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels[a] of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.29 When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. 30 He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"31 Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe."*

Thank goodness for Reuben. He convinced his brothers into Plan B. They could throw Joseph into a well, but at least he would still be alive! Reuben had plans to come back later to rescue Joseph, but by the time he returned, the brothers had sold him as a slave and Joseph was taken away to Egypt. And they had taken his colorful coat, dipped it in animal blood to make it look like they murdered him, and took the coat back to their father to trick him into thinking Joseph was dead.

Seriously??? We simply can't imagine the fear, despair, uncertainty, anger and hurt that Joseph felt. He was betrayed and sold into slavery by his own family, by the brothers that he grew up with. The message being sent was loud and clear. "We don't want you. We're better off without you."

What would you do? What *could* you do? This is clearly a "what to do when you don't know what to do" moment.

Our life stories are obviously different than Joseph's, and we may not be able to completely relate. But we all do experience pain of some kind. We all have scary, painful, or dangerous moments that catch us off guard. We all have moments when life doesn't make sense. We all have moments where we don't have words for what we are going through. We just know that it hurts.

Unfortunately for Joseph, he had way more shocking moments in his future. We'll look at some of those in the next few weeks. But there are five powerful words that show up in the historical account of Joseph's life that can help you and me today too. We see these five words in Genesis, chapter 39 verse 2:

***"The Lord was with Joseph..."***

Joseph didn't have a lot going for him, but in the midst of all of it, God was with him. But know this.....

- God being with him didn't change the reality of Joseph's situation. But it was better than being alone.
- God being with him didn't mean that Joseph could see where the story was going. But God could provide wisdom, meaning he wasn't entirely dependent on himself to get out of the situation.
- God being with him didn't mean that Joseph could easily deal with the things that happened to him. It didn't mean that he had a reason or an explanation for the pain in his life. But it did mean that he didn't have to figure things out all by himself.

And the same is true for you. When there's nothing you can do, you can remember that God is with you. Now, you might think, "Yeah, but I hear that all the time. It sounds kind of superficial. How does that help me?"

Well, as simple as it sounds, knowing that God is with you might be just what you need to keep going, even in the midst of a hopeless situation. It's easy to let hurt feelings, fear or anger overwhelm you. There are lots of reasons to let difficult or unfair situations get the last word. But when you know that God is with you, the uncertainty of life doesn't get the last word. God does. God can give you wisdom for your next move. God can comfort your fear and sadness. God can bring you peace in the midst of your anger.

Here's two things to keep in mind:

**Be real.** Go ahead and feel your feelings. Be mad. Be sad. You don't have to just "suck it up" and act like everything is okay. If you believe that God is with you, then you should know that God can handle your honest questions, doubts, and fears.

**Remind yourself that God is with you.** We don't have any spoiler alerts for how things will turn out or for what we'll go through in the future. But when life is at its hardest, the reminder that God is with you is really important. God never intended for you to "do life" all by yourself. He wants to guide you through it and shape you along the way. Remind yourself of that now so you'll remember it then.

When things feel hopeless and when you don't know what to do, know that you can count on one thing – God is with you. Turn toward Him.

### **FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Describe a situation where you felt that things were out of your control. (Examples: being stuck in traffic; the power goes out; a storm comes through, etc.)
2. What are some words you would use to describe what you felt like in that situation? What's the worst part of being in a situation like this where things are out of your control?
3. What do you think were some thoughts Joseph had while in the cistern (the well)? What would have been going through your mind?
4. One of the worst parts of Joseph's situation was that he was alone. Why do you think situations that feel out of our control are more difficult to handle when you feel alone?
5. If you weren't alone in that situation, how would it have changed how you felt about it?
6. When circumstances are out of your control, when there's nothing you can do, you *can* remember that God is with you. Even if things don't feel fixed or better, you can have confidence that God is present. What are some ways you can remind yourself of this? How could this change your perspective?
7. What helps you get through situations when you feel stuck?
8. If you had a friend who felt stuck with nowhere to turn, what advice would you give?