

JANUARY 16, 2015

How Involved Is God in the Details of Your Life?

Why does God give us more details about Joseph's life than any other individual in Genesis?

Genesis has an interesting structure. It zooms over the creation account like a rocket (about 3% of the book), soars over the millennia between Adam and Abraham like a jet (about 15% — dropping speed and altitude over Noah), and cruises over Abraham (21%), Isaac (8%), and Jacob (23%) like a helicopter, hovering here and there. Then it sort of drives down the road of Joseph's life, devoting to it nearly 30% of its content.

God is always intentional in his proportionality. *More* does not necessarily equal *more important* in God's word economy. The epistle to the Ephesians is much shorter than the narrative of Joseph's life, but it is not less important. However, *more* does imply *take note*. There are crucial things God wants us to see.

God has many reasons to drive us through Joseph's life, some more obvious than others. Let's look at one perhaps lesser obvious reason.

Sightings of Sovereignty in the Life of Joseph

On this drive, if we're paying attention to the scenery out the windows, we see a startling and unnerving level of God's providential involvement in the details of Joseph's life. Here are some of the scenes (*warning: you may find some of these scenes disturbing*).

- Joseph's place in the Patriarchal birth order was part of God's plan (Genesis 30:22-24).
- This means Rachel's agonizing struggle with infertility was part of God's plan (Genesis 30:1-2).

- Jacob's romantic preference of Rachel and therefore his (probably paternally insensitive) favoritism shown to Joseph was part of God's plan ([Genesis 29:30](#), [37:3](#)).
- Joseph's prophetic dreams were (obviously) part of God's plan ([Genesis 37:5–11](#)).
- His brothers' jealousy (note: sibling rivalry and family conflict) was part of God's plan ([Genesis 37:8](#)).
- His brothers' evil, murderous, greedy betrayal of him, and Judah's part in it, was part of God's plan ([Genesis 37:18–28](#), [50:20](#)).
- His brothers' 20-plus year deception of Jacob regarding Joseph was part of God's plan.
- The existence of an evil slave trade at the time was part of God's plan ([Genesis 37:26–27](#)).
- Potiphar's complicity with the slave trade and his position in Egypt was part of God's plan ([Genesis 37:36](#)).
- Joseph's extraordinary administrative gifting was part of God's plan ([Genesis 39:2–4](#)).
- Joseph's favor with Potiphar was part of God's plan ([Genesis 39:4–6](#)).
- Potiphar's wife's being given over to sexual immorality was part of God's plan ([Genesis 39:7–12](#), [Romans 1:24](#)).
- Potiphar's wife's dishonesty was part of God's plan ([Genesis 39:13–18](#)).
- Potiphar's unjust judgment of Joseph was part of God's plan ([Genesis 39:19–20](#)).
- The particular prison Joseph was sent to — the one that would receive the cupbearer and the baker — was part of God's plan ([Genesis 39:20](#)).
- Joseph's favor with the prison warden was part of God's plan ([Genesis 39:21–23](#)).
- The high-level conspiracy and its exposure resulting in the imprisonment of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker were part of God's plan ([Genesis 40:1–3](#)).
- Joseph's appointment to care for them was part of God's plan ([Genesis 40:4](#)).
- The dreams the cupbearer and baker had were (obviously) part of God's plan ([Genesis 40:5](#)).
- Joseph's compassionate care for their troubled hearts was part of God's plan ([Genesis 40:6–7](#)).
- Their trusting Joseph's integrity enough to confide their dreams in him was part of God's plan ([Genesis 40:8–20](#)).

- Joseph discerning the meaning of their dreams was part of God's plan ([Genesis 40:12-13](#), [18-19](#)).
- The Egyptian judicial processes that exonerated the cupbearer and condemned the baker were part of God's plan ([Genesis 40:20-22](#)).
- The cupbearer failing to remember Joseph for two years was part of God's plan ([Genesis 40:23-41:1](#)).
- The timing of Pharaoh's dreams was part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:1-7](#)).
- The inability of Pharaoh's counselors to discern his dreams was part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:8](#)).
- The cupbearer remembering Joseph and having the courage to remind Pharaoh of a potentially suspicious event was part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:9-13](#)).
- Pharaoh's being desperate enough to listen to a Hebrew prisoner was part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:14-15](#)).
- Joseph having discernment of Pharaoh's dreams was part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:16-36](#)).
- The miraculous amount of immediate trust that Pharaoh placed in Joseph's interpretation and counsel was part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:37-40](#)).
- Pharaoh's gift of Asenath (an Egyptian) to Joseph as her wife was part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:45](#)).
- Joseph's two sons by Asenath, Manasseh and Ephraim, were part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:50-52](#), [48:5](#)).
- The complex confluence of natural phenomena that caused the extraordinarily fruitful years followed by the extraordinarily desolate years, with all the resulting human prosperity and suffering, *and* the consolidation of Egyptian wealth and power in Pharaoh's hands were part of God's plan ([Genesis 41:53-57](#), [47:13-26](#)).
- The threat of starvation that caused terrible fear and moved Jacob to send his sons to Egypt for grain was part of God's plan ([Genesis 42:1-2](#)).
- The brothers' safe journey to Egypt and Benjamin's non-participation was part of God's plan ([Genesis 42:3-4](#)).

- The brothers' bowing to Joseph in unwitting fulfillment of the dreams they hated was part of God's plan ([Genesis 42:6](#)).
- Joseph's whole scheme to test his brothers was part of God's plan ([Genesis 42:7-44:34](#)).
- Simeon's being chosen to remain in Egypt was part of God's plan ([Genesis 42:24](#)). Jacob's refusal to release Benjamin to return to Egypt causing the delay of the brothers' return and Simeon's bewildering experience in custody was part of God's plan ([Genesis 42:38](#)).
- The relentless threat of starvation that prompted Judah to make his personal guarantee of Benjamin's safe return and that forced Jacob to finally allow Benjamin go to Egypt was part of God's plan ([Genesis 43:8-14](#)).
- The success with which Joseph was able to continue to conceal his identity and pull off the framing of Benjamin for thievery and all the anguish the brothers experienced as a result was part of God's plan ([Genesis 43:15-44:17](#)).
- Judah's willingness to exchange his life for Benjamin's out of love for his father, and thus initiating his own sale into slavery like he initiated Joseph's sale into slavery, was part of God's plan ([Genesis 44:18-34](#)).
- Joseph's timing in revealing himself to his brothers was part of God's plan ([Genesis 45:1-15](#)).
- Jacob's finding out from his sons of Joseph's survival and position in Egypt (and the exposure of his sons' 20-plus-year deceit with all the accompanying pain) was part of God's plan ([Genesis 45:25-28](#)).
- God's directing Jacob to move to Egypt was (obviously) part of God's plan ([Genesis 46:2-4](#)).
- The relocation of the entire clan of Israel to Egypt, where they would reside and grow for 430 years and eventually become horribly enslaved, thus fulfilling God's promise to Abraham in [Genesis 15:13-14](#), was part of God's plan ([Genesis 46:5-47:12](#)).

If we wished, there are more sightings we could include from this drive. But these give us a lot to chew on.

Joseph's Life and Yours

Joseph had a unique role to play in redemptive history. But God's intricate involvement in Joseph's life is not unique to yours. One of the many reasons God gives us a close-up of Joseph's life is to show us how active he is, how he never leaves us or forsakes us all along the way, in both the good and the evil things we experience ([Hebrews 13:5](#)).

Joseph knew God's nearness when he woke from his prophetic dreams and probably when he experienced remarkable favor. But how near did God feel to Joseph in the pit of his brothers' betrayal, or shackled in the Ishmaelite caravan, or when falsely accused of attempted rape, or stuck for years in the king's prison, forgotten? Yet we see that God was there *all the time* working all things together for good for Joseph and millions of others ([Romans 8:28](#)).

Yes, God was even working the evil, heinous things people did to Joseph for good. We can say that because that's precisely what Joseph himself said to his brothers about their betrayal of him: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" ([Genesis 50:20](#)).

The detailed narrative of Joseph's life, among many other things, is a loving letter from your Good Shepherd ([John 10:11](#)) — the same Good Shepherd who guided Joseph through green pastures and the valley of the shadow of death, pursuing him with good *all the days* of his life (Psalm 23) — to remind you that no matter what you are experiencing, sweet or bitter, good or evil, no matter how long it has lasted, he has not left you alone ([John 14:18](#)). He is with you ([Psalm 23:4](#)), he is working all things together for good ([Romans 8:28](#)), and he will be with you to the end ([Matthew 28:20](#)).

[Jon Bloom \(@Bloom Jon\)](#) serves as teacher and cofounder of Desiring God. He is the author of [four books](#), including [Not by Sight](#) and most recently [True to His Word](#). He and his wife have five children and make their home in the Twin Cities.