

GOD  
WILL  
CARRY  
YOU  
THROUGH

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## You'll get through this.

You fear you won't. We all do. We fear that the depression will never lift, the yelling will never stop, the pain will never leave. . . . We wonder: *Will this gray sky ever brighten? This load ever lighten?* We feel stuck, trapped, locked in. Predestined for failure. Will we ever exit this pit?

Yes!

Deliverance is to the Bible what jazz music is to Mardi Gras—bold, brassy, and everywhere. Deliverance:

out of the lion's den for Daniel,  
the prison for Peter,  
the whale's belly for Jonah,  
Goliath's shadow for David,  
the storm for the disciples,  
disease for the lepers,  
doubt for Thomas,  
the grave for Lazarus,  
and the shackles for Paul.

God carries us through stuff:

*through* the Red Sea onto dry ground (Exodus 14:22),  
*through* the wilderness (Deuteronomy 29:5),  
*through* the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4),  
and *through* the deep sea (Psalm 77:19).

## GOD CARRIES US THROUGH

*Through* is a favorite word of God's:

*“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.  
When you walk through the fire, you shall not be  
burned,  
Nor shall the flame scorch you.” (Isaiah 43:2 NKJV)*

### **It won't be painless.**

Have you wept your final tear or received your last round of chemotherapy? Not necessarily. Will your unhappy marriage become happy in a heartbeat? Not likely. . . .

Does God guarantee the absence of struggle and the abundance of strength? Not in this life. But he does pledge to reweave your pain for a higher purpose.

### **It won't be quick.**

Joseph was seventeen years old when his brothers abandoned him. He was at least thirty-seven when he saw them again. Another couple of years passed before he saw his father.

Sometimes God takes his time:

one hundred twenty years to prepare Noah for the  
flood;  
eighty years to prepare Moses for his work.

## GOD WILL CARRY YOU THROUGH

God called young David to be king but returned him to the sheep pasture. He called Paul to be an apostle and then isolated him in Arabia for perhaps three years. Jesus was on the earth for three decades before he built anything other than a kitchen table. How long will God take with you? He may take his time. His history is redeemed not in minutes but in lifetimes.

### **But God will use your mess for good.**

We see Satan's tricks and ploys. God sees Satan tripped and foiled.

Let me be clear . . . *You represent a challenge to Satan's plan.* You carry something of God within you, something noble and holy, something the world needs—wisdom, kindness, mercy, skill. If Satan can neutralize you, he can mute your influence.

What Satan intends for evil, God, the Master Weaver and Master Builder, redeems for good.

The story of Joseph is in the Bible for this reason: to teach us to trust God to trump evil.



Good days.  
Bad days.  
God is in all  
days.





I look up to the hills, but where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let you be defeated. He who guards you never sleeps. \* As the mountains surround Jerusalem, the LORD surrounds his people now and forever. \* You are my help. Because of your protection, I sing. \* Our help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

PSALM 121:1–3; PSALM 125:2;  
PSALM 63:7; PSALM 124:8

## HOPE IN THE MIDST OF TOUGH TIMES

*So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat a meal.*

GENESIS 37:23–25 NKJV

It was an abandoned cistern. Jagged rocks and roots extended from its side. The seventeen-year-old boy lay at the bottom. At least he looked to be a boy: downy beard, spindly arms and legs. His hands were bound, ankles tied. He lay on his side, knees to chest, cramped in the small space. The sand was wet with spittle where he had drooled. His eyes were wide with fear. His voice was hoarse from screaming. It wasn't that his brothers didn't hear him. Twenty-two years later, when a famine had tamed their swagger and guilt had dampened their pride, they would confess, "We saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear" (Genesis 42:21 NKJV).

Joseph didn't see this assault coming. He didn't climb out of bed that morning and think, *I'd better dress in*

*padded clothing because this is the day I get tossed in a hole.*  
The attack caught him off guard.

So did yours. Joseph's pit came in the form of a cistern. Maybe yours came in the form of a diagnosis, a foster home, or a traumatic injury. Joseph was thrown into a hole and despised. And you? Thrown into an unemployment line and forgotten. Thrown into a divorce and abandoned, into a bed and abused. The pit. A kind of death, waterless and austere. Some people never recover. Life is reduced to one quest: get out and never be hurt again. Not simply done. Pits have no easy exits.

Joseph's story got worse before it got better. Abandonment led to enslavement, entrapment, and finally imprisonment. He was sucker punched. Sold out. Mistreated. People made promises only to break them, offered gifts only to take them. If hurt were a swampland, then Joseph was sentenced to a life of hard labor in the Everglades.

Yet he never gave up. Bitterness never staked its claim. Anger never metastasized into hatred. His heart never hardened; his resolve never vanished. He not only survived; he thrived. He ascended like a helium balloon. An Egyptian official promoted him to chief servant. The prison warden placed Joseph over the inmates. And Pharaoh, the highest ruler on the planet, shoulder-tapped Joseph to serve as his prime minister. By the end of his life, Joseph was the second most powerful man of his

generation. It is not hyperbole to state that he saved the world from starvation.

How did he flourish in the midst of tragedy? We don't have to speculate. Some twenty years later the roles were reversed, Joseph the strong one and his brothers the weak ones. They came to him in dread. They feared he would settle the score and throw them into a pit of his own making. But Joseph didn't. And in his explanation we find his inspiration:

*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. (Genesis 50:20 NASB)*

*In God's hands intended evil becomes eventual good.*

Joseph tied himself to the pillar of this promise and held on for dear life. Nothing in his story glosses over the *presence* of evil. Quite the contrary. Bloodstains and tearstains are everywhere. Joseph's heart was rubbed raw against the rocks of disloyalty and miscarried justice. Yet time and time again God redeemed the pain. The torn robe became a royal one. The pit became a palace. The broken family grew old together. The very acts intended to destroy God's servant turned out to strengthen him.

"You *meant* evil against me," Joseph told his brothers, using a Hebrew verb which traces its meaning to "weave"

or “plait. “You *wove* evil,” he was saying, “but God *rewove* it together for good.”

God, the Master Weaver. He stretches the yarn and intertwines the colors, the ragged twine with the velvet strings, the pains with the pleasures. Nothing escapes his reach. Every king, despot, weather pattern, and molecule are at his command. He passes the shuttle back and forth across the generations, and as he does, a design emerges. Satan weaves, God reweaves.

And God, the Master Builder. This is the meaning behind Joseph’s words “God meant it for good in order to *bring about . . .*” (emphasis mine). The Hebrew word translated here as *bring about* is a construction term.<sup>1</sup> It describes a task or building project akin to the one that I drive through every morning. The state of Texas is rebuilding a highway overpass near my house. Three lanes have been reduced to one, transforming a morning commute into a daily stew. The interstate project, like human history, has been in development since before time began. Cranes daily hover overhead. Workers hold signs and shovels, and several million of us grumble. Well, at least I do. *How long is this going to last?*

My next-door neighbors have a different attitude toward the project. The husband and his wife are highway engineers, consultants to the Department of Transportation. They endure the same traffic jams and detours as the rest

of us but do so with a better attitude. Why? They know how these projects develop. “It will take time,” they respond to my grumbles, “but it will get finished. It’s doable.” They’ve seen the plans.

By giving us stories like Joseph’s, God allows us to study his plans. Such disarray! Brothers dumping brother. Entitlements. Famines and family feuds scattered about like nails and cement bags on a vacant lot. Satan’s logic was sinister and simple: destroy the family of Abraham and thereby destroy his seed, Jesus Christ. All of hell, it seems, set its target on Jacob’s boys.

But watch the Master Builder at work. He cleared debris, stabilized the structure, and bolted trusses until the chaos of Genesis 37:24 (“They . . . cast him into a pit”  $\kappa\kappa\upsilon$ ) became the triumph of Genesis 50:20 (“life for many people”  $\mu\sigma\gamma$ ).

God as Master Weaver, Master Builder. He redeemed the story of Joseph. Can’t he redeem your story as well?



*LORD, even when I have trouble all around me,  
you will keep me alive.  
When my enemies are angry,  
you will reach down and save me by your power.*

PSALM 138:7

Joseph would be the first to tell you that life in the pit stinks. Yet for all its rottenness, doesn't the pit do this much? It forces you to look upward. Someone from *up there* must come *down here* and give you a hand. God did for Joseph. At the right time, in the right way, he will do the same for you.