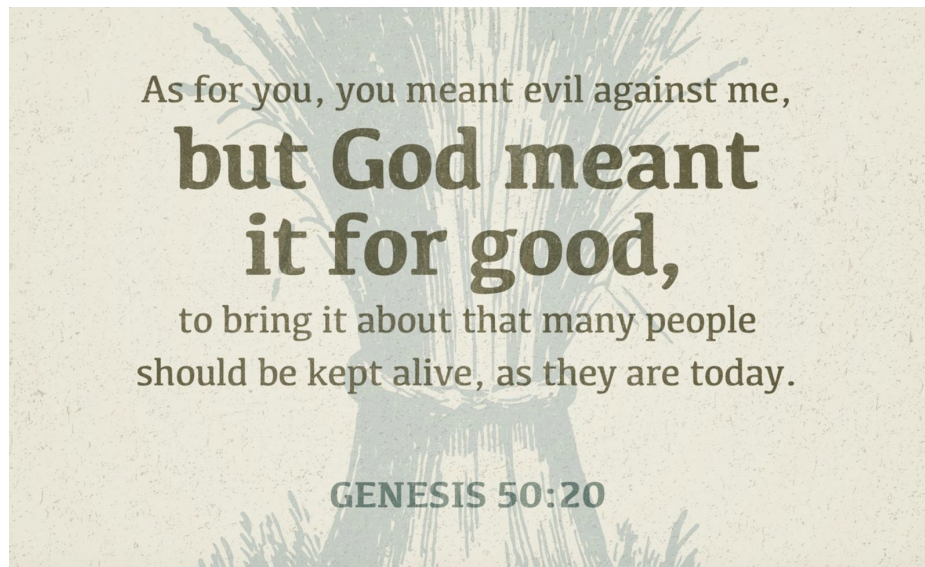


## **“But God”**

By Wendy Wood



*"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*

At the age of 17, Joseph was a typical teenage boy. He had been born into a large family, and enjoyed the benefits and favor of being the spoiled youngest. His father loved his mother and showed Joseph favoritism in caring for the boy and bestowing gifts on him. In most middle eastern families, it was the oldest son who was shown favor and was given special treatment. The older 11 brothers resented that Joseph was clearly the favorite kid. That resentment and jealousy turned violent when Joseph shared his dreams with his brothers. The dreams foreshadowed a day when the older 11 would bow down and show honor to Joseph. The brothers seized Joseph and threw him into a pit. After discussing their options, they decided to sell Joseph to a passing caravan who take Joseph to the slave trade in Egypt. Not only do the brothers rid themselves of their “problem”, they also profit!

Put yourself in Joseph's place. Joseph is still a teenager and must be confused, angry, and afraid as he is taken from his home and becomes a slave. Joseph doesn't know the end of the story. He knows his brothers hated him so much that they didn't want him around anymore and were willing to treat him horribly to get rid of him. Yet, Joseph also knew God. In Egypt, Joseph was put to work in Potiphar's house. He was a slave so he was working long hours, doing jobs and chores that were beneath 'regular' people, and was all alone in a land and didn't speak the language.

Next Joseph was solicited by Potiphar's wife. Joseph, who had been brought up to honor and fear God, refused to commit adultery with her. Potiphar's wife was angry that she was rejected, and falsely accused Joseph of attempting to rape her. Joseph was put in prison. Joseph stayed in prison long enough to gain favor with the guards and earn privileges and responsibilities there. Joseph still didn't know why all this was happening to him. His circumstances kept getting worse. Joseph was given by God the ability to interpret dreams and after interpreting the baker and cupbearer's dreams, he was forgotten about again! Joseph spent a couple more years in prison.

What would you be thinking at this point? What would you be thinking about God at this point? Joseph is mid-thirties now. Since the age of 17, life had been a series of disappointments and unfair treatment.

Finally, Pharaoh had a dream that he didn't understand and was told Joseph was the one who could help him. Pharaoh's dream of the seven fat cows and the seven skinny cows was interpreted by Joseph as seven years of plenty of food and seven years of famine. Joseph told Pharaoh to save food over the next seven years because they would need enough saved to last seven years when Egypt produced no food. Pharaoh was thrilled! He released Joseph and put Joseph in command of all of Egypt's

resources. Joseph became the second most powerful man in Egypt. He was 37 years old!

Twenty years have passed since Joseph was sold by his brothers. Twenty years of difficult circumstances and suffering at the hands of his brothers, who out of jealousy, sinned against him and triggered a long series of unfair, harsh, and frustrating events.

How do you think Joseph felt about his brothers?

Was he allowing bitterness and resentment to grow in his heart?

The refrain in all of these events from Genesis 37 to 50 is "But the Lord was with Joseph." Joseph probably struggled with being tempted to frustration and bitterness. Joseph probably wondered where God was at times. Joseph must have cried out to God asking for help and deliverance. But Joseph knew God.

As Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt needing help and food, Joseph's love and trust in God was incredible. Joseph interacted with his brothers a few times before he revealed his identity. But when he finally says who he is, there is no bitterness or ill will at all. Joseph's rock solid trust in God leads him to say, "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) Joseph knew that nothing happens outside of the sovereignty, wisdom, and love of God. Joseph knew that God determines every step of man's life and no one can change or thwart God's purpose (Proverbs 16:9, Job 42:2). Joseph's confidence in God's plan allowed him to love and forgive the brothers who sinned against him.

When you are sinned against, are you able to say, "You meant it for evil against me, but God meant it for good"? Are you able to trust that God is so powerful, wise,

loving, good, and faithful that He is using all things to bring about his purpose, even the sins of others against you.

**“But God meant it for good”** is the most encouraging and hopeful phrase to remember when someone treats us unfairly and harshly.

**“But God meant it for good”** gives purpose to the sufferings of this life. The next time someone is unkind and unloving toward you, remind yourself **“But God meant it for good”**.