

KAY
ARTHUR

When *the*
Hurt
Runs
Deep

Healing *and* Hope
for Life's Desperate Moments



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Praise for
When the Hurt Runs Deep

“A book with this much healing truth could only be written by someone who has experienced profound pain. In *When the Hurt Runs Deep*, Kay Arthur addresses universal questions about suffering and pain with insights that are candid, practical, and deeply hopeful, offering encouragement and assurance that you are not alone.”

—GARY SMALLEY, author of *Change Your Heart, Change Your Life*

“Kay Arthur’s *When the Hurt Runs Deep* is a beautiful blend of grace and truth. It’s clear, compassionate, biblically grounded, and Christ-centered. As usual, Kay’s words honor and declare God’s Word, which alone can bear the weight of our trust. I’m happy to recommend this outstanding book.”

—RANDY ALCORN, author of *If God Is Good* and *The Goodness of God*

“Kay Arthur is no ‘dry-land sailor,’ no stranger to deep hurt and pain. In the midst of her own dark seasons and desperate moments, she has mined the Scripture and found rich treasures of healing and hope. This book provides encouragement for those who need assurance that God is near to the brokenhearted, that He hears their cry, and that their journey through pain can truly lead to a place of great blessing, joy, and increased fruitfulness.”

—NANCY LEIGH DEMOSS, author and radio host of *Revive Our Hearts*

“You won’t be able to put this remarkable book down! Kay Arthur has crafted an invaluable gift for everyone who is seeking healing and hope in the midst of life’s tormenting windstorms—and that’s all of us. With deep insight and profound reassurance, Kay shows us how to connect our deep pain with the ultimate promise of God’s therapeutic love.”

—LES PARROTT, PHD, founder of RealRelationships.com and coauthor of *You’re Stronger Than You Think*

“Kay Arthur knows about emotional pain firsthand, both from her own life and from the scores of people she has counseled over the years. Now she brings her vast knowledge of Scripture to bear on this difficult subject in a compassionate and helpful way. Both people who are hurting and all those who counsel such people will find this book useful.”

—JERRY BRIDGES, author of *Trusting God Even When Life Hurts*

“I’m not sure I know of anyone more equipped in God’s Word and life experience to write this incredible book. I’ve had a firsthand look at how Kay Arthur has allowed God’s truth to guide her through life’s deepest hurts. She’s no stranger to unexpected and hurtful circumstances, and—good thing for us—she’s also no stranger to Scripture. Your journey through this remarkable book will equip and encourage you to trust in the Lord no matter what life brings your way. Read and be blessed.”

—PRISCILLA SHIRER, author and Bible teacher

“Kay Arthur understands the heartache and pain that life often brings. But more important, she has tasted the healing and freedom—spiritual freedom—that only intimacy with God can bring. This rich work, *When the Hurt Runs Deep*, will guide you to your strong anchor of hope when the storms of life threaten to overwhelm you, and you too will find healing and freedom.”

—DR. TIM CLINTON, president of the American Association of Christian Counselors

“At some point in life, we all encounter pain. Sometimes it is self-inflicted, but often it is perpetrated by others. This book may not remove pain, but it can help you process it. Kay Arthur writes from a heart that is acquainted with pain. As always, the help she offers is rooted in God’s Word. If you have been deeply hurt, or know someone who has, this book is for you.”

—GARY CHAPMAN, PHD, author of *The Five Love Languages* and *Love as a Way of Life*

“Kay Arthur is one of the most gifted teachers in the kingdom. This book is filled with wisdom she’s gained from teaching and from her in-depth study of Scripture. What a treasure it contains!”

—CHUCK COLSON, founder of Prison Fellowship and the Colson Center for Christian Worldview

“Kay Arthur is a great friend and an even better human being. Her teaching, speaking, and writing have touched millions globally. *When the Hurt Runs Deep* is another great investment in the people she loves. This is a profound book because Kay has ‘been there’ and has learned to walk by faith through some very dark valleys. Journey with her as you read these pages, and I can promise you she’ll put your hand in the hand of the One who will bring true healing and hope. This is a *great* book. Read it and then pass it on to a friend.”

—DR. DENNIS RAINEY, president of FamilyLife

“How easily we forget that we have a written guarantee in Scripture that we *will* have tribulation in our lives—not only the cosmic, earth-shaking kind that comes with a 9/11 tragedy, but also the kind that rocks our lives personally when the diagnosis is not good, or the husband walks out, or the job is lost. Yet in the midst of all the turbulence stands the Prince of peace, knowing our pain, feeling our hurt, comforting us in our doubt. Kay Arthur, a woman who loves God’s Word, takes us back to the source of true hope and ultimate healing. Be comforted as you read her words to know that, even when hurt runs deep, He is there with His deeper love.”

—JANET PARSHALL, nationally syndicated radio host and author

“*When the Hurt Runs Deep* offers healing at the point of your deepest pain and brings hope that one day your suffering will be redeemed in ways you cannot imagine. With wise insights born of personal experience and timeless truth, my friend Kay Arthur offers encouragement and abiding assurance that *you are not alone!*”

—JUNE HUNT, founder of Hope for the Heart and author of *How to Handle Your Emotions*

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To my dear Billie and Gene Campbell, who for almost forty years have lived out the precepts of God as set forth in this book, demonstrating for me His power, which is perfected in our weaknesses. As I have told you for years, Billie, there is a place in my heart that is yours alone.



To the children and grandchildren of my precious and courageous “Deborah,” Nancy Schaefer. May you live not in the light of the temporal tragedy of your grandmother’s death, but in the example of her righteous, unflinching courage in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation. Never forget she served as a Deborah in the times when everyone did what was right in their own eyes.



To all my Facebook friends who shared your stories with me that I might better minister the sufficiency of His grace and the peace that passes all understanding when you know that you know God is sovereign.



To Krista and Art, who so generously loaned us your summer home so I could write this book on my favorite lake, surrounded by the beauty of His creation and loving friends. We felt cared for, refreshed, restored...and loved with His love through you.

Thank you, dear ones, for ministering to us in this selfless way.

CONTENTS

1	“It Wasn’t Supposed to Be This Way!”	1
2	You Don’t Suffer Alone	7
3	Is There Purpose in Your Pain?	17
4	What Kind of God Allows Our Pain?	25
5	A Friend in High Places	33
6	A Time for Anger	41
7	At the Root of Your Pain	51
8	Life Changes...God Does Not	59
9	God’s Answer to Our “Why?”	67
10	Suffering We Bring on Ourselves	81
11	Has Hope Faded Forever?	91
12	Walking Through the Fire...but Not Alone!	97
13	The Lingering Hurt of Suicide	107
14	Pulling the Plug on Pain	121
15	The Benefits of Suffering	135
16	The Hurt Yet to Come	157
17	How Can Jesus Possibly Understand Your Pain?	167
18	Will the Hurt Ever Go Away?	177
	Conclusion: Life-Preserving Words	189

Healing Truths to Remember...When the Hurt Runs Deep 195

A Final Postscript 197

Individual or Small-Group Study Guide 199

Appendix: A Few Practical Helps 227

Notes 235

Acknowledgments 241



“It Wasn’t Supposed to Be This Way!”

At some point in life, nearly every one of us finds ourselves pulled under by a tsunami wave of pain, overwhelmed by something large, sudden, and personally devastating.

It can come crashing into our lives in any of a thousand ways.

A phone call from the doctor about a lab report that looks suspicious.

A wooden-faced supervisor who calls you into his office just before lunch and says, “We’re downsizing the company. We have to let you go.”

A brief, cold conversation with your spouse one morning, and then the shocking words: “I’m leaving. I’ve found someone else.”

A late-night knock on your door from a highway-patrol officer. “Your daughter has been in an accident. I’m sorry to tell you this, but she didn’t make it.”

A quick, stricken glance from the obstetrician. “I’m not picking up any heartbeat from the baby.”

At such times heartache and despair rush over us, pulling us down into a place of darkness until we wonder if the light of hope will ever again penetrate our lives.

This is when the hurt runs deep.



As human beings, hurts and wounds, bumps and bruises, disappointments and sorrows come bundled along with our birth certificates.

Every one of us, starting in childhood, had to learn how to deal with the skinned knees, hurt feelings, dashed hopes, and heartbreaking setbacks common to fallen humanity. How well we coped with these difficulties, challenges, and unexpected obstacles determined in large measure what sort of man or woman we've become and how we navigate our way through life.

But there are storms...and there are storms.

It's one thing to get caught in a spring thundershower; it's another to find yourself in a Category 5 hurricane. It's one thing to trip over a hose and fall in your backyard; it's another to fall out of a third-story window. It's one thing to be rejected for admission to college; it's another to be betrayed and rejected by the one you love with all your heart. It's one thing to lose your car keys; it's another to lose a longed-for baby in a miscarriage. It's one thing to get knocked off your feet by a surprise ocean wave, when you're looking in the other direction; it's another to be swallowed by a tsunami of pain.

Sometimes the pain we experience goes much, much deeper than surface pain. Sometimes the heartache we have to endure pierces deeper than we ever thought possible, utterly overwhelming us.

In my own life...

If you had told me four years ago the events and circumstances that would come crashing down around me in just forty-eight months, I never would have believed you.

I could have never anticipated—or even imagined—such things.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. It didn't have to be this way!

But now, there's no denying the backwash of pain and sadness I feel. These aren't the common, garden-variety wounds that we all encounter in the course of life; this is pain that goes bone deep.

So where do we turn when we find ourselves beyond our own ability to cope? What hope do we have that the pain will ever go away?



I'm thinking of a family, not so very different from many of the families you know.

Neither rich nor poor, they were respected within the community but not especially well known. The dad in the family was a pastor.

The little girl living under that family’s roof was just eight years old on the evening her dad first slipped into her bedroom to do her harm while her mother was out of the house. The sexual abuse that began that night lasted for eight horrible years. The little girl essentially became her dad’s slave, always at hand to satisfy his sexual whims.

Her betrayer was her own father. The pastor.

It wasn’t supposed to be this way! Fathers are supposed to protect and stand up for their little girls, not molest them, not destroy their lives. She was too young at eight to realize how profoundly her dad had betrayed her—along with her mom and the trusting people of the congregation. But it all came to light when she was sixteen.

(Sixteen...isn’t that supposed to be a fun, lighthearted time of life?)

In that year, her mother had an affair with a deacon in the church. And then the whole sad, sordid story about her father’s serial sexual abuse was revealed.

Her father went to prison for having sex with a minor—his own daughter. That prison sentence, just and right though it was, only drove the feelings of shame and guilt deeper into the girl’s heart. Now her father was in prison *because of her*. And to her disgust, her mother made her socialize with the deacon and his family—as if nothing evil or out of the ordinary had ever happened!

The adults tried to sweep the ugly truth under the rug, but they could not brush away the pain from this sixteen-year-old’s heart. The wounds and scars and unanswered questions have left her bitter and confused. Why, why did this happen to her? And what about God? Where does He fit into all of this? Does He even exist? If so, was He too busy or too indifferent to care...or too impotent to do anything about it?

Had God betrayed her?



Just a week ago, I received the following e-mail, and my heart just broke for this dear woman:

Dear Kay,

My husband died three years ago...

Then three weeks ago my very strongly Christian, happy-go-lucky,

nineteen-year-old son committed suicide. He thought he was going to lose his career when he failed a PT test.

I am in despair and clinging to your studies on spiritual warfare, which I know attacked him, and your study on why bad things happen.

Everyone said he was the strongest Christian they knew, so it is almost impossible to understand.

My only other child is a daughter who is eighteen and very ill.

Why do these things happen? I had it all. We were the perfect Christian family, happy, serving God, loving each other. Now we are left with rubble. Does God care?

This woman's questions are the ones we all wrestle with at times in our lives: *Why us? Why now? Does God care?*

Where will she turn for answers, for hope? Where can you and I turn?



I read an article not long ago in *Vanity Fair* magazine about the family of Bernie Madoff.

Madoff, of course, was the former chairman of the NASDAQ stock exchange and the admitted operator of the Ponzi scheme that has been characterized as the largest investment fraud in Wall Street history. In March of 2009, he pleaded guilty to eleven felonies, admitting to turning his wealth-management business into a scheme that defrauded thousands of investors of billions of dollars.

So much for the headlines; what about the real human lives behind the media frenzy? I want to consider, for a moment, the two young men who also carry the name "Madoff": Mark and Andrew, Bernie's sons.

Were his sons in on the great swindle that swallowed billions of dollars and devastated countless lives? Did they even know what their father was doing? Maybe, and maybe not. But let's just say they *didn't* know. Can you imagine how absolutely humiliated and betrayed they must have felt to learn the truth? Can you begin to gauge the depth of their pain? Their dad—their own father—had done *what?*

Bernie’s dramatic confession to his sons on December 10, 2008, would forever alter their lives. Mark was angry; Andrew fell to the floor sobbing. As a consequence, that very afternoon one of those young men picked up the phone and called the Securities and Exchange Commission, setting up an appointment for the next morning.

Can you imagine turning your own father over to the authorities? Maybe you weren’t always pleased with him or wished he were different. But it was still *your* father. You bore his name, you loved him, and at one time you were very proud of him.

Maybe you can put yourself in this situation all too well. Perhaps you’ve uncovered a devastating family secret that forever changed your relationship with a family member, someone you’d previously trusted and respected.

In 2000, according to one source in the magazine article, the Madoff family was a contented lot. Mark Madoff had said it was fun to go to work and find all his family members there working together.

In eight years, however, they went from contentment to sorrow, from prosperity to utter desolation. With each new revelation of their father’s unethical and criminal behavior, Mark and Andrew’s pain went deeper and deeper.

Take a moment to put yourself in their shoes. These sons claim to have had no part at all in their father’s appalling mismanagement and dishonesty. But how many people will look askance at them for the rest of their lives? Can you imagine being totally innocent yet not have others believe you? Maybe you don’t have to use your imagination; maybe you’ve experienced the injustice of having your own reputation tainted by the actions of someone close to you.

And how would you feel knowing that one of your dad’s clients committed suicide eleven days after your father’s arrest? Before taking an overdose of sleeping pills and slashing his wrists, the distinguished French financier René-Thierry Magon de la Villehuchet, who had invested \$1.4 billion with Madoff, wrote in his suicide note, “If you ruin your friends, your clients, you have to face the consequences.”¹ Would Madoff’s sons feel that blood spill onto their own hands, just because they shared the last name of Madoff?

And what would go through your heart when you thought about all the widows, retirees, charities, and hardworking families who’d lost all their savings because of *your* dad?

Madoff apologized to his victims, saying, “I have left a legacy of shame, as some of my victims have pointed out, to my family and my grandchildren. This is something I will live in for the rest of my life. I’m sorry.”

But what about the grandchildren and generations yet to come who will also carry the name “Madoff”?



Story after story could be told of the deep hurts we endure; particularly agonizing are the horrendous accounts of man’s inhumanity to man.

And so the questions come...for all of us.

Will the pain ever go away?

Is there anything left to hope for? Or is life just about pain?

What do you do, where can you go for help, who can you turn to when the hurt runs deep?

Let’s explore those questions together in the pages that follow.



You Don't Suffer Alone

*H*ow do we cope with the inevitable pain of life in a dark and fallen world so that it doesn't damage us beyond repair or ruin our lives? Are we destined to a future of unrelenting pain, devoid of joy, peace, and satisfaction?

No! I assure you with all my heart that hope, help, and healing are within your reach—and closer at hand than you might have imagined or dreamed. Obviously I wouldn't be writing this book if I didn't believe there was a solution.

I certainly don't claim to have all the answers. Far from it! Even though I may have lived longer than you, I realize I have much to learn. I'm still very much "in process"—just like you.

But even though I don't have all the answers, I know where to find them!

Imagine you bumped into me in a large, unfamiliar airport and asked me how to get to a certain gate. I might know the basic direction, but if we happened to be standing close to an airport information booth, I could do even better than giving you vague or general instructions. I could immediately direct you to a person who stands ready, available, qualified, and motivated to meet your every information need.

In the same way, I know how to direct you to the Source of wisdom and life, healing and hope. And it's my prayer that you will not only "conquer" your hurt, but will come through on the other side, agreeing that, although it was extremely painful, the affliction was worth the end product.

A STORY THAT COULD HELP

Let's go back to that information booth in the busy airport I spoke of a moment ago. Let's say you come to that helper behind the counter in a worried, distracted frame

of mind. You're afraid you've already missed your flight. You're not sure you're even in the right terminal. And you have no idea if you have any chance of making it to the right gate in time.

Let's imagine the helper behind the counter says something like this: "May I see your ticket? Okay...well, first of all, *you haven't missed your flight*. You can still catch it! And I will tell you exactly what you need to do."

Just knowing that you still have a chance, that there's still hope, can make all the difference. And so it is when we're going through intense pain or grief.

The Bible gives us that reassurance right off the top. The pages of this everlasting book assure us that, no matter where we are, what we have endured, or what we may be facing, there is still hope! We can make it step by step through the difficulties of this life and find lasting happiness and peace in the next life...*if* we follow some simple directions.

As it happens, we find one of the most important stories about dealing with personal pain in the very first book of the Bible. It's a story that sets forth a truth, and that truth is then substantiated throughout all sixty-six books of this great book that we know as "God's Word."

I can almost hear your protest: "But, Kay, you have no idea. I've been wounded by Christians...by the church...by God. If God is God, why would He allow me to go through this pain, this unbearable hurt?"

I understand, and I am so very sorry. However, if you have misunderstood God, or if the churches or people in your past have not represented God correctly, truthfully, and accurately, would you want that misunderstanding or misrepresentation to keep you from knowing what to do when the hurt runs deep? From finding healing and wholeness and hope? Of course not!

And if the Bible holds the key that could unlock your pain and enable you to deal with it—and even come out the better for it—surely you would at least want to listen, to consider what it says, wouldn't you? Of course!

So then, let me take you to the book of Genesis, and to the story of Joseph. Even though you might have heard it before, why don't you try a little experiment? Tell God—right now, out loud—that you want to encounter this story in a way that will bring true and lasting healing into your life.

Do this, *even if you don't believe there is a God*.

Let's read the beginning of Joseph's story. For your convenience, the text from

the Bible is printed out below. By the way, do you ever read books with a pencil or pen in hand? I do. Often some thought or question will come to mind, or I'll want to mark something or write a note in the margin or at the top of the page so I can come back and think about what I read. You might want to read this book with pen or pencil in hand.

For instance, as you read the story that follows, you might want to underline everything you learn about Joseph from the Bible. As you read the text, I will "interrupt" from time to time with a few words of explanation about what has gone before, in earlier chapters of Genesis.

And one more thing: sometimes when the Bible is quoted, we think we already know it so we skip over it so we can read the author's words or stories. Please don't! The Bible is as good as it gets. It's absolute truth—God's words! Don't choose man's words over God's words, which can bring such sweet healing. Just watch and see!

SETTING THE SCENE

Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. These are the records of the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Billhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. (Genesis 37:1–2)

Back in Genesis 12, God had called Abraham to leave his land and his parents and to go to a land God would show him and eventually give to him as a permanent possession. God also promised to make a great nation from Abraham and to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham's descendants—which would eventually lead to the birth of Jesus Christ Himself.

That promise of national greatness was confirmed to Abraham's son Isaac and to Isaac's son Jacob. Then God changed Jacob's name to Israel. Are you beginning to get the picture? God was creating a new nation, the nation of Israel. The land that was promised by God was the land of Canaan, later called *Eretz Israel*, the land of Israel.

Jacob had two wives, although he'd contracted for only one. His father-in-law had veiled Leah and sent her into Jacob's tent, when it was her beautiful younger sister, Rachel, Jacob had wanted and worked seven years for. Leah, however, gave Jacob a family, while Rachel remained barren for years.

Finally Rachel herself, the love of Jacob's life, gave birth to Joseph and, later, his younger brother Benjamin. All together, Jacob fathered twelve sons by two wives and two concubines. These twelve would eventually become the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, but for now they were all living together in their father's household. Got the picture?

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. (vv. 3–5)

The dream? It was certainly from God, as we will see later. On the surface, it seems from the consequences that it would have been much wiser for Joseph to keep the matter between himself and the Lord. He dreamed of twelve sheaves of grain—obviously corresponding to the twelve sons of Jacob. At some point in the dream, the sheaves associated with his brothers bowed down low to Joseph's sheaf.

Joseph's brothers, of course, immediately picked up the implication—and didn't like it one bit! Already resentful of this pampered “Daddy's favorite,” the brothers were deeply offended by Joseph's recitation of the dream.

Then his brothers said to him, “Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. (v. 8)

You would think Joseph might have received the message—his brothers didn't want anything to do with the young man's dreams of future greatness. Yet when Joseph had another such dream, he immediately related it to his family.

“Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?” His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. (vv. 9–11)

I know what you're thinking. How naive of this young man to share such dreams with his ten older brothers! It seems like that on the surface, doesn't it? But you won't find the deep answers you're looking for in the Bible by staying on the surface. Joseph will prove to be a deeper young man than we might first imagine.

As Joseph's story progresses, we see that the road soon became very, very difficult for him. He was about to encounter the deepest hurts he had ever experienced in all his young, privileged life.

Jacob (sometimes called Israel) sent Joseph out to check on his older brothers and the condition of the flocks. Little did he realize, as he said good-bye to his son that morning, that he wouldn't see Joseph's face again for *years*.

After looking in vain for his brothers and the family flocks, Joseph finally found them. The Bible doesn't say what Joseph was thinking as he approached his brothers, but it does tell us what his brothers were thinking about *him*. And those thoughts were disturbingly dark.

When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer! Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’ Then let us see what will become of his dreams!” (vv. 18–20)

Can you relate to the situation Joseph is about to step into? Were you going about your daily life as usual, never suspecting the pain or betrayal that lurked just around the corner?

But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, “Let us not take his life.” Reuben further said to them, “Shed no blood. Throw him

into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.

So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.

Then they sat down to eat a meal. (vv. 21–25)

Did you catch those last words? When did these brothers have lunch together? Right after they tossed their younger brother into a dry pit! I want to share another verse with you that makes clear how deeply traumatic this was for Joseph—and what the brothers remembered about it in later years.

Genesis 42:21–22 describes a scene years later when these very same brothers found themselves in a hard place:

Then they said to one another, “Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.” Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood.”

Sometimes we think those who do us wrong are deaf to our cries, to our pleading and begging, because they don’t respond. But what we just read tells us that these brothers *had* heard; Joseph’s cries had been imprinted on their consciences and memories. And though they undoubtedly tried to push the memory away or forget their little brother through the years, they could never quite erase his pleas and his distress from their minds.

In what these embittered brothers told themselves was an act of mercy, they decided not to kill Joseph outright but rather to sell him to a traveling caravan of Midianites on their way to Egypt. Judah said, “What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh” (Genesis 37:26–27).

But how would they break the news to Jacob, their father? Someone came up with the idea of taking Joseph’s tunic—that beautiful garment Jacob himself had

made for Joseph—tearing it, and dipping it in goat's blood. Presenting it to their father, they said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not" (v. 32).

Jacob immediately believed the lie that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. He went into deep mourning and would not be consoled.

Once a lie is told, it takes a mountain of courage to confess it, doesn't it? It's difficult to admit you were wrong, or that you acted out of jealousy. None of Jacob's sons had that sort of courage. They had heard the frantic pleadings of Joseph, and now they witnessed the overwhelming sorrow and tears of their father. Even so, they held on to their lie. *"That's our story, and we're stickin' to it."*

Meanwhile, what happened to Joseph?

Scripture says: "Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard" (v. 36).

Have you ever found yourself alone, abandoned, and in a strange place? That's how it was for this young teenager who had been betrayed and sold by his own brothers. *How could it happen? Life isn't supposed to work that way... is it?*

Let's follow Joseph to Egypt.

TWISTS AND TURNS

Whether you're encountering this story for the first time or the hundred-and-first time, you can't help but be amazed by all the intriguing twists and turns in this real-life account.

If this were a purely human story, you might expect things to go from bad to worse for this young man. But the Bible isn't just a collection of historical accounts; it is *His* story. And when God is involved in a situation, you can throw out all the common expectations. In fact, Scripture tells us that "the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man" (Genesis 39:2).

A successful man? After being sold as a slave in Egypt? How could that be? Very simply, when God steps into the picture, every equation changes. As a result, then...

...His master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and

all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. (vv. 3–5)

Did Joseph think he was alone in Egypt? The text doesn't tell us. We can make a guess, perhaps, but that's a detail God hasn't chosen to reveal. What we can know for sure is that the Lord was with Joseph—and just as surely, He is with you, no matter how abandoned you may feel right now. That's the fact God wants you to see; that's the point He doesn't want you to miss, so keep it in mind as we read the next twist in the story.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her. (vv. 6–10)

We could easily skip past that little phrase "day after day." It means over and over and over again. Potiphar's wife didn't proposition Joseph once, but *many* times. We can only imagine how she used all her feminine wiles to distract, confuse, and seduce this young man, seeking to wear down his resistance. But Joseph stayed faithful—to his master and to his Lord.

Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. (vv. 11–12)

Was Joseph still a young man of integrity? Yes! But even though Potiphar had done well picking a good slave, this story makes it clear he hadn't done so well in picking a good woman.

The Genesis account goes on to describe how Potiphar's wife, her pride no doubt stung by this slave's blunt refusal of her favors, made the outlandish claim that Joseph had attempted to rape her. By the time her husband got home that night, she had her story down pat. The Egyptian official had no choice but to have Joseph arrested.

So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. (v. 20)

How could this happen? This wasn't right! It wasn't fair! Joseph didn't deserve that sort of treatment. Hadn't he done what was right and honorable? And now he was in jail. Where was God in all this? Had the Lord deserted him in this new crisis?

Far from it! Once again we read that "the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer" (v. 21). As a result, the chief jailer ended up turning over the operation of the whole prison to this young Hebrew slave. And everything began to run smoothly from that day forward. The favor of God changes everything!

These events set up an interesting encounter between Joseph and two of the inmates:

Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the same place where Joseph was imprisoned. The captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time. Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his own dream and each dream with its own interpretation.

When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" Then they said to him, "We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please." (Genesis 40:1–8)

So the chief cupbearer and the chief baker both described their dreams to Joseph. Interpreting the details of each, he explained that in three days' time the baker would be hanged while the cupbearer would be restored to his office. And Joseph made this request of the cupbearer:

"Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon." (vv. 14–15)

It all took place just as Joseph had said. After three days, Pharaoh honored the chief cupbearer and restored him to his office, and he hanged the chief baker. You would think the cupbearer would have had reason to remember Joseph and speak a word in his behalf. But he didn't. Scripture tells us, "The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him" (v. 23).

What sad words! Yes, the Lord was with Joseph even in prison. But it wasn't where Joseph wanted to be, was it? As it turned out, Joseph would be in that dungeon another *two years*.

His hoped-for ticket out of maximum security didn't materialize, and we can imagine him wondering if things would *ever* change. Was he doomed to permanent disappointment? Had God forgotten about him too?

Maybe you can relate to this portion of Joseph's story. Put the book down and think about it, maybe taking a minute to write out your thoughts in the margin. In the next chapter we'll get to the fundamental truth that unlocks the door to hurt, enabling you to (finally) heal.