

God's Will Might Just Hurt

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[0 : 0 0] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Genesis chapter 37, if you would. Can I just say to you quickly, you only get your kids one time around, and they're leaving.

And you need to take every chance you can to spend some time with them. And nobody can get them in the Bible as well as you, and you're the pastor of your home. And what a privilege to be a dad, and what a blessing to have the opportunity to have little family devotions.

You should talk to John Pearson about a time one summer when he told the kids they were going to be enrolled in a summer school Bible program.

They were sending the classes to them to fill out and study. And they were going to get money. They were going to get money for spending on vacation or something. And it was all him.

He wrote lessons. He pretended to mail them. They were so excited. They couldn't believe these people were willing to give them special money for studying the Bible.

[1 : 1 6] And so anyway, for their vacation, and every week their lesson came, and every week the family worked on them. Did you tell Sandy? I can't remember. Sandy didn't even know. Sandy thought she was helping the kids make money.

Man, you can fool a woman. Amen. And so the kids were so excited. You get John to tell you the real story, but on the day they were to leave, something, they hadn't finished the last lesson or something.

And he said, well, you know, maybe the mail ran early. And the kids were all upset, and they ran up there and grabbed their stuff and found out, yes, they had finished their course. Where's Catherine? Is that true, Catherine?

You remember that? You remember that? Andrew, you remember it? Did you learn anything, Andrew? Andrew? So what a privilege you have.

And I've never heard a sweeter story than that. You need to get the kids to tell you about John and Sandy, or John really, doing that with his kids. What a privilege you had to be a dad. Don't waste it.

[2 : 1 3] They'll be gone soon enough. And I love the empty nest, but I always want to know I spent as much time as I could with my kids, and I could have done so much better than I did.

Genesis chapter 37, and I know you are here tonight not for a talent show. Excuse me, not for preaching, but for a talent show. I was asked what I would do in the talent show.

We had a deacons and staff meeting at my house on Friday night. We were just there to chew the fat and have fun. And they were very rude to me. I just thought I would tell you they hurt my feelings. They called me old.

There were several things that they did that were just really troubling as a pastor. But most of all, they said, well, what are you doing for the talent show? And I said, well, I'm going to preach. It's what I do all the time. And I said, it doesn't seem to have much effect or something like that.

And Stephanie Cornwell said, maybe you should try a different talent. By the way, Trent will be resigning Thursday night.

[3 : 09] If you're here, you'll get to hear that resignation. But anyway, Genesis chapter 37, if you would. I want to talk to you about God's will might just hurt.

And for the sake of time, because I want to be finished on time, I'm going to tell you the story not even the way I normally do trying to kind of read through it. And I'm going to then walk you through what I believe is happening here.

You know, Joseph is going to have a dream. He has dreams. He's 17 years old and he has these dreams. He has dreams that the sun and the moon and the stars will bow down to him. He has dreams that the sheaves will bow down to him.

His dad hears those dreams. His brothers already hate him because he has this coat of many colors. And his brothers already hate him because he's daddy's favorite. But now he's also even more hated because not only does he have the coat of many colors, not only is he dad's favorite, but he has all these dreams.

And he's kind of like a punk telling them how I'm going to be famous. Even his dad says to him, you mean to tell me your mom and I are going to bow down to you? And Joseph's like, you got it, dad.

[4 : 10] That's happening. That's coming. So one day, all the sons are out working in the field. And his dad sends him out to check on them. And of course, he couldn't wear his work clothes.

He put on his coat of many colors and went out there to see his brothers. And when they saw him coming, they said, that's it. Let's kill him. And let's see what happens to his big dream now.

And so they decide to get rid of their brother. And they're going to kill him. They're going to tear the coat up and beat it with rocks and get goat blood on it. But one of the brothers decides, well, instead of killing him, he said, let's put him in a pit and figure out what we're going to do with him.

And then Judah says, well, instead of that, we could sell him and make some money. And before the end of the story, he'll be sold and sent off. He'll be sold and sent off into slavery. And what I want to show you tonight, what I think is the overall arching thing here, is that when God has a plan for your life and God has a dream for your life, it doesn't always work out the way you want it to.

And somewhere along the way in modern Christianity, we almost develop an idea. If I get saved to get right with God and I serve God, I'll prosper and everything will go my way and I won't have any problems and I won't have any heartaches and everything will be great in my life.

[5 : 26] And it's just going to be wonderful because I'm serving God now. And the truth is that right here in Genesis 37, that is completely not how the story is going to work.

So if you want to write down some things, let me give you this. Number one, God has an overriding plan that's going on in this story. Now, you've read the Bible. You got your Bible. You know something.

Just remember, this is a 17-year-old kid. Can I get everybody who's 17 years old to hold your hand up? How many 17-year-olds do we have in the room? Chuck, you are dyslexic. It's 71 for you, buddy.

Okay. You only have one 17-year-old tonight. A 17-year-old, just a young child, almost an adult, but still, I mean, let's just be honest, a very young person.

And he has these big dreams. And the story we read about Joseph is literally horrible. He's going to be sold into slavery. He's going to be mistreated and abused. He's going to be put in prison.

[6 : 26] And the next 13 years of his life are going to be horrible. And so we might say, man, what happened to God's plan? And what was God doing? But you see, God has this big overall plan, this thing he's accomplishing.

And when he's at work in our lives, it might hurt while he gets us to where he's taken us. You know, he saved me. And the guy, God who saved me said, I have begun a good work and you will complete it.

And I will carry you on. We know in Romans chapter 8 and verse 28, all things work together for good to them to love God and are called according to his purposes. And verse 29, he has predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son.

And so Joseph, who's going to go through all sorts of things, he doesn't know it. But God has a big plan. He thinks it's about him. You can think it's about you.

You know, you can imagine, 17, he walks into the dining room table and he says, hey, guys, man, God's got big plans for me. He's going to do big stuff for me.

[7 : 29] And he really thinks that he is the stuff he's got on his special multicolored coat there. And he walks in. But God has an override riding plan.

He's going to move Joseph to Egypt. The story is about God moving Joseph to Egypt to save Israel in a time of famine years and years from now.

God's plan is not about today, but what he's going to do 13 years out through there and then 14 years out through there and then two more years after that. So 30 years from now, really, for a lot of the stuff's really going to happen.

And God's got this big plan. God is going to use these next 13 years to get Joseph ready to do what he wants to do with Joseph. God is forming a nation.

He has started a nation and he's forming a nation that's going to bring great glory to him. He's going to use this great nation to defeat the 10 gods. He is going to come against Egypt in a big way and say, I am God and no other is out there.

[8 : 33] He is preparing his people to be an example. He is preparing the man who will write the first five books of the Bible. He has a plan that's bigger than any of us. And so I want you to get a hold of this.

God has a plan. God has a plan. God has something he's doing and his plan is far bigger than Austin Gardner. Sometimes, sometimes we are confused and hurt.

We are confused and hurt because we think God has great things he wants to do with us. I'm called to be a preacher. I'm called to be a missionary. I've got a God who gave me a beautiful wife so I can have a beautiful family.

She gets sick. She dies. Kids die. Things go wrong. And we kind of get confused and hurt because we haven't studied the Bible enough to know that God's got a big overarching plan that's taking place even though I might not understand it.

In chapter 37 and verse 20, they say let's kill Joseph and see what will happen with his dream. Let's kill Joseph. Joseph thinks that God is going to do something big with him.

[9 : 34] He's excited. He's looking forward to it. He can't wait. Let me out of the training center. Let me out of the family. Let me go. I'm going to do big stuff. God's got big plans for me.

I'm the man. And Joseph is so sure of God's big plan. He announces it. He gets mocked and evidently hurt even by his family. He has no idea what God plans to do to get him to where he can do his part of the plan.

Joseph has no idea that God's big plan for him, and when they're all going to bow down to it, it's going to be 13 years later, after he's been in prison, after he's been a slave, after he's been forgotten, he will finally be raised up to all that, and it is going to happen, but he doesn't understand that.

You see, God has a big plan. God has something he's going to do. God has something he's going to accomplish in his life, but he has no idea the trajectory. He has no idea all the steps that he's going to take.

God's will often hurts. God's will often hurts. I really think God's will hurts all the time.

[10 : 40] You're going to find out that God is at work in your life, that God does have big plans for you, and he is going to do stuff in your life, and you are somebody special he wants to use, but you're looking for the prosperity gospel, and you're looking for TBN or TNT or TBN or whatever it is.

You're looking for that group that tells you everything's going to go right, and it just don't work that way. It just doesn't work that way, and that's not what happens. So they are going to kill him.

Reuben feels responsible, and he's all upset, and he decides he's going to try to put him in a pit and get him out later and save him, but the other brothers have sold him, and they make up a big story, and they deceive Dad, and Dad is heartbroken, and Dad won't be comforted.

In 37, 35, he refuses to be comforted. He rejects any love for the rest of the family and apparently becomes a bitter, angry old man. What do we feel when things go wrong?

I'm always, can I just say, I'll say this to John and Cole and the guys who are starting a church. One of the hardest things, you know, my job is like to keep people excited about what God is going to do, but over the years I've watched God not always do what I thought God was going to do.

[11 : 59] My job is to say to a young missionary, hey, man, you can do it. It's going to work. God's going to bless you. And sometimes things are a lot rougher than they ever dreamed they could be. What do you do when things aren't working out?

We think that if we please God, that if God is pleased with us, things are going to work out according to the plan. Everything's going to go well. We see the plan from our perspective and not His.

I must be doing something wrong or my dream would be coming true. That's what we think. We tend to think that if God's happy with me and I'm doing right, and by the way, God kind of owes me, I keep the Ten Commandments, I always go to church, I've been baptized, and I tithe, and I do everything I'm supposed to do, and my life is supposed to work out.

But you can't tell Joseph that. He just showed up to see his brothers. He's a dumb baby of the family. He walks up to them. I mean, I can imagine he's excited, got in his robe, feeling on the top of the world.

God told him great things are going to happen. He's been telling his brothers, and he walks up. He doesn't know. They're fixing to kill you, boy. They're fixing to tear up your nice clothes that you're wearing.

[13 : 06] They decide not to kill you. They're going to sell you into slavery. And everything in his life, in one day, his brothers, he cries in the pit. When they throw him in, he cries and says, please don't do this to me.

His life is totally the opposite of what he was expecting. When things don't go my way, I often get a bad attitude. I get angry with God and those around me.

I have a tendency to run. I have a tendency to drop inside of myself. I have a tendency to retreat. I usually would deny this, but I end up doubting God or myself that I must have it all wrong.

I would just like to say to you, I watch people quit on God. When things don't go their way, when they've got a dream from God and everything's going good and they're prospering and they're wearing their coat of many colors and all of a sudden they get sold into slavery or they lose their job or there's some kind of health issue or something, they get angry with God and they quit.

They're not in church. They're not reading their Bible anymore. They're not praying anymore because they fully thought God loved them. I thought he loved me.

[14 : 21] I thought he was going to do big stuff with me. I thought he had a plan for me. But it's obvious that he doesn't have a plan. In the middle of the storm, all we can do is trust that God will work it out for his glory.

Storms are coming in all of our lives. Storms are coming in all of our lives. In Romans chapter 8 and verse 28, we were told that all things work together for good of them that love God.

We were told in verse 29, he had predestined me to be conformed to the image of his son. First Peter 5, 6 says, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.

I want you to understand we don't think like God and we don't understand his thoughts. And we have no idea what he's doing. I'm talking about on an individual basis.

When Betty and I went to the mission field, you'd have to understand it was the biggest climatic tragedy, cataclysmic event that you could possibly imagine.

[15 : 33] I love Betty with all of my heart. I still love Betty with all of my heart. And I really felt like we should go to the mission field. Well, I'd thought that since I was 11. I'd kind of gotten off track. And I went into Betty and I told her I wanted to go to the mission field.

And Betty said this. She said, well, I'm not going where it's hot. You can mark that one down. So I said, no problem. So I got out of the World Book. And we had the World Book Encyclopedia.

And I read every place it was cold. And so I told her I found these places where it's cold, it ain't hot, and we can turn the heat on. And Betty said, just like it, she said, well, I ain't going where it's cold either.

So I began to study the whole map over. And I found these places where it wasn't cold and it wasn't hot. It was lukewarm like the Lord would like to spew you out of his mouth. I found the cities of eternal spring.

That's what they called them. It's not primavera. And I found these cities. I found three cities. And I went to her and I said, I found this city called Iriquipa. And it's not hot. And it's not cold. And it's eternal spring all year round.

[16 : 31] 77 degrees during the day. And 55 degrees during the night. I believe it's God's will. And this is what she said. I ain't going there either. I was a young kid.

I didn't have a pastor or a mentor because I've really been in the ministry all of my life. And I had no pastor. And so I was praying and asking God. And I just felt like I would pray at night by the hour.

And I would say, God, please don't kill her. I know you're going to use me. You've got to understand, I'm an idiot. I didn't know any better. I should have had somebody tell me. When we were getting married and she came down the aisle, on the way down the aisle to marry me, I'm standing there waiting on her.

And I knew God had big plans for me. My name is Joseph. I didn't have a coat of many colors, but I thought it was coming. And when she was coming down the aisle, I said, God, I really did. I prayed. I said, God, if she's not the one and if she's going to mess up my plan, kill her right now.

Don't let her get down here. Betty wants to know why I didn't pray God killed me. Well, because I'm the guy God's going to use. Amen. And so I wanted to go to the mission field.

[17 : 34] I chewed my lip until I literally grew a big, long piece of meat like a tongue. We had it cut out like three or four times before we could get it fixed. I was concerned. We arrived in the mission field, and it was literally horrendous.

It was a long time ago. Things were not like they are now. People were making \$25 a month, 85% under employment or unemployment. And we were starting churches.

Man, Betty was feeding as many as 25 people a day at our house, at our table. We were working like nobody you had ever met. And one day, my son couldn't see the hand in front of his face.

He got where he couldn't walk. And I knew he had diabetes. And we took him to the Peruvian doctor. And I was not about to not believe in Peruvians. And we took him to the Peruvian doctor.

And the Peruvian doctor said, well, I don't know. He said, this is unusual because Peruvians at that time didn't have diabetes. He said, I think you should go to a specialist. So we went to the specialist. The specialist said, yeah, I think it's diabetes.

[18 : 34] We're going to put him on one unit of insulin a day. And once a week, we're going to add a unit of insulin until we find out how much it takes to control it. He got worse and worse and worse.

And I finally called my mother. And I said, I've got to have a doctor. The boy can't do anything. And I called the doctor on the phone. And she said, I have that kid at Six Flags on the weekend.

If you get him up here. She said, he needs like 100 units a day. He'd have been dead time we got there. He'd have been dead time we got there. But you know what I said when I found out he had diabetes?

I can remember sitting out on the park and saying, what are you doing? What are you doing? What are you doing? Do you know who you're messing with? I am a missionary.

I'm not sitting up there in America driving a nice car, living in a nice house like I am now. I'm not doing all that stuff. I'm out here suffering, bless God. And you let my kid get sick.

[19 : 29] You've got to let one of their kids get sick. Because you get upset. Y'all don't do that, do you? Well, I was mad. But all you can do is trust him in the middle of the storm.

You've got to understand that you don't understand. The Bible says in Isaiah 55, 8, for my thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways. As the heavens are higher than yours, so my ways are higher than your ways.

And my thoughts are in your thoughts. Joseph has a dream from God. But when he gets to the dream, it starts a downhill spiral in his life. You would think that if God said, I'm going to do big stuff with you and people are going to bow down before you, you would think that would be good stuff.

I don't know what you can, I don't, you've got to understand, I get in the story. I mean, I'm really in the story. I want you to imagine Joseph as he walks out. He don't have to work like the other brothers.

He's walking down through there thinking, hey, y'all, coming down to see you. Check you out here. Been up there with Daddy. We've been drinking Coke and watching TV. I love Lucy's on right now. Hey, how y'all doing? And they said, bam, bust him in the nose.

[20 : 37] He said, what are y'all doing? I've got a dream. I'm a special son. They throw him in a pit. When he's in the pit, he cries. Hey, guys, get me out of here. What are you doing? Some guys come by to buy a slave and they jerk him out and they sell him.

He's like, okay, the joke's off. I know you're kidding. You would never do this to your brother. I know, hey, I'll quit saying I've got a dream. I'll quit being the jerk of the family.

Get me out of here. I'm sorry to get off with him. I don't know what you think he thought, but 20 miles down the road, walking and being drugged and dirty, his good coat gone and dressed like a slave, I bet he thought, what happened?

Where's the dream? And maybe God has given you a special dream or a calling or something that you should do. And I'm just going to say this to you. And all the time, I'm pastor, so you don't always tell me stuff.

When I used to preach all across America, I met tons of people who used to think God had something for them. And they'd given up and quit. They'd come up to me when I was a young kid preacher. And they'd say, son, hang in there now.

[21 : 50] Don't let stuff drive you away from it. Because I used to be like you. And I used to want to do something big for God. And I used to have big plans for my life. But, well, now I'll never have any of that. So don't let them take it away from you, son.

But see, God does have a plan for you. And God does want to work something in your life. And it did get bad. And it did go wrong. And things bad did happen. And you did get sold into slavery. And your brothers did mistreat you.

But you need to walk away tonight saying, I can trust God. You need to walk away and say, God does have a plan for me. I would say you could probably be a little less brash, a little less pushy, a little less braggadocious about your dream.

Oh, you know, boy, if you're not called to preach, you don't get it. But, man, when you're like me, I grew up in a dream. I was the only preacher. There was the preacher. And there was the little preacher. I've been the little preacher all my life until I got to be the big old fat preacher.

But I was the little preacher. And then I was the medium-sized preacher. And then all my life, it was always like we'd have a visit and evangelist. The pastor, I'd be a 12-year-old pastor would say, hey, Austin, come over here.

[22 : 55] This is our preacher boy. That's me. I mean, everybody knew it. Everybody knew it. I knew it. Everybody knew it. I knew it. That's good. Preacher. They need somebody to lead singing.

Austin. But then sometimes God runs you through a ringer. He lets you get a dream so you'll step out in courage. But when you're in the middle of fighting to do what God wants you to do, know that it costs big time.

Rather than being afraid of God's leadership in our lives, we should trust Him to do something great in our lives. It'll benefit others. Not just us. Realize that if God has put a special calling on you, that it'll call for deep sacrifice of personal comforts and conveniences.

In America today, everything is, if God has a plan for your life, He's going to make your life really good. Not necessarily. Jim Elliott was dead before 30.

Jim Elliott was dead before 30. Great dreams of God saving the Akka Indians. And none of them got saved after he was dead. They got saved later.

[24 : 03] I doubt that you could say that Daniel was all that happy in the lion's den. I doubt you could say that the three Hebrew young men were happy in the fire. When you serve God, things are going to go wrong.

No matter what happens around you, keep believing God is at work in your life and wait to see how He's going to work it all out. From the time God speaks to you about what He wants to do with you until you get there, you're going to go through a lot of testing and time and trials.

So I'll end it and say this. I really believe God wants to do something at Vision Baptist Church of Cobb County. I believe it with all my heart. But it won't be the first time I believe something.

God let my kid get sick. Or my grandson has already had six surgeries and he's not three yet. And why in the world has God let that happen? Why in the world has God let that happen?

Or a baby died that belongs to a sweet mystery family. Or a wife get killed. Or you get sick. Why does He let that happen? See, the real question is not what's going on in my life.

[25 : 08] But what's God's big plan? Joseph, you thought it was about everybody bowing down to you. Joseph, you thought it was about being a big shot.

Because that's what we do when we get a dream from God. I mean, we're the most egotistical, braggadocious, proud people that you could ever imagine. You ever notice that? Clap. I'm here.

Clap. I'm the man. Clap. Clap. But God in heaven is saying, I don't need to clap for you, buddy. I'm just using you to accomplish great things. God's working in your life.

And maybe your dream's on the bottom of the pit right now. And maybe it's going to be 13 years before you get out. But over the next few weeks, you're going to go through Joseph's life. And you're going to watch God take him all the way through all the mess.

And pull him right out on top on the other end. And do exactly what he said he was going to do. Trust God as he works in your life. Father in heaven, I love you.

[26 : 07] And I thank you for the privilege of serving you. And I pray that you'd draw your people close to you. And I pray you'd help those that are discouraged right now. They're hurting right now. Things didn't work out like they thought they would.

I'm asking you, God, to do something special in their life. And I'll give you praise for it. You're great. You're wonderful. And I am honored and blessed to just get to share what a great God you are.

And God, everything you've ever done in my life has been the best thing in the world. It might have been hard. And it might have hurt for a while. But I know it was all for your glory.

And I thank you for it. Thank you for being such a good God. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.