

The story of Joseph, an OT hero of faith, is a memorable one with his coat of many colors and all the ups and downs of his life. He went from a slave in Pharaoh's prison to second only to Pharaoh in all of Egypt. It's easy to see why we think of Joseph an extraordinary man.

But upon further review, Joseph was just an ordinary person, *literally, an ordinary Joe*, like you and me. But what about all his life-time achievements? *He was an Ordinary Joe ... but he had an Extraordinary Lord.* Today, we'll learn *Joseph was An Ordinary Joe from an Ordinary Family, with an Ordinary Life.*

**(1)** Joseph had been sold as a slave by his own brothers. What kind of family would do something like that? Joseph was an ordinary Joe from an ordinary family.

His mom was Rachel, and his dad was Jacob. He had a little brother, Benjamin. His mom and dad loved each other and thought the world of their sons, Joe and Ben. Sounds like a nice little family, a model family! Not exactly. Joe's dad had another wife, Leah, who was Rachel's sister. Rachel and Leah's dad, Laban, was a real piece of work. Joe's grandpa was very good at deception and manipulation.

Joe's dad, Jake, didn't have the best family life either. He had a serious sibling rivalry going on with his twin brother, Esau. At one point Esau wanted to kill Jake and Jake had to leave home.

Jake was his mom's favorite. Esau was his dad's favorite. You'd think Jake would have learned a lesson about playing favorites, but he didn't. He picked up in his own family where his parents left off. He made it obvious that Joe was his favorite.

That caused tension. Joe and Ben weren't Jake's only sons. He had 12 in all. 6 sons with Leah, 2 sons with Rachel. Then he had 4 more sons by two household servants. We shouldn't be shocked. Joe's great-grandpa, Abraham, had done the same

thing with his wife, Sarah, and his household servant, Hagar.

Joe's family was dysfunctional, long before that term was ever used. He was an ordinary Joe from an ordinary family. We can call it that because of what messed up Joe's family. Sin! Every ordinary family is messed up by sin. Every ordinary family is made up of sinners. That's why every family is dysfunctional in some way.

When we look at our own families, we see similarities to Joe's family. We've seen how divorce has taken its toll and how hard it is to blend families. We're concerned that our parenting mistakes have scarred our children. Some of us have scars we struggle with each day to overcome.

If there are families that haven't been touched by these issues, the Apostle Paul has this advice for you: **If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.** With a 50% divorce rate, that means half of marriages experience the struggles of divorce, while the other half struggles to not take God's gift for granted.

We all have ordinary families made up of ordinary sinners which makes us all dysfunctional in some way by sin. None of us are perfect spouses. None of us are perfect parents. None of us are perfect kids. None of us has made it easy on our parents. All of our kids have to deal with our sinful quirks.

If Joseph is such an ordinary sinful Joe from an ordinary sinful family, why does the Bible call him a hero of faith and we remember his Bible stories? What's so special about him? **The LORD was with Joseph and he became successful.** Ordinary Joe had an extraordinary LORD! He's the perfect LORD who hates sin and all who sin. **He is the LORD who punishes wickedness, rebellion and sin.** But what's truly extraordinary is this: The LORD who hates sin and demands payment for it is the same LORD **who is compassionate and gracious and forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin.**

- It was extraordinary that in spite of all Joe's family problems, the LORD made sure that

Joe knew no matter where he found himself, the LORD was with him.

- It was extraordinary that the LORD chose to have the Savior of the world come from an ordinary, sinful family like Joe's.

The LORD's love and forgiveness for you and your ordinary sinful family, is also extraordinary.

- It's extraordinary that no matter what sinful problems your family had, the LORD moved them to get you baptized.
- It's extraordinary that the LORD Jesus took all of your sins ... all of your family's sins ... upon himself on the cross.
- It's extraordinary that no matter how much baggage you carry ... no matter how dysfunctional your family may be, the LORD is with you just like he was with Joseph.

And, just like Joseph, we're a bunch of ordinary sinful Joes from ordinary, sinful families, but we've got an extraordinary LORD!

**(2)** There's another way in which Joseph was an ordinary Joe just like you and me. He had an ordinary life with temptations and life's ups and downs.

When Joe's brothers sold him he went from spoiled son to slave. He could have been tempted to say: *"Forget the LORD I learned about in my father's house! Look what following God got me! Enough of that!"*

When handsome young Joe was confronted by a real housewife of Egypt, he could have been tempted to say: *"Forget the LORD, my dad didn't follow the 6th Commandment. Why should I? Look where following God got me! Enough of that!"*

The only thing that kept this ordinary Joe from losing his faith was his extraordinary LORD, who gave him the strength to hold on to the promise that he was loved no matter what and would be with him everywhere. The only thing that kept this ordinary Joe from giving in to Potiphar's wife was his extraordinary LORD, who gave him the strength to say to Mrs. Potiphar: **How then could I do such a great evil and sin against God?** and also resist her daily advances.

Ordinary Joes like us could be tempted to turn away from the LORD instead of turning toward him when the going gets tough, or when sexual temptations come at us from all different sources. The only thing that keeps us from giving in to them – our extraordinary LORD.

Don't tell anyone it's them against the world. Don't let them think that somehow they must get the strength from inside themselves to say "No!" Tell them that the LORD gives them all the strength they need by coming to church, reading their Bibles and receiving the Lord's Supper.

Joseph was an ordinary Joe with an ordinary life in another way: life's ups and downs. He could have been named Joe Murphy, because he experienced Murphy's Law: *If anything can go wrong, it will.* He went from being the favorite son in his father's house to being a slave in Potiphar's house. From hardworking, faithful slave in Potiphar's house to a prisoner in the big house. The guy couldn't catch a break!

Our highs and lows may not be as dramatic, but we still have them. You may feel trapped in your ordinary life working hard trying to get by and just when you think you've turned the corner and things are going better ... then something happens that causes stress and more obstacles. Take your pick of any situation: Financial, Job-related, Health, Retirement, House, or Family!

You're an ordinary Joe, living through life's ups and downs, but you have an extraordinary LORD. The LORD was with Joseph each time, no matter how hard he fell. The LORD was there to make sure he landed on his feet. He does the same for you and me when we fall. He'll always make sure we land on our feet no matter how many of life's ups and downs we face.

Joseph was an **ordinary Joe** just like us. He accomplished some things, because he had an **extraordinary LORD** with him.

It doesn't matter how **ordinary** your life may be here. You'll always have an **extraordinary LORD** ... who has an extraordinary life waiting for you in heaven!