



Life “Out of Control”

Leader's Notes

(Please do NOT use the “if time permits” sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

The term “oxymoron” is used to describe words that seem to contradict each other, but are used side by side. In fact, the word “oxymoron” is an oxymoron itself, because it is derived from two Greek words meaning “sharp” and “dull.” (Examples: “alone together,” “big baby,” or “living end.”) Think of one example and share with your group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share an oxymoron. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group throughout the study. Some more examples might include: act naturally, civil war, good grief, jumbo shrimp, old news, original copy, plastic glasses. The leader might want to do an online search for more examples.**

Would you consider the phrase, “cruise control,” an oxymoron? Explain why or why not. **Answers will vary. Encourage discussion which might include: “cruise” indicates being free or unfettered; “control” indicates restraint or command.**

During this Bible study, we will look at the life of Joseph and some of the seemingly “out of control” events that God used to shape his life and ultimately the lives of his family and descendants. We will also see how God uses some of those “out of control” events in our lives for our good and the good of those around us. Yes, our God is in control and we are thankful for it.

Opening Prayer: Dear Father, You created us and sustain us. We know that even though You have given life to each one of us, often the circumstances of our lives appear “out of control” as a result of our daily sins. We confess those sins and ask Your forgiveness for the sake of Your Son's perfect life, suffering, and death in our place. We praise You that because our Lord and Savior lives eternally, we can look forward to eternal life in heaven with You. We thank You for sending us Your Holy Spirit who gives us faith and the power to believe and to

share our love for Jesus with those around us. Please let the love of Christ control us and use us, O Lord, for Your purposes. Bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

“Out of Control”

The early life of Joseph could appear to be “out of control” from Joseph's point of view. Read the following three Scripture accounts and identify (1) what circumstances happened in Joseph's life; (2) who appeared to be in control of those circumstances; and (3) what sin(s) caused his problems.

Genesis 37:3–5, 8, 23–24, 28 **1. Joseph was sold to traders by his jealous brothers and taken to Egypt. 2. The brothers appeared to be in control. 3. Jealousy, hate, betrayal, lying**
³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. ⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. ⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. ⁸ His brothers said to him, “Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. ²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. ²⁴ And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

Genesis 39:1, 6–12, 16–20 **1. Joseph became a trusted slave in Potiphar's household, but caught the seductive eye of Potiphar's wife. When he refused her advances, she twisted the innocent situation into a lie. 2. Ultimately, Potiphar still appeared to have control over Joseph's life and put him in prison for the supposed offense. Potiphar's wife also took control of Joseph's future. 3. Lust, lying, anger**
¹ Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from

the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

⁶ So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. ⁷ And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." ⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. ⁹ He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" ¹⁰ And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. ¹¹ But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, ¹² she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.

¹⁶ Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, ¹⁷ and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house." ¹⁹ As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. ²⁰ And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.

Genesis 40:1–8, 14–15, 20–23 1. Joseph was in prison with no hope of getting out. He interpreted the cupbearer's and the baker's dreams correctly, but the baker was hanged and the only one who could help him forgot about him, so Joseph remained in prison. 2. He was in prison, subject to the control of Pharaoh's guard and to the cupbearer's memory. 3. Forgetfulness of a promise, kept in Egypt and in prison unjustly as a continuing result of the sins of Joseph's brothers and Potiphar and his wife

¹Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. ² And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody. ⁵ And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream,

and each dream with its own interpretation.

⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?" ⁸ They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.

¹⁴ Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house.

¹⁵ For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit."

²⁰ On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. ²² But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Read **Genesis 4:6-7; Matthew 15:18-19; and James 1:15**. How does sin specifically influence the "out of control" events in life? **Sin is the reason why life gets "out of control". It crouches at our door and causes us to become angry, have evil thoughts, murder, commit adultery, be sexually immoral, steal, give false witness, slander others, lie, and have sinful desire. The list could go on.**

Genesis 4:6–7: ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Matthew 15:18–19: ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

James 1:15: ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Who experiences the effects of sin? See **Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1–3; and 1 John 1:8. Everyone. Me. You. All. We.**

Romans 3:23: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ...

Ephesians 2:1–3: ¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the

body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
1 John 1:8: ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If time permits: Read **Psalm 31:9–10** and **32:3–**

4. What physical and emotional effects does sin wreak in every life? **Physical: bad eyes, strength fails, bones waste away and become brittle, strength dries up. Emotional: distress, grief, sorrow, sighing, groaning, depression.**
Psalm 31:9–10: ⁹ Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. ¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.
Psalm 32:3–4: ³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or in the small group about a time when your life appeared to be “out of control.” Why did it seem that way?
Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.

God is in Control!

Let's look at Joseph's account once more. Read the rest of the story in **Genesis 41:38–49; 53–57.** What happened to Joseph? **Joseph correctly interpreted Pharaoh's dreams [Note: this occurs in earlier verses.] and then gave a plan for preserving the Egyptians during the years of drought. Joseph was given charge of the preservation plan and was second only to Pharaoh in the land. Eventually, all the lands of the earth came to Egypt to buy grain during the drought.**

³⁸ And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” ³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.” ⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. ⁴³ And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of

Egypt. ⁴⁴ Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” ⁴⁵ And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt. ⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁷ During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, ⁴⁸ and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. ⁴⁹ And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.

⁵³ The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵ When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.”

⁵⁶ So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷ Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

How did God specifically use the circumstances in Joseph's life for the good of Joseph, his family, and God's people? See Joseph's own summary of events in **Genesis 45:1–15.**

Joseph's brothers came to him for food, the family was reunited, and the Children of Israel were preserved and moved to Egypt. (See highlighted section in Scripture below for Joseph's own words.)

¹ Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, “Make everyone go out from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³ And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. ⁴ So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ And



God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰ You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' ¹² And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³ You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.' ¹⁴ Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or in the small group how you know that God has taken the seemingly "out of control" events in your life and used them for the good of yourself and others. Be specific. **Answers will vary.**

Encourage sharing within the group. God not only works all events for His own glory but He as well redeemed the cause of a runaway creation by His blood. His cause and making of all history is different than His giving of the forgiveness of sins through the Gospel. Now, of course, He is shaping all of history so that more people might come to faith.

How did our Savior take our "out of control" lives due to sin and save us from eternal death? See **Hebrews 4:14–16** and **John 3:16–17**. **He lived a perfect life, suffered, and died on the cross to save us from our sin.** Hebrews 4:14–16: ¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. John 3:16–7: ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into

the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

What means (tools) does the Holy Spirit use to sustain our faith until life's end?

Colossians 3:16 The Word of God

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

1 Peter 3:21 Holy Baptism

²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...

Mark 14:22–25 The Lord's Supper

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Faith Talk: Read **2 Corinthians 5:14–15**. Share with a partner or in the small group what the words of Paul in verse 14, *For the love of Christ controls us*, mean for you as a Christian.

Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

As a group, make a list of specific ways that you can serve Christ in your home, your church, your community, and into all the world.

Answers will vary, but do encourage a written list. Some ways might include: caring for your family, cooking, singing in church choir, serving on a committee, participating in fellowship activities, being a member of a community civic or social organization, serving meals to the homeless, participating in a mission trip, or giving mite money to mission grants.

Too often we might live as if we are on "cruise control," allowing sin to freely dictate or control our words and actions. What an oxymoron that is! How do Paul's words in **Galatians 2:20** and **5:16–25** encourage us to live our lives? **He encourages Christians to live for Christ, using**



the fruit of the Spirit to serve others. *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...*

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 5:16-25

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Thanks be to God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you and I are truly free through the saving work of our Savior Jesus to live lives that glorify our Lord. We are Spirit-controlled. What a blessing that is!

Faith Walk:

1. Thank God daily for sending His Son Jesus to be your Savior.
2. Daily remember your Baptism and that you are God's own child.
3. By the power of the Spirit, serve the Lord by talking about the Good News about Jesus with at least one person each day. Identify ways that you can serve God in your home congregation.
4. Be an encourager for the women around you, assuring them of God's plan and care for each one of them.
5. Read the Bible and meditate on God's Word every day.

Closing – Sing or Speak Together (Lutheran Service Book #878, stanzas 1 and 4-6*):

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy
victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me!

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the
skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain
shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me. Amen.

*LSB #878, v. 1, 4-6; LW #490, v. 1, 3, 5-6;
TLH #552, v. 1-2, 7-8).