

“God writes straight with crooked lines.” Where human sin and failure often send us off the beaten path, God can help us no matter how far off course we end up. The story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis is a fine example.

Jealous of the love and affection that their father showed his young son Joseph, his elder brothers plotted to kill him. They would have left him for dead in the desert had they not thought to profit from his misfortune as they sold him into slavery.

With God’s help, Joseph used his talents to interpret dreams and rose to prominence in Egypt, second only in power to Pharaoh. Joseph helped Egypt in a time of scarcity and quite ironically found his mean-spirited brothers coming to him for help even though they did not recognize him.

After keeping his identity hidden for some time, Joseph finally reveals everything to his brothers: “I am your brother Joseph, whom you once sold into Egypt. But now do not be distressed, and do not reproach yourselves for having sold me here. It was really for the sake of saving lives that God sent me here ahead of you” (Gn 45:5).

The crooked lines of Joseph’s life were written by the sinful and spiteful nature of his brothers. Joseph was able to set all of that hurt aside and to reconcile with his brothers because he understood how God had helped him in the midst of all of the tragedy and turmoil. Faith in God and a forgiving heart helped Joseph to let go of any resentment and to focus on the present ... moving forward rather than brooding on the past.

The story of Joseph reminds us of the saintly woman, Josephine Bakhita who was born in 1869, in a small village in the Darfur region of Sudan. She was kidnapped while working in the fields with her family and subsequently sold into slavery. Her captors were ungodly men who tried to strip of her all dignity selling her to others and offering her no hope that she would ever return home. After some years, she wound up in Italy and was able to use the justice system there to plead her cause for freedom. She learned about Christianity and entered religious life. Like Joseph, she was able to look at the hand of God writing straight with the crooked lines of her life. She said: “If I were to meet the slave-traders who kidnapped me and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands, for if that did not happen, I would not be a Christian and Religious today.”ⁱ

Life is often unfair, and we may find ourselves suffering due the unscrupulous and sinful behavior of others. At times like these, it is helpful to look at the faith of Joseph and Josephine Bakhita to help us look for God’s hand in helping to right any wrongs.

ⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-josephine-bakhita-680