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[Author Note: I wrote this intro for students to read before their first devotional time, to give them vision for what my expectations and hopes were for them during their devotionals. Use this as is or edit to fit your context.]

Life is messy. Many of us, if not all of us, wouldn’t argue this statement, and if you tried, your argument would dissolve rather quickly. Life is messy—right? People get sick unexpectedly. A friend tragically dies with way too much life left to live. Your best friend shares your deepest, darkest secret with someone else. A family member hurts you so badly, you’re certain you’ll never recover. Your teacher expresses something to you that feels unfair and hurtful. You make a bad decision that leaves your stomach in an uproar, the type of decision you know you’ll regret and wish desperately you could take back.

Life is messy.

Sometimes life’s messiness is self-inflicted, but many times it’s completely uncontrollable and falls in our lap like an unexpected dagger to our heart.

Many “out-of-our-control” daggers have deeply penetrated people’s hearts over the years. A parent’s divorce at a young age; a dad’s second marriage to a woman who had a restraining order against his mother when he was 16; a high school breakup that left a young lady drowning in pain, sadness, and confusion when she was 17; a grandma’s tragic cancer that swept away her health; a brother’s deep fall into a life of drugs and dealing when he was 21; and the day you found out your college love had cheated on you, and hid it from you for months.

These unexpected messy parts of life have left deep marks on many people’s hearts and minds. Many have fully healed, yet some continue to induce pain and backlash. However, at each collapsing moment God has figured out a way to show up. Often, we don’t realize He was there until later, but as we look back at the hard times, we can become convinced that God navigated us through each heartache.

Through studying the messiness of Joseph’s life, you will discover how to navigate through the messiness of your own life. Use these three devotionals to immerse yourself into God’s Word and Joseph’s story in Genesis.

As we grow in our Christian maturity, it's important to always go back to God’s Word for guidance, wisdom, and direction. When life gets messy we have hundreds of places to turn—busyness, school, sports, relationships, media, addictions, and so on. These are understandable, and a few are not unhealthy in moderation. But none of them will help people navigate the potholes of life successfully like God’s Word and the examples He gives us through lives like Joseph’s.

As you go through these devotionals, look to the story of Joseph to help you navigate the messiness you have in your own life.

Challenge yourself to dig deep into each devotional. Don’t forget to stay in line with four key discussion principles as you discuss Joseph’s story in small groups.

1. Be Who You Are
2. Say What You Think
3. Love One Another
4. Talk About the Same Thing

My prayer for you is simply to find freedom and rest in God’s arms during your devotional time. I pray that you would not feel the pressure to navigate through life’s trials alone, but rather trust and follow God to help you navigate through the messiness of life.

I encourage you to pray the following:

“Lord, rid the distractions lingering in me as I head into my times of devotion with you. Give me presence with you. Speak to me in the way I need. Build memories and foundations I can fall back on during the storms of life. Amen.”