

Joseph

Session THREE

TEACHING NOTES

God's promises

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. (Hebrews 11:9 NIV)

One big happy family (Genesis 37:2-4)

God communicates

Joseph's dream (Genesis 37:5-8)

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. (Hebrews 1:1)

Another dream, same response (Genesis 37:9-11)

Believing God

By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. (Hebrews 11:22 NIV)

KEY VERSE(S)

Genesis 37-50:20

KEY THEME(S)

God communicates

Believing God

God is sovereign

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob

Genesis 25:19-26

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Sent to check up on things (Genesis 37:12-17)

Scheming (Genesis 37:18-20)

Sold into slavery (Genesis 37:21-36)

Life in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:1-18)

*But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden.
(Genesis 39:21)*

Prison (Genesis 39:19 – 40:19)

Forgotten (Genesis 40:20-23)

Interpreting Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:1-33)

In charge of Egypt (Genesis 41:37-55)

Famine begins (Genesis 41:56-57)

Forgiveness (Genesis 45:1-16)

The move to Egypt (Genesis 45:17 – 46:8)

God is sovereign

*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.
(Genesis 50:20)*

Faith (Genesis 50:20)

*By faith, Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.
(Hebrews 11:22 NIV)*

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PERSONAL STUDY

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Above all else God desires you to know Him personally — not just know things about Him, but know Him like you would a good friend. As you set aside time to be alone with God you will get to know Him in a personal way – just like you would a good friend. It's during these private times with Him where you give God access to your life so He can guide, instruct, comfort and help you grow spiritually.

Session 1 (approximately 20 minutes)**Prepare your heart and mind**

Begin your time with God by asking the Holy Spirit to quiet your mind and focus on Him.

Life of Joseph

Often our lives do not turn out like we had planned. As we take a look at Joseph's life we will see how he responds to men making sinful choices.

Before you jump into this part of Joseph's life, here's a little background to help you. Joseph was born the son of Jacob, a descendant of Abraham. Jacob showed favoritism to him by making him a special robe. That didn't go over too well with Joseph's brothers – jealousy boiled inside them. And to make matters worse Joseph shared a couple dreams with his family that indicated they would be bowing down to him at some point in their life. We pick up the story when Jacob asked Joseph to go out into the fields and see how his brothers were doing with shepherding the family sheep.

Read Genesis 37:18-36

What do you think was running through Joseph's mind as he watched his brothers sell him off as a common slave and then placed with the other slaves at Potiphar's house?

Think of a time when the events of your life looked hopeless. What consumed your thoughts? Who or what did you want to blame?

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Read Genesis 39:1-2

At this point in Joseph’s life it would have been so easy for him to feel sorry for himself and settle into what he perceived as a meaningless existence. But we see a truth in verse two that makes all the difference – write out this key truth.

Application

If you have put your faith and trust in Jesus, the same is true in your life – the Lord is with you wherever you are, no matter the circumstances. Why do we tend to focus more on our problems than on the fact that God is there guiding us through them?

Write down an area of your life where you need to live in the truth of God being with you.

In your next time alone with God, consider how He worked in Joseph’s life. He wants to work in yours too, if you will allow Him.

Prayer time

Spend some time talking with God. Ask Him to help you grow in your belief that He is in control and with you always.

Share with God the things you are struggling with right now in your life. Reflect on how God wants you to be faithful to Him while putting the outcome into His hands.

Thank the Lord for giving us the example of Joseph’s life that we can learn from. Be reminded of the hope that is found by believing God will do what He says He will.

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Session 2 (approximately 20 minutes)**Prepare your heart and mind**

Ask God to help you to be free of distractions while you spend this time alone with Him.

Read Genesis 39:5-23

We all know life isn't fair. However, when something unfair happens to us we often seem surprised and get consumed by the injustice of our circumstances. How do you think Joseph was able to rise above his mistreatment?

What patterns do you see in how Joseph handled himself – no matter where he was assigned?

Let's fast-forward to later in Joseph's life. Joseph was called from prison to interpret some dreams for Pharaoh. Pharaoh saw God was clearly working in Joseph's life so he put him in charge of all the land of Egypt – quite an upgrade from being in charge of prisoners. Pharaoh's dreams communicated seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine. Joseph wisely set aside enough food to sustain the people through the famine. We pick the story back up when Jacob sent his sons to buy food from Pharaoh because theirs had run out.

Read Genesis 42:1-38

What might you have done if you were in Joseph's shoes when his brothers came to him to buy food?

What does it tell you about Joseph's heart towards his family when you read that he not only gave them grain, but returned their money as well?

We recommend you continue reading this entire story of how God worked through Joseph. (Genesis 37-50) But for now we'll skip ahead.

Read Genesis 45:1-8, 50:20

Can you imagine how the brothers felt when they realized Joseph was not only alive, but in a position to determine the outcome of their lives? What might have been going through their minds?

Application

Because Joseph trusted God, he was able to see God’s purposes in spite of all the horrible circumstances he faced. What does your response to hard times say about your level of trust that God will be with you and work things out for His good? Have you seen God’s purposes play out regardless of the difficult situations you have faced?

When we are led by our sin nature we will experience the fallout of our selfish desires. However, we have a God that is able to work in the midst of a fallen world to produce good and see His promises to completion. Do you believe God is big enough to do that in your life? Do you trust Him enough to remain faithful to Him no matter how hopeless life can seem at times?

Key verse

Put to memory Genesis 50:20. Put the provided scripture card up where you can see it throughout the day.

Prayer time

Have an honest conversation with God about your current place in life and how much you are trusting God with the outcome.

In Hebrews 13:5 God says, *“I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.”* Thank the Lord for promising to always be with us.

Finish your time with the Lord in quiet reflection. See what God may bring to mind during this time of stillness.

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PARENT GUIDE

For Elementary-Age

Most young children find the idea of trusting God with their lives to be easy at first. They trust their parents, teachers, and other adults, so why not God? As they mature and begin to experience things like disappointment, sadness, and frustration; they start to question the idea of trust. The question, “Why is God allowing ‘this’ to happen in my life?” creeps into their thinking. Haven’t we all been there and asked that question?

The story of Joseph teaches us that even when things seem to be going horribly wrong, we can still trust God’s plan for our lives. When Joseph’s brothers stole his colorful coat and turned it to shreds, Joseph’s future appeared to be nothing more than tatters. And it only went downhill from there: sold into slavery, taken far from home, thrown into jail, and forgotten. No one, except God, would have guessed that Joseph would eventually become the second most powerful man in the world.

Only God knows the end of our story and the complete journey it will take for us to reach it. As parents, you are further along in your journey and have the opportunity to share with your children how God has been there for you during those difficult times.

- Set aside some time this week to retell the story of Joseph to your children and then share your own Joseph story with them.
- Help your children to recall times in their own lives as well.
- If you like to write, start a family journal that documents your family stories.

Being able to reflect back on these situations will help you and your children see God’s plan at work in your lives.

For Teenagers

Read Genesis 50:15-21

In the finale of the Joseph story, we see something very interesting about Joseph's character. He doesn't hold a grudge and he believes that God has been in control the whole time. While this may be easy to say, it is really hard to believe and live out. We all know stories that have ended very poorly. In fact most of life's stories do not end up with our kids being in charge of Egypt and saving thousands of lives during a worldwide famine. God does have a plan for each of us that can be carried out regardless of other people's wicked choices. God has the ability to bring about good through all circumstances.

- Watch the news with your kids and discuss a couple of stories. Talk about how God might be working in those situations or how God could bring about good through them.
- Now share a personal story about a bad circumstance in your life that God worked through.
- Ask them to share a similar situation from their life and how they saw God working.
- Tell them about a time when you held on to a grudge for too long only to find it hurting you. Share how God helped you to forgive and move forward.

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OPTIONAL STUDY

It is said that hindsight is 20/20 and as Joseph looked back over his life he responded, "What man meant for evil, God meant for good." He was able to look over his shoulder at the past and clearly see how the God of Israel led him by the hand from slave to the leader of a nation. It is a beautiful thing to be able to see how the Lord used every circumstance in Joseph's life to prepare him for service in God's Kingdom. We have the ability, in just a few minutes, to read from beginning to end, many of the Bible's greatest stories of God's faithfulness and purposes in the midst of what seems like chaos. It feels good to be able to close your Bible with a nice, neat conclusion to difficult circumstances doesn't it? Our lives, however, are very different. We are not born with a script in our hands to follow when the road ahead is blocked or when seemingly impossible obstacles stand in our way. We are in the midst of a walk by faith and these stories were recorded to increase our faith and trust in the all-seeing God of the Bible.

Read Romans 8:18-39

Have difficult times or suffering in your life brought purpose and meaning to it? If so, how? (ex. Joseph's rejection by brothers and imprisonment)

Though we don't have road maps for our individual lives, who has God given us to help us in our time of need? (vs. 26)

Read vs. 28-29. Why do you believe the Creator of heaven and earth will work ALL things for your good and His purposes?

Read vs. 31-34. Is it difficult to believe that the Lord is for you when you are going through painful circumstances? Is it hard to believe that the Lord has His eye on you when He seems to be very silent? Why? (ex. Joseph left alone in prison for years)

Romans 8:32 says, *Since He (God) did not spare even His own Son but gave Him up for us all, won't He also give us everything else?* The Living God is able and WILLING to give us all we need as we go through the hard times in order to bring us out on the other side to accomplish His glorious plans and purposes.

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