

Joseph

One of the most intriguing narratives in all of Scripture, Joseph's story has twists and turns, heroes and villains, excruciating hardship and glorious victory. Through it all, God is at work, His sovereignty consistently on display.

This study guide will depart from our usual format in that each week, the primary content will be your family or small group reading through the narrative of Joseph's life from the Bible. The Word of God is living and active, and simply reading its pages transforms lives. The life of Joseph contains incredible human drama, and it is our prayer that you will be enthralled by the simple reading of this captivating story.

And that God's Spirit will work through it to transform your life.

Each week, there will be a few questions to ponder and discuss after each reading, but let the anointed Word speak to you and give insight and understanding into God's character and redeeming work.

Week 1- Walking with God in a Dysfunctional Family

Read Genesis 35:9-29 (for Joseph's father's history and genealogy) and 37:1-4 together and out loud. Then discuss the following and any other insights or observations you may have from the narrative.

- Discuss Joseph and his family dynamic based on what you've read in Genesis 35 and 37. What do you learn about family dysfunction and favoritism from these passages? For some background here's a reminder: Joseph's father Jacob, though generally godly, embraced the polygamy that was common in the day, which opened the door to jealousy, insecurity and almost constant conflict among his wives. Joseph was the son of the wife Jacob loved most - Rachel. The other sons were either from Rachel's sister Leah, who Jacob was tricked into marrying, or from concubines. Joseph had three stepmothers, ten step-brothers, one brother, and a step sister--all living in the home at the same time. That's one crazy family!!
- What part does Jacob's choices play in what happens to Joseph?
- How would you describe Joseph's character based on this part of his story only? What weaknesses do you see in him? What strengths?
- Share some of your own family dysfunction. How does it compare with Joseph's?

- How has your family dysfunction negatively impacted your life?

Prayer: End your time together with prayer, asking God to give you insight in the coming weeks through Joseph's story. And that whatever negative impact your family has had upon you, you will be able to see God's redemption at work in your story.

Week 2- When Your Dreams Get High-Jacked

Read Genesis 37 together and out loud. Then discuss the following and any other insights or observations you may have from the narrative.

- What role does bitterness and jealousy play in this portion of Joseph's story? What do you suppose would have led his brothers to this degree of jealousy and hatred?
- Joseph went from being a pampered and favored son, to being sold into slavery. What mental and physical struggles do you imagine he faced as a result?
- Amazingly, Joseph chose a different path than his brothers while a slave, and rather than choose bitterness, he chose humility, which ultimately elevated his status in his master's house. What injustice have you faced in your own life where you may need to forsake bitterness and anger and instead embrace humility and trust?

Prayer: Read aloud Ephesians 4:31-32 and pray for one another and the areas in which you need to get rid of bitterness and forgive another.

Week 3- Where is God When it All Goes Wrong?

Read Genesis 39 together and out loud. Then discuss the following and any other insights or observations you may have from the narrative.

- Begin with discussing what ensued in Joseph's life as he chose humility, rather than anger and bitterness, when taken as a slave by Potiphar.
- In what ways was God with Joseph during this time and what was the result? How does this encourage you as you may face your own valley of life?
- As Joseph rose to great success in Potiphar's house, he began to face great temptation from Potiphar's wife. Discuss how he contended against this temptation.
- What do you learn about defending against temptations you face?

- Despite Joseph's integrity, he faced yet another injustice because of the accusation of Potiphar's wife. How have you dealt with injustice done toward you in your own life?
- Though imprisoned, Joseph experienced God's favor and blessing, and he again rose above his dire circumstances. What does this portion of Joseph's story reveal about how God works even in the most dreadful of situations?

Prayer: Close by reading Romans 8:28 together and praying that you would each be able to see God working together for good in your situation.

Week 4- Stamped with Integrity

Read Genesis 40-41 together and out loud. Then discuss the following and any other insights or observations you may have from the narrative.

- After facing continued malice and injustice and years of imprisonment because of it, Joseph unbelievably is favored by God to interpret dreams. Because of this, in one tremendous moment, he goes from the deepest pit to the highest height in Pharaoh's kingdom. What insights do you gain from this portion of Joseph's story?
 - About vengeance?
 - About humility?
 - About patience?
 - About trust in God's promises?

Prayer: Pray for one another to have the kind of trust and humility that Joseph displayed in his years of both hardship and affluence.

Week 5- Softening the Seared Conscience

Read Genesis 42-45 together and out loud. Then discuss the following and any other insights or observations you may have from the narrative.

- Finally Joseph's story comes full circle and God's ultimate plan comes into view. What insights do you gain from this portion of Joseph's story?
 - About his original dream?
 - About forgiveness?

- About God's provision through Joseph and how He works in the mountaintops and valleys of life?
- As you consider the whole of Joseph's story, what was God refining in Joseph that He might accomplish His will in and through him?
- How and what might God be refining in you to do the same?
- Share your overall reflections upon Joseph's incredible story.

Prayer: Read Philippians 2:13 together and give thanks to God for both the highs and lows in your life. Pray to be able to trust Him in both, that He may work in and through you for His good purpose.