

JOSEPH

FAITH + ENDURANCE

NAME:



HOW TO USE THIS READING PLAN

Use this reading plan journal to study God's Word and follow along with our series on Joseph. Read through these passages each week and respond to questions to help you apply God's Word to your life. You can also use this journal to take notes during each teaching.

Before each reading, take time to pray and ask God to open your heart to receive his Word.

- READ passages first
- APPLY what you've read
- PRAY for God's help in applying his Word

If you feel like you're having trouble following this reading plan, consider studying and praying in these ways:

- Underline and circle words or phrases in the passage.
- Write out your prayers as you reflect on what you read.
- Turn your phone onto Focus Mode.
- Listen to a recording of the passage while following along.
- Create accountability within your group as you read together.

WEEK 1: AUGUST 21-26

THIS WEEK

We are starting our Joseph series by introducing the story of Joseph in Genesis. Joseph is the son of Jacob, who is the son of Isaac, who is the son of Abraham. God promised Abraham that he would make his family a great nation. You can read Genesis 29-30:24 to get more background on Jacob and his family leading up to Joseph's birth. This week, we will focus on Joseph's relationship with his father and brothers, how the sin of jealousy creates destruction, and how God is involved in the process.

DAY 1: GENESIS 37:2-11

This is the account of Jacob and his family.

When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. He worked for his half brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. "Listen to this dream," he said. "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"

His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"

This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. "What kind of dream is that?" he asked. "Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?" But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

REFLECT

1. What do Joseph's actions make you think of him?

2. Why do you think God allowed Joseph to have visions?

3. Do you think his brothers' reactions were justified?

4. How have you allowed jealousy to be a motivator in your life?

DAY 2: GENESIS 37:12-36

Soon after this, Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem. When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them."

"I'm ready to go," Joseph replied.

"Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along," Jacob said. "Then come back and bring me a report." So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. "What are you looking for?" he asked.

"I'm looking for my brothers," Joseph replied. "Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?"

"Yes," the man told him. "They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, 'Let's go on to Dothan.'" So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. "Here comes the dreamer!" they said. "Come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, 'A wild animal has eaten him.' Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!"

But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said. "Why should we shed any blood? Let's just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he'll die without our laying a hand on him." Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime. Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed. So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in grief. Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, "The boy is gone! What will I do now?"

Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: "Look at what we found. Doesn't this robe belong to your son?"

Their father recognized it immediately. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!" Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time. His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "I will go to my gravemourning for my son," he would say, and then he would weep.

Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

REFLECT

1. How did jealousy drive the actions of Joseph's brothers? (see James 3:14-16)

2. What do you think about how Reuben responded to his brothers and Joseph in this story? Was he in the right or wrong?

3. How do you see God working in the midst of Joseph's circumstances?

DAY 3: JAMES 4:1-10

¹What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? ²You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. ³And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

⁴You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. ⁵Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him. ⁶ And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say,

“God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble.”

⁷ So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. ⁹Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor..

REFLECT

1. What does James say about our evil desires? (see James 1:14-15)

2. How do you act on jealousy in your own life?

3. How can you discern if what you're asking God for comes from selfish or godly motives?

4. What does it look like practically to "humble yourself before the Lord"?

WEEK 1 SMALL GROUP

READ: GENESIS 37:2-20

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approached, they made plans to kill him. “Here comes the dreamer!” they said. “Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, ‘A wild animal has eaten him.’ Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!”

REFLECT

1. What can you learn about God’s character from the passage we just read?
2. Discuss the reading plan from this week.
 - » What did you learn about God, yourself, or the world?
 - » What questions arose as you spent time in Scripture?
 - » Where did you feel personally challenged or encouraged?

MOVE

1. Joseph’s brothers are jealous, discontent, and entrenched in bitter comparison. What do these three things look like in your life right now?

2. Who are the people in your life that you would compromise your character for? Why?

3. Most relationships are chosen out of comfort, proximity, and ease. Who is someone in your life whose burdens you are willing to carry? Who is someone that the only thing in common you have is a shared pursuit of the gospel?

4. How can you move towards a relationship with someone that will not benefit you but could be an opportunity for you to demonstrate the gospel or share the love that God has shown you with someone else?

WEEK 2: AUGUST 28-SEPTEMBER 2

THIS WEEK

We are going to go through 1 Corinthians 12 to learn more about why God blesses us with gifts. Throughout his story, Joseph had the opportunity to use his gifts selfishly but chose to serve others instead. While reading this chapter, start evaluating how you're using your gifts as God intended and how you can be serving others around you.

DAY 1: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11

¹Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this. ²You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. ³So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. ⁶God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

⁷A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice[b]; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. ⁹The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. ¹⁰He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages,[d] while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

REFLECT

1. This chapter starts off by warning us not to confuse what comes from the world and what comes from the Holy Spirit. How do you know when you're listening to the Holy Spirit in your own life?

2. Verse 4 states there are many different gifts—what do you believe are some of yours?

3. Are there times you feel like you have no gifts to offer? Do you believe verse 6 is true?

4. The Holy Spirit is the source of our gifts for those who are Christians. We have a choice—to use them selfishly or for others. In what ways are you selfish with your gifting and in what ways can you serve others with them?

DAY 2: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-21

¹² The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³ Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

¹⁴ Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. ¹⁵ If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

¹⁸ But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. ¹⁹ How strange a body would be if it had only one part! ²⁰ Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. ²¹ The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”

REFLECT

1. If we’re one body of believers, why do we have conflict among Christians?

2. Why is it important for us to have different giftings?

DAY 3: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:22-29

²² In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. ²³ And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, ²⁴ while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. ²⁵ This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

²⁷ All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. ²⁸ Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:

first are apostles,
second are prophets,
third are teachers,
then those who do miracles,
those who have the gift of healing,
those who can help others,
those who have the gift of leadership,
those who speak in unknown languages.

²⁹ Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles?

REFLECT

1. Do you think that your gifts and talents are actually gifts, or do you think you have nothing to offer?

WEEK 3: SEPTEMBER 4-9

THIS WEEK

We will see what happens to Joseph when he is sold into slavery in Egypt. We will see his character, how he handles his responsibilities even though he is a slave, and how he handles sexual temptation. Pay close attention to where and how you see the Lord moving and working despite Joseph's seemingly dire circumstances.

DAY 1: GENESIS 39:1-9

When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man, and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.

But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

REFLECT

1. Joseph was unfairly treated by his brothers and unjustly sold into slavery. What can we see about Joseph's response to his challenging circumstances? Why would God allow this to happen to Joseph?

2. What is God doing during this time?

3. Why does Joseph refuse to sleep with Potiphar's wife? What is his motivation toward sexual integrity?

DAY 2: GENESIS 39:10-23

She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house.

When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled, she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running. "Look!" she said. "My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got away, but he left his cloak behind with me."

She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. Then she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me," she said. "But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!"

Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. 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. Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

REFLECT

1. What can you learn from Joseph's response to temptation in this section? What might have happened if he responded differently?

2. Despite his integrity and faithfulness, Joseph continues to face unfair circumstances. Has God abandoned him? Why would God allow bad things to keep happening to Joseph?

3. What patterns do you see happening in Joseph's life? How is his experience in prison similar to his experience with Potiphar before Potiphar's wife approached him?

DAY 3: PROVERBS 6:16-29

Joseph is able to resist temptation because of his godly wisdom and fear of the Lord. Proverbs is an entire book about godly wisdom and is of great value to soak in and learn from—especially as a young person.

- ¹⁶ There are six things the Lord hates—
no, seven things he detests:
- ¹⁷ haughty eyes,
a lying tongue,
hands that kill the innocent,
- ¹⁸ a heart that plots evil,
feet that race to do wrong,
- ¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies,
a person who sows discord in a family.
- ²⁰ My son, obey your father's commands,
and don't neglect your mother's instruction.
- ²¹ Keep their words always in your heart.
Tie them around your neck.
- ²² When you walk, their counsel will lead you.
When you sleep, they will protect you.
When you wake up, they will advise you.
- ²³ For their command is a lamp
and their instruction a light;
their corrective discipline
is the way to life.
- ²⁴ It will keep you from the immoral woman,
from the smooth tongue of a promiscuous woman.
- ²⁵ Don't lust for her beauty.
Don't let her coy glances seduce you.
- ²⁶ For a prostitute will bring you to poverty,
but sleeping with another man's wife will cost you your life.
- ²⁷ Can a man scoop a flame into his lap
and not have his clothes catch on fire?
- ²⁸ Can he walk on hot coals
and not blister his feet?
- ²⁹ So it is with the man who sleeps with another man's wife.
He who embraces her will not go unpunished.

PROVERBS 9:10

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom.

Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.

REFLECT

1. According to vs. 20-24, what are some of the blessings and benefits that come from listening to and being obedient to parental instruction?

2. Look at vs. 25-29. What are some of the consequences of sexual sin?

3. Are there any current consequences of sin that you're experiencing, or blessings from choosing to live in godly wisdom?

4. Why would you not sin if you aren't experiencing any consequences?

WEEK 3 SMALL GROUP

READ: GENESIS 39:2-20

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MOVE

1. How do you define success? How is that different from how God would define success?

2. How do you balance God-given ambition with faithfulness?

3. How does a fear of failure or an insatiable desire to be the best hinder you from pursuing what God actually wants for you?

4. How do you usually respond when you are tempted? What might it look like for you to honor God with your response to temptation?

WEEK 4: SEPTEMBER 11-16

THIS WEEK

We will look at Joseph's experience in prison with interpreting dreams of the Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and baker. Continue to observe Joseph's character and his faith despite his circumstances. Make a note of any questions that come up as you read.

DAY 1: GENESIS 40:1-15

Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.

While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.

And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

"This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer. And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."

REFLECT

1. “And they replied, ‘We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean.’ ‘Interpreting dreams is God’s business,’ Joseph replied. ‘Go ahead and tell me your dreams.’”

Why did Joseph feel confident that he could interpret the dreams of the cup-bearer and baker? Where did he get the interpretations?

2. How do you see Joseph displaying both faith *in* God and faithfulness to God in this passage?

DAY 2: GENESIS 40:16-23

When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head.”

“This is what the dream means,” Joseph told him. “The three baskets also represent three days. Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh.”

Pharaoh’s birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. Pharaoh’s chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

REFLECT

1. The chief baker was hoping for a positive interpretation of his dream. Why did Joseph deliver such terrible news instead?

2. Are there any connections or themes you’re seeing in Joseph’s life as it relates to dreams? (remember chapter 37)

DAY 3: ROMANS 12:9-21

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

"I will take revenge;
I will pay them back,"
says the Lord.

²⁰ Instead,

"If your enemies are hungry, feed them.
If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap
burning coals of shame on their heads."

²¹ Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

REFLECT

1. What is the context of this passage? Who is speaking and who are they speaking to? What are some of the other topics discussed in this chapter?

2. This passage feels like a lot of practical action steps. Why is it good for us to live this way? What's the point of following this instruction?

3. Go through the passage and highlight the things that you think reflect how you are currently living. Underline the things that do not reflect how you're currently living. Where do you need to grow?

WEEK 4 SMALL GROUP

READ GENESIS 39:21-23, 40:1-8, 20-23

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. Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.

While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.

And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

REFLECT

1. What can you learn about God's character from the passage we just read?
2. Discuss the reading plan from this week.

WEEK 5: SEPTEMBER 18-23

THIS WEEK

We are going to read about Joseph facing Pharaoh and how he is used by God to save the nation of Egypt. In this chapter, we see how God's plan starts to take shape and understand more clearly why Joseph had to go through so many trials to lead to this moment.

DAY 1: GENESIS 41:1-13

Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh. "Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."

REFLECT

1. Why would God let Joseph stay in prison for another two years?

2. What does God speaking to Pharaoh in dreams teach us about his presence to unbelievers?

3. If Joseph allowed bitterness to drive him in prison, he wouldn't have helped the baker and cup-bearer. Do you look to follow God even in trying times, or does your obedience depend on your circumstances?

DAY 2: GENESIS 41:14-36

Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it.”

“It is beyond my power to do this,” Joseph replied. “But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease.”

So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. “In my dream,” he said, “I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I’ve never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. But afterward you wouldn’t have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

“In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean.”

Joseph responded, “Both of Pharaoh’s dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

“This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

“Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh’s storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land.”

REFLECT

1. When asked if he could interpret Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph's response was that he was unable to but that God could. His life was on the line—why was it important for Joseph to respond that way?

2. Why would Pharaoh believe Joseph was telling the truth?

3. God's plan was starting to be revealed to Joseph. What do you think would have happened to Egypt if he hadn't been there?

DAY 3: GENESIS 41:37-57

Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval."

Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah. He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt.

As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure.

During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, "God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father's family." Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, "God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief."

At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, "Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you." So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

REFLECT

1. What did Joseph's faith in God result in?

2. How did that faith affect Pharaoh?

3. Does your life display that same level of faith in God no matter what your circumstances are?

WEEK 5 SMALL GROUP

READ GENESIS 41

Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh. "Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."

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“Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh’s storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land.”

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REFLECT

1. What can you learn about God's character from the passage we just read?
2. Discuss the reading plan from this week.
 - » What did you learn about God, yourself, or the world?
 - » What questions arose as you spent time in Scripture?
 - » Where did you feel personally challenged or encouraged?

MOVE

1. Joseph is quick to point to and elevate God in a moment when it would be easy to elevate himself. In what situations is it easy for you to point to God, and in what situations is it easy for you to grab the glory for yourself first?

- » What does this reveal about where you are finding your identity?

WEEK 6: SEPTEMBER 25-30

THIS WEEK

We will be concluding the story of Joseph. He finally has the chance to confront his brothers after all he had been through. Pay attention to how Joseph interacts with them when the opportunity to take revenge presents itself.

DAY 1: GENESIS 42:1-20

When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why are you standing around looking at one another? I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we’ll die.”

So Joseph’s ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. But Jacob wouldn’t let Joseph’s younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him. So Jacob’s sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well.

Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground. Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where are you from?” he demanded.

“From the land of Canaan,” they replied. “We have come to buy food.”

Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn’t recognize him. And he remembered the dreams he’d had about them many years before. He said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.”

But Joseph insisted, “As I said, you are spies! This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will never leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here! One of you must go and get your brother. I’ll keep the rest of you here in prison. Then we’ll find out whether or not your story is true. By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don’t have a younger brother, then I’ll know you are spies.”

So Joseph put them all in prison for three days. On the third day Joseph said to them, “I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die.” To this they agreed.

REFLECT

1. Bitterness is an easy response for us when we're wronged. What emotions do you think Joseph experienced when he saw his brothers?

2. Why would Joseph make his brothers believe they were in danger?

3. When wronged, what is your initial reaction and do you tend to hold on to your anger?

DAY 2: GENESIS 44:18-24; 45:1-15; 50:14-21

Then Judah stepped forward and said, “Please, my lord, let your servant say just one word to you. Please, do not be angry with me, even though you are as powerful as Pharaoh himself.

“My lord, previously you asked us, your servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’ And we responded, ‘Yes, my lord, we have a father who is an old man, and his youngest son is a child of his old age. His full brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him very much.’

“And you said to us, ‘Bring him here so I can see him with my own eyes.’ But we said to you, ‘My lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for his father would die.’ But you told us, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes with you, you will never see my face again.’

“So we returned to your servant, our father, and told him what you had said.

Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, “Out, all of you!” So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace.

“I am Joseph!” he said to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. “Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

“Now hurry back to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately! You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.’”

Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph! Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here

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WEEK 6 SMALL GROUP

READ

Genesis 42:1-3, 6-9, 45:1-5, 15

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Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

REFLECT

1. What can you learn about God's character from the passage we just read?
2. Discuss the reading plan from this week.
 - » What did you learn about God, yourself, or the world?
 - » What questions arose as you spent time in Scripture?
 - » Where did you feel personally challenged or encouraged?

MOVE

1. The way Joseph responds to his brothers despite the harm done to him shows he is actually experiencing the power of the gospel. How do you usually respond when others do something hurtful to you?

- » What does your response to this hurt reveal about the lies you believe about God? (Ex: If I respond with extreme anger, this might reveal I don't actually trust that God's justice and wrath are sufficient. Or, my inability to forgive might mean I am quick to forget how God has forgiven me.)

2. When you are put in a position of power or influence, what do you usually do with it?

- » How do you see God using his power throughout the Scriptures?

A blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines, centered on a background of orange and red wavy shapes. The paper is oriented vertically and contains 25 horizontal lines. The background consists of a light beige top section, a bright orange middle section, and a dark red bottom section, with wavy, organic shapes separating the colors.

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