

SMALL GROUP GUIDE
Perspectives: The Life of Joseph
Week 1 - Dysfunction

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: If you had siblings growing up, what were some of the things they did that drove you nuts? If you were an only child, what were some of the things you loved about being an only child and what, if anything, would you have changed?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Genesis 37:2-36, Romans 3:23, Proverbs 29:11, Isaiah 43:19, 1 John 1:9, 2 Corinthians 12:9*

Notice from the very beginning of Joseph's story, there is tension and dysfunction. This began long before Joseph was born, but maybe Joseph didn't know any better, maybe he did. Either way, the beginning of his story begins with something familiar to us all...family drama.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. Right from the start, we're told about how Joseph was loved and elevated over his other, older, brothers. In their culture, priority should have gone from oldest to youngest. How do you think this made the other brothers feel? Why do you think Jacob was so overtly loving and showed favorites? (think about Leah and Rachel's story, plus mothers of the other brothers).
3. Do you think Joseph let this love and favoritism go to his head, or do you think he didn't know any better? Do you think he had his brothers' best future in mind, or that he was rubbing their noses in his favoritism? Do you think Joseph expected his dreams to be good news for his brothers?
4. As the other brothers plot to kill Joseph, Reuben tries to at least keep him from being murdered. Do you think Reuben was having compassion on Joseph or Jacob? Explain.
5. Why do you think the Isaiah 43:19 passage is shared during the first week of this story? What's its potential application here?

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. One of the phrases that come to mind as we read through the deception of Joseph's brothers both to Joseph, and to their father, is, "Oh what a tangled web we weave when at first we practice to deceive." Why do small lies often become big lies?
2. Name some of the dysfunctions we find in the beginning of this story of Joseph.
3. Why do you think God left, in His sacred word, all these stories about sinful human beings?

4. What hope do you find for your story knowing that God can bring good out of even the worst human beings and human circumstances.

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: leaning on his everlasting love

- Knowing all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, what struggles are in your life right now that you want/need to lay at the feet of Jesus
- Knowing that God's love can overcome and rewrite your sin/story, spend time this week in prayers of gratitude for how He loves you.
- Journal your insights through this experience as you meditate on these truths this week.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

- Looking back over the course of your life, what was broken inside of you that God has made whole? What negative situation did God bring something good out of?

CLOSING PRAYER (Psalm 51)

1 Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins.

2 Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.

3 For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night.

4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight...

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

11 Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE
Perspectives: The Life of Joseph
Week 2 - Temptation

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: If you are willing to share, was there ever a crucible moment in your life, a difficulty that you endured, that ultimately helped shape you into an even better version of yourself?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Genesis 39:1-23, 1 Corinthians 6:18*

While an outsider may have looked at Joseph's life and thought God had abandoned him, we come to find out that the opposite is true.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. What do you think happened to Joseph between the time he was sold by his brothers, to the time where he is put in charge of Potiphar's house? What changed in his own character development?
3. How do you think Joseph is able to keep from sinning by going to bed with Potiphar's wife, especially with the day after day after day temptation? Do you think it was always easy for him to say no?
4. Joseph loses his position and gets put in prison for something he didn't do. How would that make you feel? What's different in Joseph in this part of the story, versus when his brothers sold him into slavery?
5. What choices do you think Joseph has to continue to make in order to keep being a blessing no matter his circumstances?
6. Why do you think Paul was so strong with his words in 1 Corinthians 6:18?

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. What can we learn from Joseph's story about our own negative circumstances and God's involvement in our lives during those times?
2. One can certainly say that Joseph chose to make the best out of a bad situation. How does that choice witness to others about your own character, but also, your faith and trust in God?
3. When temptation comes our way, how are we to resist? Share what has helped you, as well as what to do when you give in and fail.
4. How do you and I stay grounded in who God is, in bad circumstances, when tempted, and when the world tells us to give up?

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Repentance

- This week, find some time to listen to and meditate on the words of Matt Maher's song, "Lord I need you."
- List the spaces in your life, right now, where you need God's grace to be more.
- In prayer, fall on Jesus and let Him hold you in His arms of love and grace as He offers you His robe of righteousness to wear, showing you belong to Him now and always.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

- What is an area in your life right now that is a weakness, an area that you need God's help with most?
- Practice surrendering, three times a day, that part of your life to God in His good grace.

WORDS TO REMEMBER

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (1 John 1:9, NLT)

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Week 3 - Abandoned

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: Have you ever had to watch someone close to you go through something horrific, yet the way in which they chose to navigate their circumstances inspired you? Share what impacted you and what choice or choices they made that helped them face those times in such an inspirational way.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Genesis 39:20-41:1, Romans 15:13, Galatians 5:22-23, Galatians 6:9*

Consider how Joseph might have been developing his inner life even when facing difficult circumstances in his outer life.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. Again, in bad circumstances, Joseph quickly rises to the top. Do you think this happened immediately or did it take time? And how did Joseph continue to make this impact wherever he went?
3. What insight can you take from the way Joseph impacted others even though he was just a prisoner, a person of little to no importance? Does this attitude remind you of anyone else in Scripture?
4. Do you think the teenage Joseph would have even noticed the dejection of another human being? Describe what you think he has learned along the way that has helped him become a better man, stripped him of his pride and ego, and even able to identify with those suffering.
5. Why do you think Joseph felt confident in being able to interpret the dreams of the baker and cupbearer? What does he say in verse 8 of chapter 40?
6. At the end of this story, again, Joseph is forgotten about. How do you think that must have felt, and how does Joseph survive yet another blow (Remember, he doesn't know where his life is heading)?

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. In Romans 8: 28, it says that "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to his purpose." How have you seen this work out in your life, or in the life of someone near to you?
2. How can you and I, as followers of Jesus, continue to follow Him even when life throws us blow after blow after blow?

3. Joseph gives credit where credit is due when it comes to interpreting dreams. How can you and I keep from getting big heads when God blesses and uses us to bless others?
4. Joseph, like Jesus, impacted others by being a servant. Jesus calls us to serve and love others, like He served and loved us. What are some practical ways we can live out this call in our homes, at work, in our faith community, and along the ways of life?

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Personalizing God's Why

- Right out and compare the desires of our sinful nature as described in Galatians 5:19-21, with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.
- Then, write out ways to help cultivate each fruit of the Spirit in your life.
- Do an inventory of the things you're spending your life with right now. Which of those things are helping produce the fruit of the Spirit, and which are pushing you to your sinful nature? Ask God to help you be rooted and established in His love, His fruit, over that of the worlds.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

- God sent Himself to us, and sent us to others. Do you sense an area in your life where God is sending you to be a blessing, share his love, carry his peace, etc...?
- Is there something holding you back from answering that call and if so, what, and what would it take for you to let go and say along with Isaiah, "Here I am, send me!"

WORDS TO REMEMBER

"Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'" (John 7:37b-38, NLT)

SMALL GROUP GUIDE
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Week 4 - Rescue

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: Either share with the group one of the best gifts you've ever received, or the one of the best trips you've ever taken. What was it that made it one of the best?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Genesis 41:1-57*

Notice the why behind God's sending.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. Many of us gr

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. In what ways have you experienced God sending Himself to you (His Word, His Church, His people)?
2. When God comes

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Personalizing God's Why

- Re-write John 3:16-17 and use your name in the place where it says "world."
- Then, re-write it using the name of an enemy, or someone who is challenging you.
- Journal your insights through this experience as you meditate on these truths this week.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

- God sent Himself to us, and sent us to others. Do you sense an area in your life where God is sending you to be a blessing, share his love, carry his peace, etc...?
- Is there something holding you back from answering that call and if so, what, and what would it take for you to let go and say along with Isaiah, "Here I am, send me!"

CLOSING PRAYER (Leader or Participant Reads), from the hymn, "Here I Am, Lord"

GOD: I, the Lord of sea and sky,

I have heard my people cry.

All who dwell in dark and sin,

My hand will save.

I, who made the stars of night,

I will make their darkness bright.

Who will bear my light to them?

Whom shall I send?

US: Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

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Week 5 - Reconciliation

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: Either share with the group one of the best gifts you've ever received, or the one of the best trips you've ever taken. What was it that made it one of the best?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Genesis 43:1-2, 8, 29-30, Genesis 44:1-5, 14-18, 33, Genesis 45:1-5, 25-46:1, Genesis 50:15, 18-20*

Notice the why behind God's sending.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. Many of us

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. In what ways have you experienced God sending Himself to you (His Word, His Church, His people)?
2. When God comes

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Personalizing God's Why

- Re-write John 3:16-17 and use your name in the place where it says "world."
- Then, re-write it using the name of an enemy, or someone who is challenging you.
- Journal your insights through this experience as you meditate on these truths this week.

Invite the group to check in next week about their experience.

FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

- God sent Himself to us, and sent us to others. Do you sense an area in your life where God is sending you to be a blessing, share his love, carry his peace, etc...?
- Is there something holding you back from answering that call and if so, what, and what would it take for you to let go and say along with Isaiah, "Here I am, send me!"

CLOSING PRAYER (Leader or Participant Reads), from the hymn, "Here I Am, Lord"

GOD: I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.

All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?
US: Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

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Week 6 - Humility

INTRODUCTION: The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN: Either share with the group one of the best gifts you've ever received, or the one of the best trips you've ever taken. What was it that made it one of the best?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read together: *Philippians 2:6-8, Hebrews 4:15, Matthew 4:1, Genesis 40:23, Matthew 27:45-46, Matthew 6:26-33, 2. Corinthians 5:19-21, Romans 5:8*

Notice the why behind God's sending.

HEAD: Explore the Text

1. Share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts you received just from listening to the text, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead.
2. Many of us

HEART: Personal Reflection

1. In what ways

HANDS: Practice This Week

Spiritual Practice: Personalizing God's Why

- Re-write John 3:16-17 and use your name in the place where it says "world."
- Then, re-write it using the name of an enemy, or someone who is challenging you.
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FINISH WELL: Bring It Home

- God sent Himself to us, and sent us to others. Do you sense an area in your life where God is sending you to be a blessing, share his love, carry his peace, etc...?
- Is there something holding you back from answering that call and if so, what, and what would it take for you to let go and say along with Isaiah, "Here I am, send me!"

CLOSING PRAYER (Leader or Participant Reads), from the hymn, "Here I Am, Lord"

GOD: I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.

I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?
US: Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.