

Life Group Lesson

The Pits of Life a Pathway to Freedom - Week of Jan. 18

Opening

The path to freedom is not easy. In fact, it is most often full of setbacks, difficulties, obstacles, challenges, and yes, pits. Yet, we have freedom ... even in the pits of betrayal ... even in the pits of injustice, darkness and despair. For the deep question we should ask ourselves when we find ourselves in the deepest pit is this: will I become bitter, or will I become better? Will I succumb to the darkness? Or will I make choices that will result in a stronger, more fruitful path that leads to freedom? Today's story teaches us to keep the faith *and* keep hope alive. Let us learn from Joseph, and watch how he chooses integrity over injustice, how he learns to trust the Lord, and how he keeps his eye on freedom.

Read together the Plain Truth:

Managing bad experiences well leads to deeper growth in Christ.

Introduction

In the book of Genesis, we find the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph was a dreamer, and his older brothers resented him for his dreams. One reason they grew to resent Joseph was due to the way he willingly made his dreams known to them, expressing dreams that depicted how one day they would all bow before him. Another reason they resented Joseph was because he was the favored child. Joseph's older brothers resented how this eleventh son, born to Jacob and his beloved Rachel, thought he was so special. Make no mistake, Joseph lacked a measure of humility in his youth. But in time, this favored son did, in fact, learn humility ... the hard way. God's Word is clear – though God does not show favoritism (Romans 2:11; Colossians 3:25), Scripture also says, we must learn humility; for “God opposes the proud but favors the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).

“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 could not say a kind word to him” (Genesis 37:3-4).

Background

One day Joseph's brothers plot against him. They see Joseph coming to check on them, per their father Jacob's request, and decide to throw him into a pit and leave him to die. When the oldest brother Reuben hears of it, he says, “Let's not kill him ... Let's just throw him into this empty cistern” though Reuben secretly planned to come back and rescue Joseph. While Reuben is away, however, the other brothers see a band of traveling Ishmaelite traders approaching. Judah speaks up, “What will we gain by killing our brother? His blood would just give us a guilty conscience” (Genesis 37:14, 21-22, 26-27). So Joseph is lifted from the pit and sold to the traders for twenty pieces of silver and is taken to Egypt. To cover up their action, they kill a young goat, dip Joseph's beautiful robe in the blood, and show the blood-stained robe to Jacob when they return home –

allowing their father to believe a wild animal has killed Joseph.

Think about it: While Jacob mourns the loss of his son, Joseph is being taken to Egypt as a prisoner. And the LORD sees it all.

Read Genesis 39:1-23

Discussion:

The pit of betrayal. The pit of injustice:

Joseph could have easily remained in a pit of bitterness and anger towards his brothers for kidnapping him and selling him into slavery. Yet somehow, Joseph came to a point where he chose a path of forgiveness. It is easy for any of us to harbor anger or take on a vicious victim mentality when we are betrayed or falsely accused (i.e. when Joseph faced the wrongful incident created by Potiphar's wife). Yet, like Joseph, we too must learn to redirect our thoughts and develop a mindset of serving in humility. Joseph chose to begin helping the prison warden better manage the prison. In both pits, Joseph chose inner freedom.

- Discuss life in a pit. Perhaps you have been in a pit of betrayal or a pit of injustice. How is it we too often want to spiral down into a pit of hopelessness and despair?
- Though Joseph acted with integrity and honor while serving in Potiphar's household, he was wrongly accused by a lustful woman. Have you ever been falsely accused while trying to do the right thing? How did you respond? What consolation did you find in that pit of injustice?
- What did you learn? What can we learn from Joseph?

The pit of isolation:

- Joseph's pit of betrayal (sold for 20 pieces of silver by his brothers) and his pit of injustice (wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife) could have led Joseph to an even worse pit, the pit of isolation. Think of a time you found yourself gravitating toward isolation. How does fear and anxiety block out any light in this pit of isolation? How does isolation lead to an attitude of defeat and unhealthy coping mechanisms?
- Perhaps you have been in the pit of isolation. What word would you share with someone locked in chains of isolation?
- How specifically does Joseph's actions (responses) inspire us to rethink our responses to the pits of betrayal, injustice, and isolation?

Our Response

Let the Lord Jesus Christ pull you from the pit today. He paid for your freedom on the Cross of Calvary. The Lord Jesus knows what it is like to be betrayed, beaten, thrown into a pit, and falsely accused. He died a criminal's death on the cross *for you*. His body was taken down and wrapped in linen cloth and placed in a grave – a 'pit' of sorts, hewn

from rock. Though the covering over the tomb was sealed and guarded, the pit of death could not contain the Christ of God. My friend, the pit of death, betrayal, injustice, and isolation will not consume you! You have a Savior. Call out to him. Scripture says: "... you have died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory" (Colossians 3:3-4).

Close by Reading Together Selected Verses from Psalm 105 (below):

He (the LORD) called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply.

Then he sent someone to Egypt ahead of them—Joseph, who was sold as a slave.

They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar. Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the LORD tested Joseph's character. Then Pharaoh sent for him and set him free; the ruler of the nation opened his prison door. Joseph was put in charge of all the king's household; he became ruler over all the king's possessions.

He could instruct the king's aides as he pleased and teach the king's advisors. Then Israel arrived in Egypt; Jacob lived as a foreigner in the land of Ham" (Ps. 105:16-23).

One Year Bible Reading For This Week:

January 18: Genesis 37:1-38:30, Matthew 12:22-45, Psalm 16:1-11, Proverbs 3:27-32

January 19: Genesis 39:1-41:16, Matthew 12:46-13:23, Psalm 17:1-15, Prov. 3:33-35

January 20: Genesis 41:17-42:17, Matthew 13:24-46, Psalm 18:1-15, Proverbs 4:1-6

January 21: Genesis 42:18-43:34, Matthew 13:47-14:12, Psalm 18:16-36, Prov. 4:7-10

January 22: Genesis 44:1-45:28, Matthew 14:13-36, Psalm 18:37-50, Proverbs 4:11-13

January 23: Genesis 46:1-47:31, Matthew 15:1-28, Psalm 19:1-14, Proverbs 4:14-19

January 24: Genesis 48:1-49:33, Matthew 15:29-16:12, Psalm 20:1-9, Proverbs 4:20-27

The Pits of Life a Pathway to Freedom

Text: Genesis 39:1-23

Plain Truth

Managing _____ experiences _____
leads to _____ growth in Christ.

1. Joseph chooses _____ over
_____.

2. Joseph chose to walk in _____ in the
face of _____.

3. Joseph chose _____ in a place of
_____.

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