



# JOSEPH

# SESSION I

- **Main Passage:** Genesis 37
  - **Supporting Passage:** Philippians 3:4-8
  - **Purpose:** To examine how God uses times of tribulation to draw us to a closer relationship with Himself.
  - **Session Snapshot:** God can use adversity in our lives to reveal Himself to us and to shape us into the image of Christ. Also, God can use difficult times to reveal our hearts' idolatrous strongholds and to further our dependence on Him.
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## GETTING STARTED

*Kick-off your time together by introducing a new theme or reviewing what you did in the last session.*

FIRST, if this is your first series from *Real Men*, explain to your group that they will be beginning a video series on Joseph that is part of a larger study on looking at the real men of the Bible. Remind men that the Bible is true and that the people depicted in its pages aren't fictional characters. They are real people who lived real lives. Remind your group that God wants us to study these people's lives to learn from their example what it means to be in a relationship with Him.

If this is your first session as a group, consider introducing yourself, if necessary, and having the men in your group introduce themselves. Then, ask for volunteers to share what they want to get out of their time in this study. If you want to pass around a contact sheet or do any other first-session "housekeeping tasks," this is the time to do it.

If this isn't your first session from *Real Men*, simply inform your group that you are starting a new character study, the life of Joseph, and that this study will work just like any of your previous studies have worked.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

## DIGGING IN

*Jump into the session by watching this week's video.*

FIRST, if this is your first session of *Real Men*, explain to the group the basic structure of your time together. Explain that you will watch a video that is usually about 15 minutes long, followed by a short discussion of the video. Then, you'll spend a few minutes in Bible study, followed by a closing activity. Consider encouraging men to take notes as they watch the video.

THEN, play the video.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **As we will see over the next five weeks, the biblical account of Joseph is full of ups and downs. Joseph is repeatedly treated harshly and undeservingly. Can you think of a specific instance in your life when you felt like you were treated unfairly? How did you respond to this time?**
- **Have you ever been through a difficult time of your life and felt that God was not there? How do we react to that feeling of loneliness?**
- **Why do we feel abandoned by God during trying moments of life? How does God show us that we are not alone and that He is, in fact, right there with us?**
- **If God is indeed totally sovereign and in absolute control, can He prevent bad things from happening to us? What are the reasons you think God would allow bad things to happen to you? How has God worked in troubling times of your life to bring about His purposes and to reveal His plans?**
- **Why do we look for a way out of a difficult time in life rather than asking God to teach us and change our hearts during those times? How do we change our perspective from one of escaping a hard time to, instead, learning from and being shaped by God during those times?**
- **Would you describe your life as totally dependent on God? How does adversity show us who or what we are dependent on?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **God is instructing us through the life of Joseph on how we are to deal with difficult times. Let's look at the life and lessons of Joseph in Scripture.**

## OPENING THE WORD

*Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.*

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at the idea of suffering as seen in the life of Joseph in Genesis 37. Also, explain that you will also see how the apostle Paul in the New Testament describes how God used adversity to show him the richness of Christ. As Rick stated in the video, understanding God's perspective on adversity in our lives is important in understanding who God is.

We must make sure your group has a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- **Time frame:** It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible—including Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—of which Genesis is a part). Most of the material originated from Moses himself. Depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), that would make a date for the writing of Genesis sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC

- **Purpose:** Genesis details our world's earliest history, including creation and Adam and Eve's fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Genesis 37:1-4. When the volunteer has finished, lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **When we are introduced to Joseph, Jacob's 11<sup>th</sup> son, what do we learn about him right away?**
  - *Answer:* We see that Joseph was obviously loved by Jacob above all his other sons. Jacob makes a special robe for Joseph, and his half-brothers hold contempt against him.
- **How do you think Joseph felt about the way his brothers treated him?**
  - Answers will vary. There is no clear indication in Scripture as to whether Joseph was prideful about his family position or not. We know that Jacob's decision to love Joseph more than the other sons negatively impacted the other brothers' views of Joseph and his relationship with them.

Continue the study on Joseph by asking a member of the group to read Genesis 37:9-11. Ask something like:

- **What were the dreams Joseph had and shared with his family? How did his family respond?**
  - *Answer:* Joseph had two dreams which have a similar meaning. Both dreams indicate that all his family will fall before Joseph and that he will be elevated in status above them. This further infuriated the jealous brothers and even brought scolding remarks from his father.

NEXT, summarize the next verses to the group by explaining that Joseph is then sent by his father to check on his brothers who are tending sheep in fields about 50 miles away from their family home. The events that occur when Joseph finds his brothers are described in Genesis 37:23-28; have a volunteer read these verses and then ask the group:

- **How do you think Joseph felt when he came upon his brothers, and they treated him with such malice? Do you think Joseph deserved to be treated as he was?**
  - Answers will vary. We can only guess how Joseph would have felt in such a situation. Surely, he was scared, but he likely felt betrayed, as well. Be sure to emphasize to the group that Joseph certainly did not deserve this kind of harsh treatment regardless of his prior actions.
- **What are the possible responses Joseph could have during such a time of unfair treatment?**
  - *Answer:* Joseph could have become bitter due to the unjust treatment and could have renounced his faith. Or, Joseph could have remained faithful during this time and continued to be obedient. Although Genesis 37 doesn't spell out exactly how Joseph felt or his specific immediate response to his brothers, we know from the rest of Joseph's story, as we will study in the weeks to come, that Joseph was faithful and obedient to God in his actions.

Read to the group Genesis 39:2–3, “[2] The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. [3] His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.” Emphasize to the group that even in the middle of a complete underserved tragedy, God is obviously with Joseph and others see God in Joseph's life.

THEN, for this next section, explain that you are going to shift your focus from the trials of Joseph to the trials of a central figure in the New Testament, the apostle Paul. Ask the group to turn to and have a volunteer read Philippians 3:4-8. Then, ask the group:

- **What does Paul reveal about himself to show his religious competence? What does this tell us about Paul's life before Christ?**
  - *Answer:* Paul gives us his religious resume' in verses 4-6 of this section. He mentions that he was a Hebrew of the tribe of Benjamin and was a leader in the religion as a Pharisee. He would have been

considered a righteous and blameless person by his outward actions, according to other Jews at the time. Paul tells us these are the things he put his identity and hope in before meeting Jesus Christ.

- **What things do we put our security, hope, and identity in instead of Jesus?**
  - Allow time for reflection as answers will vary. Some of the things we put our hope in include our jobs, our bank accounts, our church membership, our family, etc.
- **What is it called when we place our hope, identity, and security in anything other than Jesus?**
  - *Answer:* When we place our worth, our security, our identity, or our hope in anyone or anything other than Christ, we are committing idolatry. That thing or person has taken a role in our hearts above Christ and is an idol.
- **According to Philippians 3:7-8, how does Paul consider all the things he once depended on before following Christ?**
  - *Answer:* Paul considers all the things that he staked his identity on before following Christ as a complete loss. Those things that Paul once held so dear are nothing compared to Jesus. Paul says that all those things that he placed his identity in are now considered human waste and absolute garbage compared to God's glory and knowing Him personally through Jesus.

FINALLY, ask the group:

- **What is the “surpassing worth” that Paul talks about in knowing Jesus?**
  - *Answer:* Paul is referring to the immeasurable worth of knowing Jesus personally and intimately. He is not referring to knowing about Jesus, but knowing Jesus.

Group members may mention the innumerable benefits of knowing Christ as well in answering this question. Those blessings of a relationship with Christ include peace, joy, strength, forgiveness, and salvation. As the group leader, emphasize that these gifts are immeasurable, but even these do not compare to Christ Himself. Say something like:

- **Having a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus and being indwelt with the Holy Spirit far outweigh even the gifts from such a relationship. Jesus is the greatest gift and should be the object of our life’s pursuit. Paul shows us that pursuing anyone or anything else is rubbish.**

FINALLY, ask if there are any questions and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

## ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

*Focus your group’s attention on the takeaways from your time together.*

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Say something like:

- **After investing the time we’ve just invested, the worst thing we can do is to leave this place unchanged. The right response to what we just read and processed is to do the work to see what changes this brings about in our lives.**

Remind your group that God has a plan for each of them. That's how God works. Challenge your group to consider which of the following questions applies most to them and to work with God to answer it:

- **When I am going through a crisis or an adverse time, do I still seek God and, like Joseph, do others around me still see God in me?**
- **What in my life comes in between God and me?**

- Each of us in the group should take time to examine our hearts and ask ourselves and of God what we are holding onto or pursuing that are idols. What am I trusting in or placing my identity in instead of Christ?
- **After hearing Rick's message and seeing the truths in our study, we should all look closely at our hearts and ask, "Is my perpetual lack of dependence on God due to a lack of relationship with Him?"**
  - If we do not have a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus, then we cannot follow Him in loving obedience or trust Him wholly. If this is the case, then establishing a personal relationship with Christ is paramount and should take priority. Seek out a pastor, Bible study group leader, or Godly friend to help talk through your relationship with Jesus.

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves in these three questions. If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of processing they find themselves doing.

FINALLY, encourage men to continue to marinate on these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.