

Interrupted Again. And Again.

Small Group Discussion

Genesis 37-50

Begin with prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you all through God's word, and to lead your discussion.

Opening Questions (try to get everyone involved in discussion):

- To what extent are you able to be optimistic about the current state of affairs? (On a scale of 1 to 10, a 1 would mean that you are totally cynical about anything ever getting better, and a 10 would mean that you are completely content and optimistic).
- Today we're discussing the Old Testament story of Joseph, which is full of interruptions. We'll read several portions of this narrative (which runs from Genesis 37-50).

Read Genesis 39:2-6a, then discuss the following.

- Re-hash Joseph's story up until this point. How has he arrived at the home of Potiphar?
 - From what you know of Joseph's upbringing, what reason might he have to trust God even when he found himself suddenly sold into slavery?
- What enabled Joseph to be successful in Potiphar's house?

Read Genesis 39:6b-23, then discuss the following.

- Joseph lands in prison, and yet from all we can see, he is not harboring bitterness against God or his accuser. How is this possible?
- Do you think that Joseph had a participating role in arriving at a position of favor with his officials?

Joseph eventually has the opportunity to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, with God's help, and to suggest a wise plan of governance as a result. **Read** what happens as a result of this opportunity, in Genesis 41:37-46.

- In what other ways could Joseph have responded when he was brought out of prison to Pharaoh? Why do you think he responded this way?
- In what way did Joseph's initiative play a role in this turn of events? In what way did God's sovereign hand play a role?

When the famine hits the land of Canaan, Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy food, without realizing that he is the second in command. Eventually, after several encounters with them, Joseph reveals his identity. As the narrative starts to turn toward redemption, **notice** what the author brings out in the following verses:

- Gen. 42:24
- Gen. 43:30
- Gen. 45:2
- Gen. 46:9
- Gen. 50:1
- Gen. 50:15-17
- Why do you think that Joseph is weeping so much? What is he weeping for?
- Why do you think that the author describes Joseph's weeping in such vivid detail, when the story is turning happy?
- On Sunday, Pastor Josh mentioned that the Bible doesn't gloss over grief; in fact, **mourning for what you have lost is honoring to God**, and necessary to emotional health.
 - Are there aspects of life that COVID-19 has taken from you? To what degree have you mourned those losses? How do you feel about this idea of grieving your losses?

Read Genesis 50:15-21, then discuss the following.

- Why are Joseph's brothers suddenly afraid?
- What do we learn about Joseph's character and faith in this scene?
- Does Joseph minimize the brothers' sin in his response? Why or why not?
 - How is it possible to both forgive, and guard against minimizing the sin?
- We learned Sunday that the word "intend," in v. 20, also has the meaning, "to weave." In what way does the image of weaving shed light on Joseph's point here?
- Joseph essentially says that in God's hands, his suffering enabled him to be an instrument of salvation for many people. In what ways was Joseph an instrument of salvation?
 - Josh said on Sunday that **God is like a Master Weaver, weaving the dark threads of our pain into something better for us and for the world than we would have ever chosen.** To what degree do you believe this statement to be true about your own life?
 - As you think about the ways you have been wronged in your life, and the losses you have suffered, is there an example of some incident that you would not have chosen, but which God has woven for good?
 - Are there areas of pain in your life where you have a hard time seeing how God could possibly weave them for good? (Leaders: If people share anything, commit to pray for them at the end of the discussion).
- In what ways is Joseph's story a picture of what Jesus would accomplish for us through his suffering?
 - In what ways does the gospel of Jesus enable us to approach our current difficulties with contentment, faith, and optimism?
 - What practices have enabled you to have this perspective during the current season?
- Obviously, we won't know much about how God redeems the COVID-19 crisis until we have the benefit of many years of hindsight. But can you start to see, or even imagine, some ways that God could possibly use this event to bring about "the saving of many lives?"

Sharing/Prayer

- As always, take some time to share areas where you need people to pray for you. Spend time praying for one another. Be sure to pray for any areas of pain that people have mentioned throughout the discussion.
- Specifically pray for needs of which you are aware in relation to COVID-19, such as sick relatives/friends, or front-line medical workers.