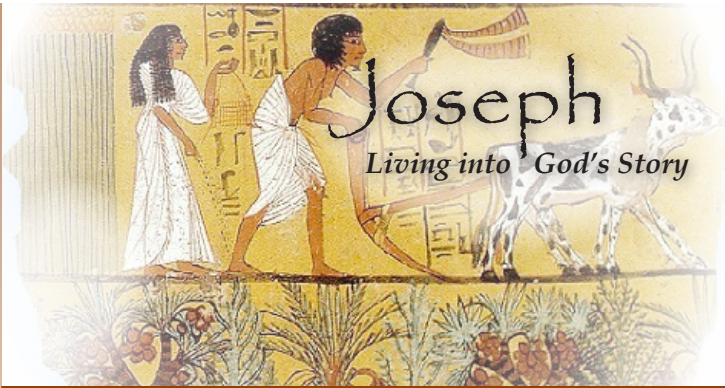


Weekly
Discussion
Guide

April 11,
2010

Genesis 42-45:
The Tale of
The Brothers



Thinking back through Joseph's story . . .

Summarize Joseph's story from his being sold by his brothers to his reunion with them in Egypt. What steps did he have to take to make that journey?

What do you recall about what has happened in the lives of the brothers while Joseph has been on that journey?

Thinking about what all this means . . .

Ultimately, God is doing a great and gracious thing for Jacob (Israel) and his sons and their families--He is preserving their lives. But God does that in a way that includes Joseph going through serious suffering. What do you think about the idea that God might bring blessing into the lives of others through you, but that the way to be that conduit is for you to endure hardship and suffering?

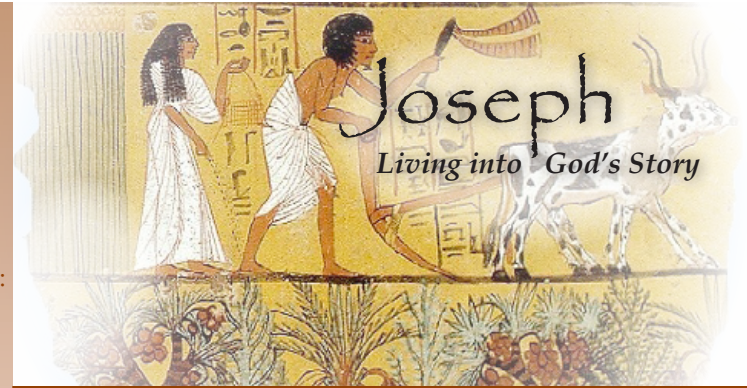
Joseph's suffering was not due to sin in his life or wrong he had done. But Joseph's journey was the divinely intended means to a very different end. What do you think about the idea that the hardships you face may actually have little to do with your own personal "condition of soul," but might be the means for a particular end God intends?

Job is a man who endured great suffering--including the loss of children, goods, and health. Job is never told why these losses have come upon him--although we, as readers, get insight that Job does not. Ultimately, what God is doing in and through Job's life is pursuing *His own ends* and *working for His own glory's sake*. This seems also to be the case in Joseph's life. What would it mean for the way you approached your day-to-day life if you understood that all that God is doing or allowing or orchestrating is more about *His ends* and the pursuit of *His glory* than about your ease or comfort or your plans?

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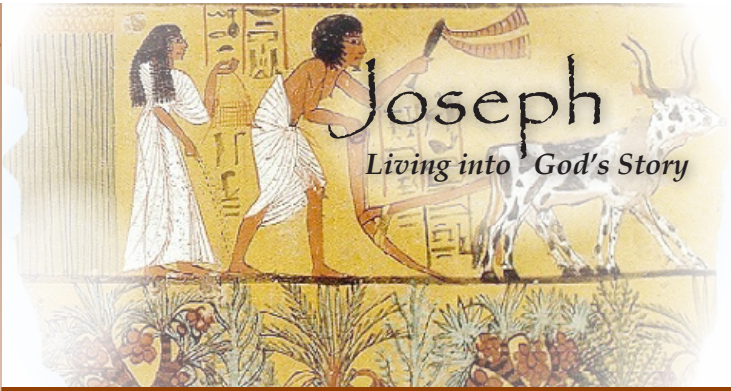
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What are we focusing on?

This week, we want to try and “synthesize” a bit. Good Bible reading includes both analysis (where we focus on the details of the text) and synthesis (where we attempt to fit the individual facets of the story we have been studying into a bigger frame). Each week we do some of both; we look closely at the text (analysis) but we also ask some “So what?” questions (which tend toward synthesis). This week we want to major on the synthetic thinking--drawing on the big ideas presented to us in Joseph’s story and trying to think well about the major movements of the account.

What will we be discussing?

Basically, the discussion will focus on two simple things: a review or summary of how the story of Joseph’s life has played out so far (Genesis 37-45) and a few over-arching questions that attempt to pull together the major ideas that undergird Joseph’s story.

There are a variety of ways that you could review the story of Joseph. Be as creative as you feel inclined! You don’t have to read all eight chapters--that would take a significant amount of time. You might simply scan the chapters, reminding yourselves of what each touched on. You could, as the leader, get the “big pieces” in mind and give each a heading and ask the group to fill in the picture each piece represents by recalling what they can of the story. The goal is not to recreate, in all their details, each episode or movement of the story, but to get a sense of the overall flow and what Joseph’s journey has really been like.

One way to review is to follow the chapter breaks in Genesis and settle on a couple of “topic sentences” for each chapter. For example:

- Genesis 37: A. Joseph’s dreams about what God is going to do
B. Joseph’s brothers sell him into slavery
- Genesis 38: Judah’s sin, giving evidence to his character
- Genesis 39: A. Joseph in Potiphar’s house, giving evidence to
his character
B. Joseph in prison, the Lord is still “with him”
- Etc. . .

Once you have discussed and recalled the major movement of Joseph’s story to date (that is, up to and including 45:1-15), you can turn your attention to the three big discussion questions:

Ultimately, God is doing a great and gracious thing for Jacob (Israel) and his sons and their families--He is preserving their lives. But God does that in a way that includes Joseph going through serious suffering. What do you think about the idea that God might bring blessing into the lives of others through you, but that the way to be that conduit is for you to endure hardship and suffering?

Here the issue to wrestle with and discuss is that our suffering might be God’s chosen way to bring blessing into the lives of others.

Joseph’s suffering was not due to sin in his life or wrong he had done. But Joseph’s journey was the divinely intended means to a very different end. What do you think about the idea that the hardships you face may actually have little to do with your own personal “condition of soul,” but might be the means for a particular end God intends?

Here, the issue to wrestle with and discuss is that there may be times when our suffering is not about something we have done wrong.

Job is a man who endured great suffering--including the loss of children, goods, and health. Job is never told why these losses have come upon him--although we, as readers, get insight that Job does not. Ultimately, what God is doing in and through Job’s life is pursuing *His own ends* and *working for His own glory’s sake*. This seems also to be the case in Joseph’s life. What would it mean for the way you approached your day-to-day life if you understood that all that God is doing or allowing or orchestrating is more about *His ends* and the pursuit of *His glory* than about your ease or comfort or your plans?

Here, the issue to wrestle with and discuss is that although we might be suffering, what God is doing may be much less about us and much more about what He is doing for the sake of His glory.

It could well be that in and through our suffering, God might well be about some end that is for His glory and for the good of someone else. If we could see a glimpse of that, it would change the way we faced our troubles and how we spoke to God in the midst of all we go through . . . something we clearly see in the way that Joseph lived.