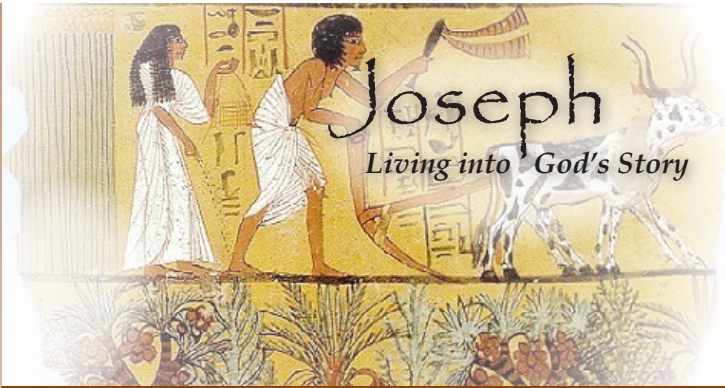


Weekly
Discussion
Guide

March 28,
2010

Genesis 42-45:
What It Really
Meant



Where we start . . .

When have you “misinterpreted” what God was doing in your life?

How do we experience life when we misconstrue what He is up to?

What we read . . .

Joseph’s story began with dreams. Read Genesis 37:1-11. How did Joseph’s brothers and father interpret what Joseph’s dreams meant?

Let’s notice how things ultimately played out. Read Genesis 44:14 and 45:1-12. Given what is described here, what was the fulfillment of Joseph’s dreams?

What was wrong about the way the brothers had interpreted Joseph’s dreams? What had they either misconstrued or overlooked?

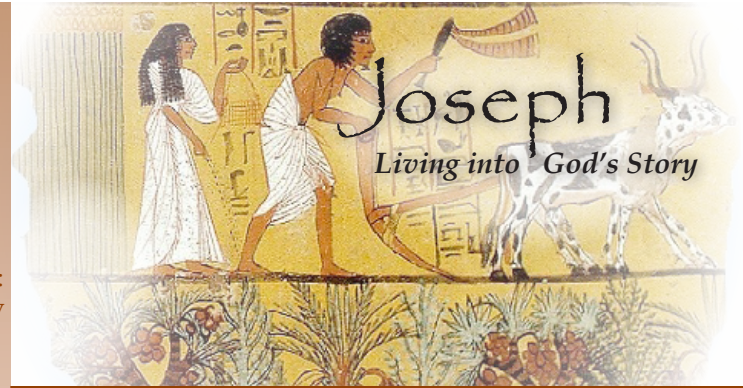
Why this matters

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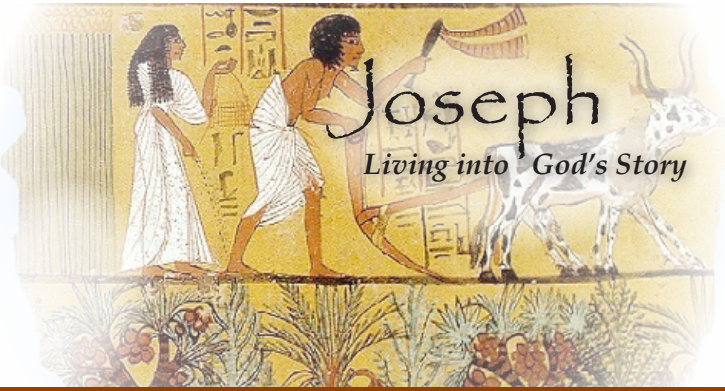
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What are we focusing on?

This week, we are trying to grasp some of the big movements of Joseph's story. We want to see, in one glance, where it began and where it is heading. The story began in Genesis 37 with Joseph's dreams and moves toward the fulfillment of those dreams in Genesis 45. What we want to take note of is how the brothers misconstruing the meaning of Joseph's dreams resulted in their acting and living poorly. Ultimately, God does carry through with all that He intended and the brothers benefit greatly from God's plan. But part of the tension in the story is the way the brothers had been living, all rooted in their misinterpreting what God had revealed.

What will we be discussing?

As you begin your discussion, talk about how we can sometimes misconstrue or misunderstand what God is doing in our lives. Most friends of Jesus have had those moments when, as the Spirit grants insight, we awaken to how we had "missed it" in thinking about what God was doing. The goal is *not* to underscore how we tend to misinterpret what God is up to, but to reflect on how we tend to live poorly when we *do* misunderstand what God is doing.

As you turn to the Scriptures, dip back into Genesis 37:1-11 and discuss Joseph's dreams and the way that Joseph's brothers and father had interpreted what those dreams meant. They heard the "bowing down" imagery; clearly that was part of the picture God had given Joseph. But what had they concluded about that?

They seemed to think that bowing down was going to be

a bad thing. That it was oppressive or inappropriate. Apparently, it never entered their minds that the expression of bowing down to Joseph might have been in gratitude or thankfulness or willing submission to a goodness or blessing that Joseph might have been enabled to bring into their lives through the grace of God. Both brothers and father misconstrued the dream *and ended up living--in relationship to God and to Joseph--out of their misconstrual rather than out of the truth God had revealed.*

When you get to Genesis 44 and 45, we finally get to see some of the fulfillment of Joseph's dream. Yes, the brothers bow before him. But this submission is not what they anticipated (nor did they, in the moment, realize this was the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams for they didn't realize who they were bowing before!).

Their bowing and both their and their father's ultimate submission to Joseph was a wonderful and rich and good thing. Seeing as no one could get food in the time of famine save through Joseph (41:55-57; 42:6), being in submission to Joseph was a great and good thing. And the reality of what the dreams had pictured was actually a benefit to the brothers and to their father, in spite of the way they had misconstrued the dreams.

All of the chaffing and bitterness and wickedness of the brothers was anchored, to some degree, in how they had *misconstrued* what God was doing and their visceral reaction to that misconstrued idea! They were embittered--not because of what God was doing--but because they wrongly interpreted what God had revealed about what He was doing in such a way that they felt that He was against them rather than for them.

This idea is embedded in the account as we move from Genesis 37 through chapter 45 and beyond. You will have to encourage those in your group to see the big picture, spread out over many chapters and very many years.

In Genesis 42:9, we are told "Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed." Perhaps Joseph, himself, didn't really grasp all that the dreams had meant until he began seeing the events unfold. Certainly, Joseph must have thought about the meaning of the dreams; but the full implication of what God had been showing him was not realized until he watched his own life unfold.

Both the brothers and Joseph had God's revelation (through the dreams). Joseph lived well in the years that followed; the brothers lived poorly. And the difference? How they tried to make sense of what God had revealed. Joseph rested; the brothers misinterpreted. How sad it would be if we lived out our lives only reacting to our misconstrued ideas of what God was up to . . . not trusting Him to make sense of His revealed will, not trusting Him to bring to pass all that He intended.