

FINDING YOUR DREAM

group leader's guide

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This guide is to be used in conjunction with *Finding Your Dream: From Famine to Feast—the Life of Joseph* by Jane Rubietta (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2015).

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The daily readings of *Finding Your Dream: From Famine to Feast—the Life of Joseph* have been combined by weeks to form a thirteen-week group leader’s guide. If your group is meeting for a shorter time, combine multiple weeks for each group session. There will be ample material to use during your meeting time. The questions in this guide work well in combination with the application elements at the close of each reading.

To get started, each group member should have a personal copy of *Finding Your Dream*. It is helpful if they read the current week’s selections in advance of the meeting. Individual group sessions are divided into two parts: “Digging In” contains icebreaker questions, non-threatening openings that invite people into relationship, story, and memories. “Digging Deeper” takes a more in-depth look at elements in the book’s chapters, related Scriptures, and application.

Note: At the beginning of each session, you might want to remind people that silence is uncomfortable but good and allows people time to process. Also, to honor confidentiality and to create a safe environment, adapt the motto, “What we say here, stays here.”

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO ASK AT EACH SESSION

1. What stood out for you in these readings?
2. What Scriptures spoke to you? In what ways?
3. Where did you sense God tugging at your heart?
4. What emotional responses did you experience?
5. What will be different today? Tomorrow?

CLOSING

Close by reading a selected “Traveling Mercy” aloud, either as a group, or in pairs to one another, so it is intimate for each person.

For more group ideas and resources, please visit www.JaneRubietta.com. If your group is interested in a video conference call with the author, during or toward the end of your study together, please contact her at info@JaneRubietta.com.

WEEK 1

September 1–7

DIGGING IN

1. What's your favorite dream? What recurring dreams do you have? Nightmares?
2. When have your dreams hinted at a deep longing or neglected gift? What do you do when you awaken from those dreams? How do you listen to those dreams?
3. Jot down, perhaps just for your own eyes, what dreams you've had or considered when it comes to life, work, and family.
4. Acts 2:17 says God will pour the Holy Spirit on all and people will prophesy and dream. Dreams are not biased based on age or gender. Where are you seeing that freedom (or lack thereof) to dream and its acceptance?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. One comforting and discomfoting element of Scripture is that God chose to work through people who trashed their lives (and others' lives). What do you make of Joseph's childhood (see Gen. 30:24, for instance) and Jacob's handling of Dinah's tragedy? And how do you put this into context with people who ultimately figured hugely into God's hopes for the world, for you and your neighbor? What hope do you find here for your own life?
2. When have you regretted a decision to change plans? How do you listen to hear what's next?
3. The statistics are grim about sexual abuse and crime. How can you be prepared to help people who appear with a Dinah story of their own? More tragedy in Dinah's story involves silence (her father's) and revenge (her brothers'). Perhaps you have found yourself in one of these places, whether Dinah or her father or brothers. Whether about rape or some other offense, how do you handle it? And how do you deal with your own regret or shame over actions or non-action?
4. How does the word *temporary* influence your view of eternity? In what ways do you battle the world's message of ownership, possession, permanence, and rightness?
5. How do you view the imperfect as the perfect setting for God to work? Where have you seen this? Jacob favored Joseph, which resulted in enormous animosity and a life trajectory no one would choose. In what ways has your past become the perfect motivation for your present and future, for your gifts and dreams?

WEEK 2

September 8–14

DIGGING IN

1. How have you navigated complex issues? How have you avoided them?
2. When have you experienced favoritism, either on the “most favored” or the “not included” side?
3. The very human brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than them. Where do you see this ricochet effect in your own life reacting from a place of less than rather than equal? Where do you see this in society?
4. Where have you been able to honor people’s dreams? When have people honored your dreams? Not? How did this impact you?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. How have your dreams called you to pay attention? When have you been afraid to pay attention? What has happened, either with your words or your silence, to you, the dreams, your relationships?
2. Joseph’s circumstances could have broken or shaped him. He got to choose. Where do you see this principle in your life? What costs are involved with either choice?
3. How do kindness and respect reflect Joseph’s journey to dream fulfillment? How is brokenness a prerequisite for learning kindness?
4. Joseph shared his dream immediately. What is wise about this? What does it do for accountability? What are the risks involved with talking too soon, or not at all?
5. Think about a dreaming circle: people who will listen to your dreams, ask good questions, and consider with you how to fulfill them. Who might that be in your life? What do you think God is pressing onto you regarding your dreams?

WEEK 3

September 15–21

DIGGING IN

1. Joseph was seventeen when his dream showed up. What dreams do you remember from your childhood?
2. Even if your parents or others didn't honor your dreams, how can you apply Genesis 37:11 to your life? Consider Genesis 18:14; Psalm 118:1–4; and 1 John 3:11. How do these encourage you to move forward?
3. Have you quit dreaming? What has it cost you? What can you do now? What stops you from dreaming again?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. When Jacob called to Joseph, his son's immediate response was much more significant than it is translated in English. "Here I am" carries the connotation of obedience, of "Whatever you say, I will do." How likely are you to respond to another like that? What dream principle do you draw from Joseph's response?
2. Consider Joseph's encounter in the field outside Shechem. What was significant about Shechem for Joseph? And how was it vital for him to meet this stranger? Jewish tradition holds that the stranger was an angel. Regardless, he acted divinely in Joseph's life in terms of direction. Who are those people in your life? When has God found you wandering in a field and redirected you?
3. How do you answer these questions: What are you looking for? Where are you looking? When did you stop looking and why?

WEEK 4

September 22–28

DIGGING IN

1. What are some of your favorite places to visit? Why? How about difficult places to revisit, whether physically or emotionally? What do you do to avoid them? What benefits do you receive from either avoiding or revisiting them?
2. Joseph's family betrayed him, using his dream against him. What do you relate to in this part of his life story? In what ways can people use dreams against you, even though they aren't outright aggressive? What are the various ways people get "sold out"?
3. Who are the Reubens and Judahs for you, redirecting people's hatred even if they didn't actually stop it?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. When do you continue to give power to past wounds and what does that do to your dream? To your heart? How can you move toward God with those wounds?
2. An empty cistern is good if you're going to be thrown into a pit. In other words, pits are bad, but it sure could've been worse for Joseph! Where do you see this for yourself, a bad event that could have been much worse if the cistern wasn't empty? Now consider the reverse—cisterns are intended to water the land. Empty is not good for people who rely on water for their crops and animals and families. In your own life, where was the cistern empty and thank God it was? Where is it empty and you need to fill it? What does filling the cistern mean for you? How will you refill?
3. The slave traders put Joseph in shackles, but he resisted being enslaved in his soul. How? Where have you seen people shackled by their past? How about freed from their past?
4. The story of Judah and Tamar is complicated. Tamar's intense desire to be part of Judah's family makes no sense given the family dynamics. How much do you really think God was behind the continuation of this family line? What do you make of Judah's repentance in the end?
5. With Dinah's rape, Joseph's sale into slavery, and Tamar's (and Judah's) sin, the Bible makes both sin and sin's fallout clear. These serious social and spiritual issues today are a blight on our world and on Christian responsibility, wreaking destruction and death on women and men worldwide. Where do you see the church making a difference? How about your small group or family? Do you consider dreaming a perk of only the privileged in society or a gift to be given to all regardless of their situation?

WEEK 5

September 29–October 5

DIGGING IN

1. Talk about “honoring the Joseph” in others. How have you seen this done? Who has done this for you? How might that approach refocus relationships for you?

2. Joseph could have given up, quitting out of discouragement, pain, and hatred. Think of a time when you were ready to throw in the towel. What was happening for you? Why did you stay or why did you walk away? What was your attitude?

3. The world (and church) has its own growth curve and loves to tell us how ours should look. How do you measure up? How do you resist others’ parameters for you? How have you heard God’s voice for growth in the midst of all the other voices?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. God will work it out. How do you hold on to that truth? Do you believe it? Why or why not? How do you handle God not meeting your expectations? How tempting is it to walk away?

2. Make a list of the ingredients for prosperity. Now make a list of the attitudes you see in Joseph’s story. How do they compare?

3. Look again at your guidelines for prosperity above. Now compare to Romans 5:2–5. How would you define prosperity after reading this passage? How do you handle others’ prosperity versus your own (or the lacks of one or the other party)?

4. Talk about Potiphar’s trust in Joseph. Who do you trust with even some of what you own or have responsibility for? Who do you trust with everything? What sort of stuff or people do you reserve for your own overseeing? Where does God fit on your list? How does Psalm 37:4 fit in?

5. Sexual harassment is hard to prove (witness Joseph’s difficulty, since his coat was in the clutches of his boss’s wife). Even the best guidelines in place to prevent any opportunity for problems don’t always prevent problems. Plus, in any sort of crime or accusation, the accuser stands a good chance of losing to the popular or the powerful accused. Where have you seen this in another’s (or in your own) life? And when have you stood on solid truth and still been sold out? How did you feel about God then? How does Joseph’s attitude after Mrs. Potiphar tried to destroy him challenge or convict you?

WEEK 6

October 6–12

DIGGING IN

1. What do you do when you're bored? What do you think about Mrs. Potiphar, who we love to judge, acting out of a deeper longing, the longing to be deeply and truly loved and valuable? Where is your "I do" conditional, whether it's marriage or some other relationship or commitment?
2. Imagine yourself in prison under a false charge. What do you do with your mind? Your heart and soul? Your relationship with God? How do you stay alive there?
3. The timing of the baker and the cupbearer's appearance in prison was encouraging in many ways to Joseph. Like what? And when have you experienced that kind of timing? How has this helped you hold on to your dreams?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Revisit some of your past and current dreams. What is your progress? Where are you discouraged? What pits or dungeons do you find yourself in?
2. Now review those places of favor, the "Potiphars" in your life surprising you or encouraging you. What steps are you taking, like Joseph did, to keep honing skills and gifts?
3. Where do you see God's timing in light of how long Joseph stayed imprisoned after interpreting the cupbearer's dream? How do you trust that the timing will be right when it seems so wrong now in your prison of waiting?
4. How hard is it for you to tell others when you feel like you're in some sort of prison? Why? Who might you reach out to in your current situation? Or to whom might you reach out? What bearing do Jesus' words in Matthew 25:31–48 have on this situation?
5. It is possible we have a skewed sense of our own guilt. How do you offer compassion to others in their prisons (which you might feel are deserved)? Where do you find yourself on the spectrum: always feeling guilty or rarely? How does this affect your relationship with others? And how does this affect your dream state and the state of your dream that God is giving you?

WEEK 7

October 13–19

DIGGING IN

1. We all have lots of meanness in our past, our own or others' against us. Where do you relate to the cruelty of Joseph's brothers? Mrs. Potiphar? In what ways?

2. How do you get free from meanness? What tactics do you suggest? Where do you struggle with releasing the past so it no longer controls or hinders you? How do you think meanness cancels dreams? What about dreams canceling meanness? Where have you seen this in your own life?

3. Where are you in the process of dreaming? How are you listening in a deeper way to what God might be impressing upon you? Who have you brought into your dreaming process? How much have you shared with the group, and how are you holding one another accountable?

4. What scares you about waiting on the dreams, waiting on God's timing? On dreaming at all? What risks do you face if you dream? What might need to change in your life? Relationships? Priorities? Boundaries?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:11–21. Discuss the idea of reconciliation: between you and God, you and others, and others and God. Where does this make you feel squeamish? Eager? Why? How does reconciliation impact dreams for you? How does verse 17 affect your dreams, future, and outlook? In what ways do you experience the truth of this verse?

2. "Tell me your dreams," Joseph said to the new guests in Potiphar's dungeon for the esteemed (Gen. 40:8). Given the context, this doesn't appear to be self-serving on Joseph's part, but rather out of concern for them. What did Joseph notice about these men that led him to inquire into their lives? How is this the mark of a leader? (See Neh. 2:2 for an example of this level of leadership.) How does Joseph's own experience with telling his dreams give him the ability to ask the question?

3. When has someone told you his or her dreams and you interpreted the dream? What was that like for you? How about you, telling others? What makes you think you're right in the interpretation?

4. Joseph told the two prisoners to remember him. When have you experienced another's remembering of you and been blessed? Surprised? Helped? How about your own remembering of another when you were in a position to bless? In what ways is this generous or challenging for you?

WEEK 8

October 20–26

DIGGING IN

1. Who are some dreamers you admire? What have you seen happen as a result? How are you encouraged? How are you envious?
2. The cupbearer forgot to talk about Joseph's gifts of dream interpretation to Pharaoh. Where do you feel forgotten? How do you see God's timing when you are remembered?
3. Forward momentum on dreams requires the occasional (or the often) no. When has saying no meant losing friends or respect? How has a timely no helped you move your dream—God's dream—forward? Joseph refused to be a yes-man. He didn't give a favorable interpretation to the baker even though the interpretation wouldn't be well received. How hard is it for you to tell the truth in situations like this?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Read Genesis 41:8–13. How likely are you to own up to your failures? What stops you? What shortcomings dog you every day?
2. Read Genesis 39:20–21. Where are you experiencing God's kindness and favor in your season? How does this help you hold on to your dream? How does this help combat your sense of failures? And how do you recalculate so that failures don't get you off-track with your dreams?
3. Pharaoh's wise men were likely as intelligent as Joseph. He could have felt pretty stupid and afraid in that place. How are you inhibited by others' brightness? How do you overcome that fear?
4. Read Genesis 41:16. How often do you pray with very specific answers in mind? How often is the answer you receive a non-answer or a not-this-answer? How do you handle that? Take a minute to honor all those places of non-answers and disappointing answers, those hard places of faith.
5. Abundance doesn't always lead to wisdom. Good thing Joseph had wisdom about how to live in that place of plenty. What are some ways you do the same? Also, times of plenty are great for world leaders and their popularity. This, too, can create monsters. What examples do you have of this, either personally or on a broader scale? How do you live well in feast time?
6. Paul's letter to Titus has quite a theme to it. "[Be] one who loves what is good. . . . Teach what is good. . . . [Do] what is good" (Titus 1:8; 2:3; 3:14). Another element running through the letter is self-control. Put this into context with Titus 3:8 and dreams, leadership, and faith-forward momentum.

WEEK 9

October 27–November 2

DIGGING IN

1. Joseph’s brilliance in Pharaoh’s war room demonstrates maturity beyond his prison-life. In what ways do you notice this in your own life? Where do you see growth over the past year? Five years? Since you were seventeen?

2. Joseph displayed emotional intelligence. “Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. It is generally said to include three skills: (1) emotional awareness, including the ability to identify your own emotions and those of others; (2) the ability to harness emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problems solving; (3) the ability to manage emotions, including the ability to regulate your own emotions, and the ability to cheer up or calm down another person.”¹ Where do you see this in Joseph? Who do you know with these gifts?

3. Who in your life would qualify with the descriptors noted in Genesis 41:33? Where do you see that person get the position, and when does it go to someone unqualified? How easy would it have been for Joseph to trip up in that high-pressure encounter? What could have messed him up? Look at your own journey. Where do you see some of the same situations or possibilities and how have you handled them?

4. In Genesis 41:38, Pharaoh spoke of Joseph to his kingly council: “Can we find anyone like this man, in whom is the spirit of God?” Who do you know, about whom you would make such a statement? How do their lives influence you?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Egypt, because of the Nile River, can usually make it through a famine. But the severity during Joseph’s tenure would wipe out the land without good planning. Talk about famine in your own life: emotional, spiritual, relational, physical, intellectual. What are you starving for? Do you think you can store up for lean times, and what would that look like for you?

2. Talk about loving people into heaven. Do you just need to live a kind life? A service-oriented one? How will people actually have a name for your loving and service?

3. Memories offer sustenance. The double-doom for forgetting and not remembering for the people in the famine was dangerous. Why? What do you remember? What do you tend to forget? How does remembering forward your dream? How does forgetting?

4. What dreams are taking shape within you? Where are you making time to dream? How are you honoring a dream this day, this week, this month?

5. Dreams do not tend to grow in solitude. Reconsider your dream team. Who has come alongside you? Who are you inviting into this journey? Where are there teammates who haven't demonstrated much teamwork? Read Hebrews 10:25, and pray through how that will look for you. It's not too soon to start your dream team. And to whose dreams are you privy? How are you helping others?

NOTE

1. "Emotional Intelligence," Psychology Today, accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/emotional-intelligence>.

WEEK 10

November 3–9

DIGGING IN

1. How likely are you to forget regrettable stuff from your past, whether your own poor choices or others' toward you?

2. The marriage to the high priest's daughter was quite a political move for Joseph. We don't tend to consider marriage as a political alliance these days, in spite of the history of world leaders. What examples do you have from your own family history? When have you been tempted into relationship because it was strategic?

3. After naming his son Manasseh, Joseph said, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household" (Gen. 41:51). What does this mean and what does it say about Joseph? About Manasseh? How is this a positive? How is it a negative?

4. Joseph's second son was named Ephraim and Joseph said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering" (Gen. 41:52). What is encouraging about this? Discouraging? What is your response to Joseph's comment?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Read Romans 8:18. How does this relate to Joseph's naming of his sons? Now read the context of Romans 8:28–39. How is this hopeful? Challenging? Revisit Hebrews 11:34–38 and 2 Corinthians 12:9. Who do you know who has lived this way?

2. The Egyptians weren't all that taken with Hebrews. They called them sand dwellers and throat slitters and considered them uncivilized and wild. Joseph's acclimation in Egypt overcame quite a reputation. Where do you see him taking on the personality of Egypt? How did he retain his own heritage?

3. How can we overcome stereotypes of others? How do you acclimate with another culture without entirely throwing in your own lot, abandoning your own identity? How do you cling to your dream in a land (or relationship) where perhaps it will not be honored? How do you stay in relationship in those situations?

4. Remember, release, walk forward. How have you done this? Where do you need to start the process?

5. What might your season of lean look like? How are you seeing God's provisions? What is God inviting you into, in terms of being a steward, tithing and trusting right now?

WEEK 11

November 10–16

DIGGING IN

1. People react to desert or difficult places in many ways. How have you compounded a difficult place with your own hurtful response? How did you recover?
2. The sense of having everything against us is not uncommon. Life falls apart and it is so hard to count our blessings. How do you restore perspective?
3. Grief is vital, and it is tricky to grieve wholly with family surrounding you who have their own grief? How do you apply Romans 8:35–39 without hating the necessity or feeling like it is trite?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What losses and triumphs did Joseph face when he was displaced? Now consider his reaction in context. How might you react similarly? What part do your own abandonment wounds play in your response? How did Jacob's?
2. What has fear and refusing risk cost you? Cost your relationships? Your life with God? Life is a faith-based adventure. How do you keep the adventure and live with the risk?
3. How can you stand firm on verses like Isaiah 49:15–16? What about balancing your own tendency to partiality (which we all have) with James 2:1, 8? How does favoritism show up as racism, stereotyping, or sexism in your life?
4. Revisit Judah's trajectory. How does his journey encourage or challenge you? Where do you stand in the gap for another in a way that puts your own life or reputation on the line?
5. Where are you in your dream progression? What challenges do you face right now? How can you bring your team around you? How can you find some dreaming time? And how could restlessness be a sign of discontent and needing to stop and listen?

WEEK 12

November 17–23

DIGGING IN

1. Read Ecclesiastes 3:4. Where do you stand on this verse? How caught up are you on your tear quotient and timeline? How critical are tears to your spiritual growth? In what ways?
2. Joseph looked for a good place to weep, according to the Bible. Where or with whom have you found to be a safe place for your tears?
3. Discuss the silver cup of indictment. The brothers must have felt heartsick over this, though they knew their own innocence. What's one of your silver cups, a place where you sure looked guilty but knew you weren't?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Read 2 Kings 8:11–15. What does it take to grieve for another in this way? Compare to other instances: 1 Samuel 1:1–8; Nehemiah 8:1–9; and Lamentations 2:11. What are the people in these passages weeping over? What do you make of these various bouts and types of tears? Now compare Joseph who is considered one of the greatest leaders of all time. Why is this important for leaders and dreamers to take note? What do you learn from Joseph because he wept?
2. Wherever Joseph went, favor followed and extended to the people and households around him. What resolve do you have for this? How have you interpreted favor in the past? How about now? What difference does this make in your attitude? Your prayer life?
3. Joseph lived the circumstances mentioned in Luke 4:18–19. How do you see your own life preparing you to offer favor? What's threatening about that for you? Hopeful? How would that look? How might that all be part of your finding and living your dream?
4. In Genesis 44:18–44, we see further evidence of Judah's growth. How does this foreshadow your own experience of faith in Christ? How about in your own life and witness before others?
5. How can Joseph's perspective in Genesis 45:5 be yours when you review your trajectory? Where are you seeing God leading you from famine to feasting? How can you put the blessing in Genesis 48:21 into effect in your life and in the lives of others?

WEEK 13

November 24–30

DIGGING IN

1. Do you have a favorite inheritance story, perhaps something that you treasure that belonged to someone special? What about a particular character trait or mannerism that you saw in an ancestor and now see in yourself and like? How about one you dislike?

2. Read Genesis 50:20. Put this verse into context with your own story. What does this verse tell us about God dealing with sin? How does this verse fit in with the blessing God gave Abraham in Genesis 12:1–4? Whose responsibility is it to curse another?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Compare Matthew 13:14 and 1 Peter 1:1–5 with the firstborn and spiritual progenitor expectations in Joseph’s time. What do you make of this? How is it relevant to you? To your hopes and dreams?

2. Many do not grow up in a family that blessed their children overtly. Take time now to consider the implications of not being blessed. How about your gifts? Your talents? Your personality? Where have you felt encouraged by family or friends and blessed? When haven’t you? Those have-not times can be sticking points when it comes to moving ahead with a calling or gifting. How do you see this in your life? What messages have you received about yourself and your gifts? How do any negative words hinder you now?

3. What happens in your soul when you read Genesis 49:10 and 1 Corinthians 15:24–26?

4. Consider your own feelings of inadequacy, failure, and shame. Now read Zechariah 10:6 and Isaiah 61:7. Process the words together and their impact on you.

5. Read Israel’s blessing over Joseph’s two sons in Genesis 48:20. Now read it in unison as a group. Then read it to one another. I challenge you to do this physically: place your hand over your neighbor’s head and say the words aloud over that person. Either pass this blessing around the circle or pair off into twos. It is critical for us to hear blessings said over us and to know the touch that accompanies that blessing.

6. Close with prayers over one another, for God’s blessing of them, their futures, their dreams. Determine how to continue to spur one another on to love and good deeds. Each of us has a coat of many colors, gifts very specific to our calling and our dreams. It’s time to form that dream team.