

Small Group Guide: The Story of Joseph

Week 1: Joseph's Dreams (Genesis 37:1-17)

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding Circumstances (15 minutes)

1. The pastor outlined two types of circumstances: controlled (resulting from our decisions) and uncontrolled (beyond our control). Which type do you find more challenging spiritually? Why?
2. What uncontrolled circumstances are you currently facing? How does thinking about them in light of "God's bigger picture" change your perspective?
3. The sermon mentioned that from Abraham's promise to Joseph's story was over 200 years—many died without seeing fulfillment. How does this reality challenge or encourage you in your current season of waiting?

Section 2: God's Work in Imperfect Situations (15 minutes)

4. Joseph's family was deeply dysfunctional: favoritism, hatred, jealousy, and broken relationships. Yet God was still at work. What does this teach us about where and how God operates?
5. Joseph shared his dreams despite the negative reaction from his brothers. Was this wisdom or immaturity? How do we discern when to share what God is showing us and when to wait?
6. Jacob "kept the saying in mind" even after rebuking Joseph (Genesis 37:11). What might this tell us about how to respond when we don't fully understand what God is doing?

Section 3: Simple Obedience in the Bigger Picture (15 minutes)

7. Joseph simply said "Here I am" when his father sent him to check on his brothers. This simple obedience set in motion events that would save nations. What "simple obedience" might God be asking of you right now?
8. The random man who directed Joseph to Dothan was a crucial part of God's plan. How does this encourage you about the significance of your everyday interactions and decisions?
9. Reflecting on the opening question: "What circumstances could you endure if you believed they would ultimately lead to something good?" How would you answer this now after discussing Joseph's story?

Key Takeaways

- God's promises remain active even in ordinary, difficult circumstances. The family lived as sojourners for over 200 years, yet God was faithful.
- God works through imperfect people and broken situations. Joseph's dysfunctional family didn't disqualify them from God's purposes.
- Simple obedience matters in God's bigger picture. Joseph's "Here I am" and a stranger's directions were pivotal moments in God's plan.
- What others mean for evil, God can mean for good. This perspective can sustain us through uncontrolled circumstances.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

1. Identify Your Circumstances

- List your current uncontrolled circumstances
- Pray daily, asking God to help you see them in light of His bigger purposes
- Journal any insights or perspective shifts

2. Practice "Here I Am" Obedience

- Identify one area where God may be asking for simple obedience
- Respond with availability rather than demanding to understand the whole plan first
- Share with the group next week what happened

3. Study God's Promises

- Read Genesis 12:1-3 (God's promises to Abraham)
- Write down which promises are still relevant to you as a believer
- Reflect on how these promises might anchor you during difficult circumstances

4. Reframe a Difficult Situation

- Choose one current struggle or disappointment
- Instead of asking "Why is this happening?" ask "What might God be doing through this?"
- Write down at least three possible ways God could work through this situation

Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Group Prayer Time:

- Praise God for His faithfulness to His promises, even when we can't see the full picture
- Confess areas where we've doubted God's goodness in our circumstances or tried to control outcomes
- Ask God to help each person trust Him with their uncontrolled circumstances and to give grace for simple obedience
- Pray specifically for the situations group members shared during discussion

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll continue Joseph's story, watching how his circumstances grow darker before they improve. Come prepared to discuss how we maintain faith when God's promises seem further away than ever.

Homework: Read Genesis 37:18-36 before next week's gathering.

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to group members facing truly difficult circumstances. Avoid trite answers or rushing to "find the silver lining."
- Emphasize that seeing God's bigger picture doesn't minimize present pain—Joseph suffered real injustice.
- If someone shares a controlled circumstance (result of their sin), gently guide toward repentance and God's redemptive grace without shame.
- Keep discussion moving but allow space for deeper sharing, especially around question 9.