

Small Group Guide: Joseph Sold into Slavery

Genesis 37:18-36 | The Story of Joseph: Seeing the Bigger Picture (Week 2)

Opening Prayer & Ice Breaker

Ice Breaker Question: Share about a time when something in your life seemed to be going completely backward, but later you saw how God was working through it.

Introduction (5 minutes)

This week we continue Joseph's story, watching as hatred and jealousy turn into betrayal. Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery, and it looks like God's promises are failing. Yet we'll discover an important truth: **With God, a step that feels like it's in the wrong direction can be the very step that moves His promise forward.**

Key Scripture Reading

Have someone read **Genesis 37:18-36** aloud.

Discussion Questions

Part 1: The Enemy's Work (15-20 minutes)

1. The sermon stated that "the enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy." How do you see this principle at work in Joseph's story beyond just sibling rivalry?

- Follow-up: Where do you see this same pattern in our world today?

2. Read John 10:10 together. How does understanding the spiritual battle behind our circumstances change the way we respond to difficult situations?

3. The brothers' initial plan was to kill Joseph, but Reuben intervened with an alternative. Later, Judah suggested selling him instead.

- What does this progression tell us about compromise with sin?
- Have you ever justified a "lesser evil" in your own life? What happened?

4. Why do you think the brothers could sit down to eat (v. 25) right after throwing Joseph in a pit? What does this reveal about the human heart when sin goes unchecked?

Part 2: Sin's Progression (15-20 minutes)

5. The brothers went from jealousy (last week) to murder plot to selling Joseph to lying to their father. How does this illustrate the sermon's point that "human sinfulness, when left unchecked, continues to progress"?

- Where in your life do you need to address sin before it progresses further?

6. The brothers used Joseph's special robe—the symbol of their father's favoritism—as a tool for deception. How do we sometimes use the very things that hurt us to justify hurting others?

7. Jacob mourned deeply, refusing to be comforted (v. 34-35), while his sons stood by knowing the truth.

- What does this scene teach us about the ripple effects of sin?
- How does hidden sin affect our relationships and our ability to offer genuine comfort?

Part 3: God's Bigger Picture (15-20 minutes)

8. Genesis 37:36 simply states: "Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar." This seems like a step backward, yet the sermon reminds us that God had already told Abraham his descendants would be in Egypt (Genesis 15:13-14).

- How does knowing God predicted this "detour" change your perspective on the story?
- What does this teach us about God's sovereignty over even the sinful choices of people?

9. The sermon asks: "Will God keep His word even when His people are a mess?" Based on this passage, how would you answer that question?

10. Joseph was obedient (he went to check on his brothers as his father asked), yet he ended up in slavery. How do you reconcile obedience to God with negative consequences?

- Have you experienced a time when doing the right thing led to difficulty?

Key Takeaways

Review these main points from the sermon:

1. **The enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy** - There is a spiritual battle behind our circumstances that goes beyond what we can see.
2. **Human sinfulness, when left unchecked, continues to progress** - Small compromises with sin lead to greater evil if not addressed through repentance.

3. **The enemy seems to have won, but God's promises will not be defeated** - What looks like defeat or a step backward may be God's way of moving His purposes forward.

Central Truth: Although this story might feel like defeat, God's promises move forward unaffected by sin.

Practical Application (15-20 minutes)

Personal Reflection

Take 2-3 minutes of silence for each person to consider:

- Is there an area of my life that feels like a "step backward" right now?
- What sin do I need to confess and repent of before it progresses further?
- Where do I need to trust God's faithfulness even when I cannot see the bigger picture?

Group Discussion

1. The sermon's application states: "When our lives feel like they've taken a step backward, God hasn't failed. He calls us to repent, obey once again, and trust that His faithfulness is still carrying the story forward."

What would it look like practically for you to:

- **Repent** of any current sin this week?
- **Obey** God in a specific area where you've been hesitant?
- **Trust** God's faithfulness in a situation that feels like defeat?

2. **How can we, as a group, help each other see the bigger picture when life feels like it's moving backward?**

3. **Accountability Question: Who in this group can you ask to check in with you this week about the specific area where you need to trust God's bigger picture?**

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Trust Exercise

- Identify one situation in your life that feels like a "step backward"

- Each day this week, pray specifically: "God, I trust that You are faithful even when I cannot see the bigger picture. Help me to obey You today."
- Journal about how your perspective changes throughout the week

Option 2: Sin Check

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of sin that you've been minimizing or justifying
- Confess it to God and to one trusted person this week
- Take one concrete step away from that sin pattern

Option 3: Bigger Picture Reflection

- Look back at a past difficulty and write down the ways you can now see God was working
- Share this testimony with someone who is currently struggling
- Use it as a reminder that God is faithful even in present difficulties

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

- For eyes to see God's bigger picture in our current circumstances
- For courage to repent of sin before it progresses
- For faith to trust God's promises even when life feels like defeat
- For specific situations group members shared tonight

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll continue Joseph's story and see how God works even in the midst of slavery and false accusations. Come prepared to discuss how God's presence makes a difference even in our darkest circumstances.

Additional Resources

- Read Genesis 38-41 before next week's session
- Recommended reading: Romans 8:28-39 (God's sovereignty and faithfulness)