

STUDY GUIDE

CHURCH NAME
THE COMEBACK
JOSEPH, PART 1
GENESIS 37:2-11,
GENESIS 39:7-20
02/11/2018



NEW VISION

MAIN POINT

Joseph's remarkable perseverance through numerous trials is a testimony to God's sovereignty and faithfulness.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever felt cheated out of something? If you have come to peace with it, what were some things that helped you overcome this feeling?

If you have a friend who feels cheated, how would you try to help them?

Feeling cheated can easily lead to us feeling miserable and embittered. If we hold onto this feeling, it will soon begin tainting all of our thoughts and make us very cynical. Being bitter is not a good place to be!

Joseph had plenty of opportunities to be embittered. His brothers hated him, he was sold into slavery, he wound up losing a great job because someone lied, and he languished in prison because of a lie. In this lesson, we will look at Joseph's remarkable perseverance and see how he kept from becoming bitter from what happened to him.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 37:2-11 AND 17-20.

What caused Joseph's brothers to become embittered towards him? Were any of these things really Joseph's fault? What can we learn from Joseph's brothers in this matter?

What stands out to you about the Bible's description of Joseph?

After Joseph revealed his dreams, his brothers took their father's sheep to seek pasture land near Shechem. We aren't told why Joseph did not go too, but it could have had something to do with his "most favored son" status. Perhaps Jacob sought to protect Joseph from his brothers' hatred until they cooled down. Even so, Jacob eventually sent Joseph to check on his brothers and to bring back a report.

Joseph's brothers had to contend with the fact that their father favored and loved him more than the rest of them. Though this wasn't Joseph's fault, it still caused a great deal of animosity towards him personally. The other thing that upset his brothers were the dreams that the Lord gave him regarding the future. Once again, this was not Joseph's fault. Perhaps Joseph wasn't tactful in his relation of these dreams, but he cannot be blamed for the things the Lord showed him.

What might Joseph have been thinking or praying as he was betrayed by his brothers and carried off as a slave, separated from his father?

We have to be careful that when we are upset at others that we aren't blaming them for things that aren't their fault. Jealousy is very dangerous, and if we don't repent of it, we can get to a place where we can bring ourselves to speak peaceably to others. Many of the problems the Lord Jesus had with the religious leaders were born out of this kind of jealousy towards Him.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 39:7-20

Genesis 39 relates an important instance of Joseph's faithfulness to the Lord while living in Egypt. Joseph practiced his faith when others might have been resentful. His loyalty to his master, Potiphar, resulted in an attempted seduction by his master's wife. The short-term result was Joseph's undeserved imprisonment. Yet, in spite of the constant setbacks, Joseph knew God was with him. The Lord's faithfulness in blessing Joseph proved that the evil schemes of others cannot prevent God's plans from succeeding through those who He desires to use.

To what must we credit Joseph's favor and success?

How would being aware of God's presence have made a difference in Joseph's life? How would always being aware of God's presence make a difference in your life?

Why do you think continuing to resist the temptation was important for Joseph? What could it have cost him had he failed to resist?

Joseph knew rejecting Potiphar's wife would cost him dearly, but he was determined not to sin. The same faithfulness that had resulted in his becoming Potiphar's chief servant also brought about his fall into disfavor and prison.

How often do people in the Scripture suffer harm because of their righteousness?

How do you think Joseph kept these events from making him bitter?

We know that many of the heroes of the faith suffered because they were righteous. Joseph is hated by Potiphar's wife because of his integrity. Moses is reviled by the Israelites at times for doing what the Lord told him. David was nearly killed by Saul on several occasions because of his righteousness. Of course, Jesus Christ is the best example of someone suffering for righteousness sake. Jesus was crucified for telling the truth about sin and repentance. Jesus' righteousness and character and teaching provoked the rulers to jealousy, and they killed him for it.

Joseph probably avoided the trap of bitterness by putting his faith in the Lord. Surely Joseph had bad days, but the fact that he maintained his integrity is a great indication that he continued to put his trust in the Lord. It would have been easy to give up after these events and think that trying to do right doesn't matter.

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

When we suffer painful setbacks in life, what truths from God's Word can help us keep our joy in the midst of suffering?

How can understanding God's sovereignty help us from feeling bitter or sorry for ourselves?

Have you ever been through a difficulty that drew you closer to the Lord? Is it possible to be thankful for difficult times after they are over?

PRAY

In a time of group prayer, ask the Father to help those of us who are suffering. Pray that they will have the faith to draw closer to Him through it, and ask that they will have the grace to be forgiving of those who have harmed them. Finally, ask that the Lord will keep us all from bitterness.

COMMENTARY

GENESIS 37-50

Israel's role as the people of promise was being jeopardized by their acceptance of the loose moral standards of the native Canaanites. The incest between Reuben and his father's servant-wife (35:22) hints at that moral compromise. Judah's marriage to the Canaanite Shua and his later affair with his own daughter-in-law, Tamar, makes the danger clear. To preserve His people, Yahweh removed them from that sinful environment to Egypt, where they could mature into the covenant nation that He was preparing them to be.

This explains the Joseph story. His brothers sold him to Egypt to be rid of their brother the dreamer. God, however, used their act of hate as an opportunity to save Israel from both physical famine and spiritual extinction. The rise of Joseph to a position of authority in Egypt in fulfillment of his God-given dreams illustrates the Lord's blessing upon His people. Joseph's wisdom in administering the agricultural affairs of Egypt again fulfilled God's promise that "I will bless him who blesses you." What appeared to be a series of blunders and injustices in Joseph's early experiences proved to be God at work in unseen ways to demonstrate His sovereign, kingdom work among the nations.

No one was more aware of this than Joseph, at least in later years. After he had revealed himself to his brothers, he said, "God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance." Years later after Jacob's death, when Joseph's brothers feared his revenge, he reminded them that they had intended to harm him, "but God intended it for good to accomplish the saving of many lives." Human tragedy had become the occasion of divine triumph. Joseph's dying wish—to be buried in the land of promise—looks past the future tragedy of Israel's experience of slavery and anticipates God's triumph in the exodus.