

Small Group Material: Journeying with Joseph 2

...forgotten? : Genesis 40 & 41

Welcome (10 mins) As leader, choose one question or the other to ask.

- a) Has there been a time when you have felt forgotten, let down or disappointed?
- b) Is there something people often ask you to do? Do you like this?

Word (40mins) Around the group, read chapters 40 and 41 of Genesis, which deal with Joseph from age 27 to 39/40ish. There are ups and downs aplenty!

The human experience..

1. Although Joseph has behaved uprightly and honoured God (39:9, 12), he's still in prison, with a lot of time to think.
 - a. How does he feel? (40:15)
 - b. However, how does he behave? (39:22; 40:4)
2. The cup-bearer, baker and Pharaoh are all worried about their dreams. (40:6; 41:8)
 - a. Think of a few reasons as to why they are disquieted
 - b. How is Joseph's response different – even though two of his interpretations are 'bad news' and possibly risky for him to deliver? (40:8; 41:15-16)
3. Joseph conveys God's messages in both Ch 37 and Chs 40 & 41. How has he changed over the past 13 years? (37:9-10; 41:25,28; 40:14; 41:33)

The power of the story..

4. Both Ch 37 and 40 have the same pattern – 2 dreams, 2 interpretations, yet unfair incarceration.
 - a. Why do you think everything happens over again?
 - b. How might Joseph therefore approach his reversal of fortunes in Ch 41 – particularly when, once again, he is dressed in a fine robe? (41:42)

5. Ch 39 suggests an imminent positive outcome (39:23b), yet the next two chapters open with 'some time later..', then, 'When two full years had passed..' What are we to learn about God from this? What was Joseph learning?

The key themes ..

6. 17 yr old Joseph might well have thought 'It all revolves around me!' (37:7, 9)
 - a. What has the older Joseph learnt? (40:8; 41:16)
7. Joseph ends up running the entire Egyptian nation (41:40-1, 44). God's concrete, historical purpose to save also required a human response.
 - a. Why was he placed in charge? (41:38-9)
 - i. [How does this description remind you of the qualities of the coming Messiah? (Isa 11:2-3)]
 - b. How has he been prepared for this? (37:12-14; 39:4-6; 22-23)

Bringing the narrative into today ..

8. We need to trust, like Joseph, that God sees the place where He is leading each one of us and that He can bring good out of the things that are happening to us meanwhile (see Phil 1:6).
 - a. Are there areas of your life where this kind of trust is hard right now?
 - b. How can you (or others in your group) see God using you where you are right now?
9. Suffering can make us bitter or better. Joseph's life teaches us that disappointments are a necessary part of our spiritual growth.
 - a. How would you explain this in your own words to a non-Christian?
 - b. [What do the names of Joseph's children tell us about his faith? (41:51-2)]

Worship (10 mins) Joseph is an example to us all of what it means to depend on God, however uncertain the circumstances.

- Imagine him, and indeed, all those imprisoned for their faith, singing the following with us - *God, I look to you*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KP1QKueGK-o>

- In *brief* phrases, thank God for aloud for a time from you own life where you have seen God bring you (perhaps slowly!) from difficulty into a far better situation.

Witness (15-20 mins)

- As God's man, Joseph 'speaks truth to power', because God's greater purpose takes believers beyond the local and domestic. How can Christians do so today, in a way that commends our faith?
 - Does anyone have practical advice about how to communicate effectively?
 - Is there a particular issue today (social/political/cultural etc) about which you feel God might be prompting you to respond?
- Pray for Christians (generally and any you know of by name) in positions of leadership – in education, the public services, in politics, business, the church etc