



BY FAITH

MAY 24 - AUG 2

(5) "Joseph"

HIGHLIGHT: *Hebrews 11:22; Genesis 37:2-11, 18-28; Genesis 45:1-8; Genesis 50:14-24*

H

Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.

Hebrews 11:22 NLT

22 It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left.

Genesis 37:2-11 NLT

2 This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. He worked for his half brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

3 Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. **4** But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

5 One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever.

6 "Listen to this dream," he said. **7** "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"

8 His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

9 Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"

10 This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. "What kind of dream is that?" he asked. "Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?" **11** But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

Genesis 37:18-28 NLT

18 When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. **19** "Here comes the dreamer!" they said. **20** "Come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, 'A wild animal has eaten him.' Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!"

21 But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said.

22 "Why should we shed any blood? Let's just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he'll die without our laying a hand on him." Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

23 So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. **24** Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

25 Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.

26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime.

27 Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed. **28** So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

Genesis 45:1-8 NLT

1 Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, "Out, all of you!" So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. **2** Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh's palace.

3 "I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. **4** "Please, come closer," he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. **5** But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. **6** This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. **7** God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. **8** So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

Genesis 50:14-24 NLT

14 After burying Jacob, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's burial. **15** But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said.

16 So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us **17** to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin." When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept. **18** Then his brothers came and threw themselves down before Joseph. "Look, we are your slaves!" they said.

19 But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? **20** You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. **21** No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

22 So Joseph and his brothers and their families continued to live in Egypt. Joseph lived to the age of 110. **23** He lived to see three generations of descendants of his son Ephraim, and he lived to see the birth of the children of Manasseh's son Makir, whom he claimed as his own.

24 "Soon I will die," Joseph told his brothers, "but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

EXPLAIN

E

The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.

Hebrews 11:22 R. Milligan says about this verse: "[Joseph's] prosperity in Egypt had in no way impaired his faith in the promises of God; but feeling perfectly confident that his brethren would at the time appointed leave Egypt and return to Canaan, he made them swear that they would carry his bones up with them" (*Epistle to the Hebrews*). Taking this verse alone—without the aid of the rest of Scripture—one might think, *Sure he could be confident. For eighty years he wanted for nothing; he was prime minister; he held the reins to the power of Egypt. Anyone with the power to command his wishes can laugh at the future because the future is his to make* (see Genesis 41:40-44). But Joseph's life was not a bed of roses.

Genesis 37:2-11 When problems come our way sometimes it's our fault; sometimes it's not. For Joseph it was and it wasn't. Jacob's problems with his brothers were largely due to bad parenting: **Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.** But Joseph aggravated this hostility by telling his family of two dreams that portrayed him as a ruler over them all. And **they hated him all the more. They were jealous of Joseph.** Whether or not Joseph was

intentionally taunting his family or simply relating the dreams, the symbolism was hard to misinterpret—the favored son was being elevated to ruling status.

Genesis 37:18-28 James wrote centuries later: “Jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind” (James 3:15, 16; see 4:1-3). The older **brothers made plans to kill Joseph**. Murder was scrapped in favor of **selling Joseph to Midianite traders for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt**. Esau sold his birthright. But these men sold **their brother—their own flesh and blood**. Seventeen years old, his feet bruised with fetters and his neck in an iron collar (Psalm 105:18), Joseph begins a chapter in his life he could never imagine. Falsely charged with sexual assault he is thrown into prison (see Gen. 39:10-20). There he meets a man who indicates that he will bring up Joseph’s case to Pharaoh. But he “forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought” (see Gen. 40:20-23). What was Joseph’s secret to survival—knowing that God was with him (see Gen. 39:2, 21).

Genesis 45:1-8 Thirteen long years after being sold into slavery Joseph begins a journey in Pharaoh’s court that will remind him of the dreams that created so much trouble for him. He had been put in charge of making sure that Egypt had enough food to get them through the seven years of famine that was in front of them. Joseph’s father, Jacob, heard that grain was available in Egypt and sends Joseph’s ten older brothers to buy some of it. “Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brother’s came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground. Joseph recognized his brothers instantly...but they didn’t recognize him. And he remembered the dreams he’d had about them many years before” (Gen. 42:6-9). After some period of time **Joseph could stand it no longer, and he finally said to his brothers, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. He tells them not to be angry with themselves for selling them to this place. “It was God who sent me here ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors. So it was God who sent me here, not you.”** Here is the man who has the power of the world at his disposal, but he chooses to forgive instead of squash them like bugs. I wonder if we would know anything about Joseph today if he had chosen to take vengeance on those who hurt him. His forgiveness was certainly “good news” to them. And here’s the good news, the Gospel, for us: “God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sins, so that we could be made right with God through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Genesis 50:14-24 The Gospel seems “too good to be true.” And that’s what Joseph’s brothers thought about him. With their father dead, they just **knew that Joseph would show his anger and pay them back for all the wrong they did to him. When Joseph heard this message, he broke down and wept.** How it must hurt the Father’s heart to see us questioning His everlasting love (see Psalm 103:8-14). So we come back to where we began—the faith that God will keep His promise: **“Soon I will die, but God will surely come to help you and lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land He solemnly promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob.”**

So sure was Joseph of this that he made the people promise that they would “take his bones with them when God came to help them and lead them back.” Out of all the great things that the Hebrews writer could have chosen in Joseph’s life, he chose this one thing as the greatest example of faith (see Exodus 13:19 and Joshua 24:32).

A**APPLY**

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. How does Joseph demonstrate true faith in God?
3. In what way(s) can you relate to the family dynamics we see here? How can you take hope from the story of Joseph and his family?
4. Go back and read Genesis 45:5 and 50:20. In the midst of suffering, how can the sovereignty of God comfort you?
5. Read Genesis 39:1-10. Joseph responds to sexual temptation (and the temptation to betray Potiphar) by appealing to it as a sin against God (verse 9). What can we learn from Joseph in regards to temptations to sin?

R**RESPOND**

The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.

1. Are you experiencing some type of suffering right now? How will you let the facts God is in control and He works all things for the good of those who love Him (See Romans 8:28-31) comfort you in this time?
2. How do you have faith in God when all seems hopeless? A lot in our world seems hopeless right now. Discuss how having a view of the future world (heaven) over the present world (earth) builds your faith in God and his promises.

How will you be strong in your faith this week? What will you change to make this happen?