

# Small Group Material: Journeying with Joseph 1

## Dreams in the midst of mess: Genesis 37 & 39

**Welcome** (10 mins) Can you think of a positive benefit which has resulted from what was, at the time, an unwelcome situation or difficulty?

**Word** (40mins) Around the group, read chapters 37 and 39 of Genesis which cover Joseph's life from age 17-27 (Ch 38 is not part of the Joseph narrative). It's quite a 'page turner'!

### The human experience..

1. Joseph was the son of Jacob's true love, Rachel – after he had fathered 10 sons by her elder sister and each of the sisters' maids, before Rachel died giving birth to Joseph's only birth brother, Benjamin...
  - a. How might this explain why Joseph was given a robe denoting high status? (37:3)
  - b. Looking at 37:2-18, suggest other reasons Joseph's brothers had to dislike him?
2. Many families develop a natural 'pecking order' (can you remember yours, growing up?) How might this explain Reuben's role? (37:21-2, 29-30; 42:22)
3. The emotions are real:
  - a. How do you imagine Joseph felt, being put in the cistern - then taken out ... and sold? (see also 42:21)
  - b. How does Jacob react to the bloodied robe? (37:34-5)
4. Think of all the reasons why it would have been so easy for Joseph to succumb to Potiphar's wife.

### The power of the story..

5. Like a play, Joseph's story divides into clear scenes. Comparing Chs 37 and 39, Joseph's fortunes (and clothing) go through the same 'pattern'.
  - a. What is it? (cf 37:3 & 39:4 / 37:23 & 39:12 / 37:24 & 39:20)

- b. What impact might this have on him?
- c. [But what do you notice about the end of each 'scene'? (37:11,28,36 / 39: 5,12,23) What can you deduce from this about God's intentions?]

### The key themes ..

6. Read Rom 8:28-30. God can make use of negative situations, even though we may struggle to see this whilst we suffer (!).
  - a. Joseph was a trafficked captive, but how did God use this for good (39:1-6)?
7. God's purposes frequently overturn or disrupt the status quo/'pecking order'. Look at Lk 1:46-55; 1 Cor 1:26-9:
  - a. What might God want to alter about your circumstances?
  - b. Are you ready to change?

### Bringing the narrative into today ..

8. Joseph starts out as a spoilt teenager, but 10 years later is respected for his integrity. God doesn't wait until we are 'perfectly ready' to use us.
  - a. How have you (or other group members) noticed God at work in your own life? (Phil 2:13)
9. God's plans involve individual lives - and often extend beyond them. Dreams can change nations (eg. the Arab Spring uprisings) and alter mindsets (eg. the sharing of Greta Thurnberg's vision)
  - a. Is there a 'dream' that God has given you, which you realise you are not yet living out?
  - b. Or is there a bigger 'divine canvas' that you would long to be part of?
  - c. What do you think is God's dream for Chipping Norton?

**Worship** (10 mins) Joseph learned to live a life of integrity, faithful to God in the midst of prosperity *and* adversity. With hindsight we can see God's faithfulness to him, but this may not have been so obvious to Joseph at the outset!

- [On a sheet of paper, sketch your life with its highs and lows as a line on a graph (x axis = years passing; y axis = scale of 1 to 10), labelling the points on the line. Keep this for further reflection.]

- Express your trust in our faithful God by singing: *10,000 Reasons*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE\\_IRIOE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE_IRIOE)

### **Witness** (15-20 mins)

- Think and pray for opportunities to encourage Christians you encounter to fully inhabit God's dream for them.
  - Are you already aware of an individual you could encourage? Do it!
- As with Joseph, involvement in God's purposes isn't just personal but affects our relationships, as well as wider national issues.
  - *Asia Bibi is a Pakistani Christian who has faced years of imprisonment for alleged 'blasphemy'. After being criticised for drinking from a cup used by Muslims, followed by derogatory statements about Christianity and demands that she convert to Islam, Asia responded, 'I believe in my religion and in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for the sins of mankind. What did your Prophet Mohammed ever do to save mankind? And why should it be me that converts instead of you?' Shortly afterwards, a mob came to her house, beating her and members of her family before she was taken away by the police and sentenced to the death penalty. Released after prolonged international outcry, many in Pakistan still want her dead...*

What action can you take this week to support those who are suffering for their Christian integrity? For ideas, go to the Open Doors website:

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/act/>