

Joseph

(Son, Slave, Prisoner and Ruler)

Introduction: In Romans 15, the Apostle Paul tells us that the stories of the Old Testament were written to strengthen our faith and give us hope. Tracing the grace of God as he guides Old Testament Joseph through fast changing circumstances does just that, it strengthens faith and gives us insight into our own faith journey with God. This Bible Study series will divide Joseph's life into four chapters: **1)** His life as a favored and yet hated **son**, **2)** his life as a poor and yet favored **slave**, **3)** his life as a forgotten and yet favored **prisoner**, and **4)** his life as a powerful and yet forgiving **ruler**. As we trace the life of Joseph we will see God's hand in everything; those things that seem good and those that seem bad.

The story of Joseph's life is important for us on several different levels. It teaches us about God's love and truth working through a flawed family. We learn the value of trusting a promise over experience by watching his life develop. We learn that God gives only a little light on our future and then expects us to trust him as he unfolds history. And finally, in Joseph's life we see the ongoing fulfillment of the gospel promise that includes us.

For **Lesson One** we will spend all of our time in Genesis 37. If you are able to read this chapter before we begin it would be a big help.

Read Genesis 37:1-4- Jacob creates a challenging environment for his family by practicing favoritism.

Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson:

Why did Jacob favor Joseph so much?

How would having multiple wives help foster favoritism?

What would the ornamented robe say to Joseph's brothers other than simply that he was the favorite?

Fathers and mothers see how their kids get along. Why do you think the unkind words of Joseph's brothers did not make Jacob temper his favoritism a bit?

How did Jacob's favoritism rob Joseph of meaningful family relationships?

Applying God's Word:

What are some reasons parents practice favoritism today?

How is the blended family bound to struggle with favoritism from the very start?

What God pleasing thing can we do if we are the victim of favoritism?

How is faith in Christ a great equalizing factor when there are inequities in family relationships?

How did Jacob's favoritism play into God's hand to save many lives? What does that teach us about the "bad" things we experience?

Read Genesis 37:5-11 – God shows favoritism to Joseph and Joseph flaunts it. (The Dreams)

Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson:

Why do you think God gave Joseph these dreams?

Why do you think a young seventeen year old would tell his dreams to everyone?

Why do you think the second dream even made Jacob rebuke Joseph?

Up until this time Joseph's brothers could blame their father for Joseph's cockiness and favored position. What was their problem now?

How would Joseph's dreams give him vision, purpose and meaning for his life?

Why would God give Joseph gifts that made his family life hard?

Applying God's Word:

How can we avoid pride in our gifts?

Can you tell about a time when you naively underestimated the jealousy of others?

What has God given us to give us vision, purpose and meaning in our lives? (multiple answers)

Why would God give us gifts and then make those gifts create a difficult environment for us too?

Read Genesis 37:12-24 – Joseph falls into the hands of his angry brothers?

Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson:

Find Shechem and Dothan on a map.

What role do you think their own fears played into the brothers' plot to kill Joseph?

How does Joseph's character differ from that of his brothers?

Why do you think Rueben offered a "better" mean thing to do to Joseph instead of just flat out taking Joseph from them?

Applying God's Word:

When we see animosity growing in our family or our church, what swift and decisive actions should we take that Jacob and Joseph failed to?

How might we learn from Rueben to tackle some problems differently than others?

Rueben's delay tactic positioned Joseph for his departure. What do we learn about God's plan in chaotic relationship events?

Read Genesis 37:25-36 – Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers.

Digging Deeper with Pastor Patterson:

What made Judah's argument effective to get his brothers to sell and not kill Joseph?

Why did Rueben join the lie?

What do we learn from how all the brothers kept the secret of Joseph's sale even as their father mourned deeply?

Joseph was sold to a high official in Egypt. How do we see God's hand here?

Applying God's Word:

In multiple relationships sometimes things happen that we cannot make sense of nor can we change them. What comfort does Joseph's life give us when this happens?

People very close to us will surprise us in how poorly they can treat us. How does Joseph's story help?

God often mixes "good" with "bad" in our lives. Why do you think he does this?

(cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Hebrews 12, Romans 8:28)

Summary: In this first lesson we meet Jacob's family, Joseph and his brothers. We see that their lives are less than ideal while they still have God's blessing and providence. We watch as Joseph gets ejected from his family because of jealousy. We see God using promises and problems to work out his wonderful plan for Joseph, his family, his generation, and us. We learn that even when we do things wrong God will use those misdeeds in his plan to bring blessing to his planet. We learn to trust God even when it looks like he may have abandoned us.

Homework for next week: Read Genesis 39 – Joseph as a poor and yet favored slave.