

## **CoreGroup Guide | Shift Happens - Part 4**

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### **Welcome**

Welcome to the final week of our series *Shift Happens: When Life Doesn't Go As Planned*. Over the past three weeks we have talked about the ups and down, the lefts and rights, the starts and stops of this journey we call life. Today we wrap up the series with the story of a man named Joseph, as told in the Old Testament book of Genesis. Joseph was betrayed by his family, sold into slavery, and the victim of several injustices beyond his control. And yet, somehow, Joseph continued to trust in God.

### **Opening Prayer**

God of justice, God of mercy, God of grace. We welcome you into our group today. Thank you for this opportunity to wrestle with the parts of life that feel unfair and unjust; for the opportunity to reflect on the times when we have felt betrayed and alone. We know that you are here with us, God, even in the most difficult of circumstances. Through our conversation today, please open our minds and our hearts to see the places where you are – and always have been – working in our lives and in the world. It's in your name we pray. Amen.

### **Ice Breaker**

You may be familiar with the musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, a favorite of children's ministry classes, school plays, and even a run on Broadway. This beloved musical is based on the biblical story of Joseph, but it also stars an extravagantly colorful coat that brings much fun and whimsy to the stage. What is the most fun article of clothing you own? Or perhaps, what article of clothing brings you the most joy to wear?

### **The Head**

The story of Joseph has many twists and turns. In the beginning of the story, we learn that Joseph is the favorite son of his father Jacob. This leads his brothers to feel jealous, which results in them selling Joseph into slavery. He is purchased by the captain of Pharaoh's guard and later falsely accused and imprisoned by the guard's wife. But through it all, Joseph remained faithful and eventually rose to power, earning the trust of Pharaoh himself as an interpreter of his dreams. Seven years of abundance were followed by seven years of famine, leading Joseph to reconcile with his brothers and reunite with his father.

You can read the full story of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37-50, but for today we will start at the beginning.

### **Genesis 37:3-10**

*3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born when Jacob was old. Jacob had made for him a long robe. 4 When his brothers saw that their*

*father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him and couldn't even talk nicely to him.*

*5 Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers, which made them hate him even more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had. 7 When we were binding stalks of grain in the field, my stalk got up and stood upright, while your stalks gathered around it and bowed down to my stalk."*

*8 His brothers said to him, "Will you really be our king and rule over us?" So they hated him even more because of the dreams he told them.*

*9 Then Joseph had another dream and described it to his brothers: "I've just dreamed again, and this time the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."*

*10 When he described it to his father and brothers, his father scolded him and said to him, "What kind of dreams have you dreamed? Am I and your mother and your brothers supposed to come and bow down to the ground in front of you?" 11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father took careful note of the matter.*

- How would you describe the family dynamic in this story? What role does Joseph play?
- Where do you see the start of injustice and betrayal in this passage?
- What is the significance of Joseph's dreams?
- From what you know about the rest of Joseph's story, how do we see Joseph's faithfulness and trust in the long game with God?

For a deeper dive into scripture, read this passage from the New Testament book of Romans. This is a letter written by the apostle Paul to the group of Christ-followers living in Rome.

### **Romans 8:18-25**

*18 I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us. 19 The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God's sons and daughters. 20 Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God's children. 22 We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. 23 And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. 24 We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? 25 But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience.*

- What does Paul mean by "the coming glory" in verse 18?
- In what ways have you gotten a glimpse of that coming glory in the here and now?
- As we think about all that is going on in our world today, what are the "labor pains" we are experiencing? Where do you hear the groans of God's creation?
- A bit later, Romans 8:28 states, "We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose." As you look back on the difficult times of life, how do you see God working all things together?

## The Heart

Our world today feels overwhelmed with injustices on an epic scale. However, even in our day to day lives we face challenges that seem unfair. Our thoughtful plans and good intentions fall apart in ways beyond our control. How do we persevere through these unexpected setbacks?

- When you face situations that feel unjust, what happens in your body, mind, and spirit?
- Think about a time when you have felt betrayed. How did this experience impact your relationship with God and/or the other people involved?
- How does injustice, unfairness, and betrayal impact your prayer life?
- When life seems unfair, how do you maintain a sense of perspective and long term trust?

## The Hands

As we come to the end of the *Shift Happens* series, spend some time reflecting on the main stories shared over the past four weeks. What stood out to you about each story? What lessons did you learn? What questions do you still have?

Ruth: A story of taking the next faithful step in the aftermath of great loss.

Samson: A story of honestly and humbly surrendering after messing up.

Jeremiah: A story of investing in hope even when faithfulness leads to failure.

Joseph: A story of trusting in the long game in the face of injustice and betrayal.

As time and comfort allow, go around the circle and give each person in the group an opportunity to consider these questions:

- Which story resonated most with your lived experience?
- What support do you need as you continue to wrestle with this shift?
- What is one faithful action you could take to grow in this area?
- How can your CoreGroup be praying for you this week?

## Closing Prayer

A prayer from Psalm 90:

*1 Lord, you have been our help,  
generation after generation.*

*2 Before the mountains were born,  
before you birthed the earth and the inhabited world –  
from forever in the past  
To forever in the future, you are God.*

*13 Come back to us, Lord!  
Please, quick!  
Have some compassion for your servants!*

*14 Fill us full every morning with your faithful love  
so we can rejoice and celebrate our whole life long.*

## Going Deeper

This semester, each CoreGroup guide will include a memory verse that you can learn on your own or together with your group. The recommended memory verse for the *Shift Happens* series is Isaiah 43:19 from the Common English Bible (CEB):

***“Look! I’m doing a new thing; now it sprouts up; don’t you recognize it? I’m making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness.”***

Whether you memorized it or not, read through this verse three times together as a group. For those who have the verse committed to memory, try closing your eyes as you recite the scripture together. How does God speak to you through these words?