

Small Group Guide: The Story of Joseph - Week 5

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream (Genesis 41:1-36)

Opening Prayer (2-3 minutes)

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word, and to help group members see His faithfulness in their own waiting seasons.

Ice Breaker (5-7 minutes)

Question: What's the longest you've ever had to wait for something important? How did that waiting period change you?

Sermon Recap (5 minutes)

Joseph has been betrayed, abandoned, falsely accused, imprisoned, and forgotten—for 13 years. After two additional years in prison following his help to the cupbearer, God's timing finally arrives. Pharaoh has troubling dreams that no one can interpret, the cupbearer remembers Joseph, and in one day, Joseph goes from the pit to standing before Pharaoh. Throughout it all, Joseph consistently points to God as the source of wisdom and interpretation.

Key Takeaways

1. God's timing is often much longer than we'd like, but we are never forgotten
2. Disappointment sometimes precedes deliverance
3. Daily faithfulness in the right direction doesn't guarantee immediate results
4. God positions us exactly where He needs us, even when it feels like abandonment
5. When opportunities come, we must point people to God, not ourselves

Discussion Questions

Section 1: The Reality of Waiting (15-20 minutes)

1. **Joseph waited 13 years from the pit to Pharaoh's palace.** The sermon listed many biblical figures who experienced long waiting periods (Abraham - 25 years, Moses - 40 years, David - 12-15 years). Why do you think God so often uses extended waiting periods in the lives of His people?
2. **Read Ecclesiastes 3:1 and Psalm 27:14.** How do these verses challenge or comfort you in your current season of life?

3. **The sermon stated: "Daily steps in the right direction doesn't always mean immediate deliverance. Sometimes disappointment precedes deliverance."** Share about a time when you did the right thing repeatedly but didn't see results for a long time. What did that season teach you about God?
4. **Joseph could have become bitter during his years of imprisonment.** What practical steps can we take to maintain faith and avoid bitterness when God's timing doesn't match our expectations?

Section 2: God's Perfect Positioning (15-20 minutes)

5. **Genesis 41:1 says "After two whole years..."** Joseph had asked the cupbearer to remember him (40:14-15), but was forgotten for two more years. Have you ever felt forgotten by God or others? How does Joseph's story speak to that feeling?
6. **The sermon emphasized: "Joseph was not alone, forgotten, or abandoned. He was right where God needed him."** How does this perspective change the way we view difficult circumstances in our lives?
7. **Joseph gained skills and wisdom during his 13 years of hardship** that prepared him for his moment before Pharaoh. What might God be teaching you in your current season that could prepare you for future opportunities?
8. **Read Colossians 4:5-6.** Joseph "walked in wisdom" even in prison, making the best use of his time. How can we make the best use of difficult seasons rather than just enduring them?

Section 3: Pointing to God (15-20 minutes)

9. **Three times in the passage (to the cupbearer/baker, to Pharaoh initially, and in giving the interpretation), Joseph deflected credit from himself to God.** Why is this so important? What are the dangers of taking credit for what God does through us?
10. **Joseph told Pharaoh: "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer" (41:16).** This required tremendous confidence in God. What would it look like for you to speak with this kind of confidence about God in your workplace, neighborhood, or family?
11. **The sermon mentioned that many people today speak about God without actually knowing His Word** (referencing Rhett and Link's deconstruction). How can we avoid this trap? How well do you actually know God's Word versus devotionals or podcasts about God's Word?
12. **Joseph not only interpreted the dream but offered unsolicited wisdom (41:33-36).** When has God given you insight or wisdom to share with others? Did you take the opportunity? Why or why not?

Personal Reflection (5-10 minutes)

Take a few minutes of silence for individual reflection on these questions:

- **Am I currently in a waiting season?** If so, am I waiting patiently with faith, or am I trying to "run ahead or fix the situation" myself?
- **Do I truly believe that God has me exactly where He wants me?** What would change in my attitude if I fully believed this?
- **When opportunities arise to speak about God, do I point to Him or to myself?**
- **Am I growing in my knowledge of God's Word, or am I relying on secondhand sources?**

Practical Applications

Choose 1-2 of these to commit to this week:

Option 1: Daily Faithfulness

Like Joseph, commit to doing the right thing in your current circumstances this week, even if you don't see immediate results. Identify one specific area where you'll be faithful regardless of outcomes.

Option 2: Scripture Immersion

Commit to reading God's Word directly (not just devotionals) for at least 15 minutes each day this week. Consider reading through Genesis 37-50 to see Joseph's complete story.

Option 3: Waiting with Purpose

If you're in a waiting season, write down what God might be teaching you during this time. Journal about how you can grow rather than just endure.

Option 4: Point to God

This week, when someone compliments you or asks your advice, practice intentionally pointing them to God as the source of wisdom, strength, or ability.

Option 5: Encourage Someone Waiting

Think of someone you know who is in a difficult waiting season. Reach out to them this week with encouragement, reminding them that God has not forgotten them.

Closing Prayer Prompts (10 minutes)

Break into groups of 2-3 and pray for each other in these areas:

- **For patience and faith** in current waiting seasons
- **For eyes to see** how God is positioning and preparing us
- **For boldness** to point others to God when opportunities arise
- **For hunger** to know God's Word more deeply
- **For trust** that God's timing is perfect, even when it's longer than we'd like

Memory Verse for the Week

Psalm 27:14 (ESV) *"Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD."*

Before Next Week

- Read Genesis 41:37-57 in preparation for next week's study
- Practice your chosen application daily
- Share with one group member during the week how God is working in your waiting

Leader Notes

- **Be sensitive** to group members who may be in painful waiting seasons (infertility, unemployment, illness, relationship struggles)
- **Emphasize** that waiting doesn't mean passivity—Joseph remained faithful and active
- **Avoid** giving simplistic answers about God's timing; some waiting is mysterious
- **Celebrate** stories of how God has proven faithful in past waiting seasons
- **Encourage** honest sharing about struggles with trusting God's timing