

Small Group Guide: The Story of Joseph - Brothers' Trip to Egypt

Week 7 | Genesis 42:1-20

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share about a time when something difficult or painful in your life ended up leading to something good. How long did it take before you could see the bigger picture?

Sermon Recap (5 minutes)

This week we continued Joseph's story as his brothers traveled to Egypt during the famine. Joseph, now governor of Egypt, recognized his brothers when they came to buy grain, but they didn't recognize him. Through their interaction, God began to reopen old wounds so true healing could begin. We learned that God can use pain to awaken us, and that His grace and mercy are always present even in difficult circumstances.

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Joseph's Family Dysfunction (15 minutes)

1. **Review the family dynamics:** Jacob still doesn't trust the brothers with Benjamin, showing the family is still broken 20 years after selling Joseph. What patterns of dysfunction do you see repeating in this family?
2. **Why do you think Jacob was so passive and showed such obvious favoritism?** How did this contribute to the brothers' sin against Joseph?
3. **Reflect on your own family of origin.** What unhealthy patterns or wounds have you had to address? How has God worked in those situations?

Part 2: God Uses Pain to Awaken Us (20 minutes)

4. **Joseph treated his brothers roughly and accused them of being spies.** Why do you think he did this? Was this revenge or something else?
5. **Read Genesis 42:21-22.** This is the first time the brothers verbalize their guilt about Joseph. Why did it take 20 years and this stressful situation for them to finally acknowledge what they did?

6. **The sermon states: "God wants to reopen an old wound so that true healing can begin."**
 - Have you experienced God doing this in your life?
 - Why is it sometimes necessary to feel pain before we can experience healing?
 - What's the difference between healthy guilt that leads to repentance and unhealthy shame?

Part 3: God's Grace and Mercy (20 minutes)

7. **Joseph showed mercy by allowing nine brothers to return home instead of just one.** What does this reveal about Joseph's character after all he's been through?
8. **Read Genesis 42:24.** Joseph wept when he heard his brothers' conversation. What does this teach us about:
 - Forgiveness before someone asks for it?
 - Loving people who have hurt us deeply?
9. **The sermon says: "The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that makes salvation necessary."**
 - How does this statement challenge our thinking about earning God's favor?
 - How have you experienced God's lavish grace and mercy in your own life?
10. **Joseph returned the brothers' money in their grain sacks.** This was an act of grace they didn't deserve. How do you typically respond when you receive undeserved kindness or grace?

Part 4: The Weight of Unconfessed Sin (15 minutes)

11. **The brothers returned home with their guilt still unconfessed.** They told the story but didn't admit their wrongdoing to their father. Why do you think they continued to hide the truth?
 12. **What are the consequences of carrying unconfessed sin?** How does it affect:
 - Our relationship with God?
 - Our relationships with others?
 - Our own emotional and spiritual health?
 13. **The sermon ended with: "Guilt is good."** How is guilt actually a gift from God? When does guilt become unhealthy?
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Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Daily steps in the right direction don't always mean immediate deliverance.** Sometimes disappointment precedes deliverance.
 - ✓ **God can use pain to awaken and prod us** toward repentance and healing.
 - ✓ **Guilt strikes our consciences and pulls us toward seeking forgiveness.** It's a gift that shows us we need God.
 - ✓ **God's grace and mercy are ever present,** even when we feel we're being treated harshly by circumstances.
 - ✓ **True healing requires facing the wounds we've been avoiding,** no matter how long it's been.
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Personal Application (15 minutes)

Reflection Time: Take 3-5 minutes of silence for personal reflection on these questions:

1. Is there unconfessed sin in your life that God is bringing to your attention today?
2. Is there someone you've wronged that you need to seek forgiveness from?
3. Is there someone who has wronged you that you need to extend grace and mercy toward?
4. What "old wound" might God be reopening in your life so that true healing can begin?

Sharing Time: Invite group members to share (as they feel comfortable) one thing God is laying on their heart. This is not a time to problem-solve but to listen and support one another.

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following action steps to complete before next week:

Option 1 - Confession: If God has revealed unconfessed sin, confess it to Him and, if appropriate, to someone you trust or someone you've wronged.

Option 2 - Extend Grace: Reach out to someone who has hurt you and take one step toward reconciliation or forgiveness.

Option 3 - Journal: Spend time this week journaling about a painful situation in your life. Ask God to show you what He might be doing through it and how He's present in it.

Option 4 - Scripture Meditation: Read Genesis 42 each day this week. Each time, focus on a different character (Joseph, the brothers, Jacob) and what God might be teaching through their perspective.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer Focus Areas:

- Thank God for His grace and mercy toward us
- Ask God to give us courage to face unconfessed sin
- Pray for healing in broken relationships
- Ask for trust that God knows the bigger picture even in painful circumstances

Group Prayer: Have each person pray a one-sentence prayer, or close with one person praying for the entire group.

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll continue Joseph's story and see how God continues to work in this broken family. Come prepared to discuss how God brings restoration even in the most dysfunctional situations.

Leader Tip: This topic deals with guilt, confession, and family dysfunction—sensitive areas for many people. Create a safe environment where people feel comfortable sharing but never pressured. Remind the group of confidentiality and grace toward one another.