

## Small Group Materials (Genesis 42-50)

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*Leader's Note: (Synopsis of Study) Today we will finish Genesis! As we look at the last few chapters, we will focus on how Joseph is reconciled with his brothers, and how God used those events for His purposes, ultimately continuing to fulfill the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

**Pray for your time together in God's Word!**

### **Part 1: The Masquerade**

**Ask the Group:** Have you ever withheld information from someone (family, friends, etc.)? Why or why not?

- **Ask the Group:** What were the consequences of your decision, if any?

*Leader's Note: If someone in your group missed the previous discussion on Joseph, you may want to take a few moments to give the background story for today's lesson (Option: Ask your group members to relay Joseph's story thus far.). Genesis 42 - 44 details how Egypt enters a famine.*

*With Joseph now in a position of authority in Egypt, people from all over Egypt and its surrounding nations start seeking to buy food from him. Joseph's brothers (except for Benjamin, his youngest brother) eventually come seeking food, but they do not recognize him.*

**Read: Genesis 42:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup> As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food." <sup>8</sup> Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.

**Ask the Group:** Why do you think Joseph chose not to reveal his identity to his brothers?

*Possible Answers: He doesn't trust his brothers; he wants to frighten them or get some kind of revenge.*

**Ask the Group:** How would you have responded had you been in Joseph's place? Why?

**Read: Genesis 42:9-11, 19-21, 25-28**

<sup>9</sup> Then [Joseph] remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected." <sup>10</sup> "No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. <sup>11</sup> We are all the sons of one man. You servants are honest men, not spies."...

<sup>19</sup> [Joseph said] "If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. <sup>20</sup> But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.

<sup>21</sup> They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how

distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."...

<sup>25</sup> Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, <sup>26</sup> they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

<sup>27</sup> At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. <sup>28</sup> "My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack." Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done to us?"

**Ask the Group:** What kinds of "tests" have you gone through in your life?

*Possible Answers: This can be answered with anything from academic tests, to impatient children, to difficult (or easy) seasons of life.*

- **Ask the Group:** What was the purpose of your test(s)?

*Possible Answers: Assess knowledge or capability, growth as a parent, learning truths about yourself or God, etc.*

*Leader's Note: Depending on what people have shared, it may be best to note that we may not know the purpose or reasoning behind our trials/tests.*

**Ask the Group:** Why do you think Joseph puts the silver back in his brothers sacks? What does he hope to accomplish?

*Possible Answers: Maybe he was trying to test them to see if they would return it, perhaps trying to prevent them from entering poverty.*

**Read Aloud to the Group:** Later, Joseph's brothers come back again for more food - this time with Benjamin, despite the misgivings of their father Jacob. Joseph is not upset about the silver in the sacks; instead, he rejoices at seeing all his brothers and serves them a great feast. After giving them more food, he plants a silver cup in Benjamin's sack and sends his servant after the brothers to accuse them of stealing it. The servant brings all the brothers back to see Joseph, who now threatens to imprison Benjamin.

**Read: Genesis 44:18, 30-34**

<sup>18</sup> Then Judah went up to him and said ... <sup>30</sup> "So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, <sup>31</sup> sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow.<sup>32</sup> Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!'

<sup>33</sup> "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. <sup>34</sup> How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father."

**Ask the Group:** How do the brothers offer to deal with the accusation of the stolen cup?

- **Ask the Group:** Why is this significant?

*Possible Answers: They are showing compassion for their brother, they have shown that they've changed and are willing to sacrifice for their family.*

*Leaders Note: Judah's offer of enslavement as reparation for the theft is the first example of substitutionary atonement in the Bible. This idea is fully realized when Christ dies on the cross. It's also the turning point in the story when Joseph decides to reveal himself to his brothers.*

**Ask the Group:** Have you ever taken the blame for someone else's mistakes/failure? Why?

## **Part 2: The Great Reveal**

**Read: Genesis 45:1-8**

<sup>1</sup> Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

<sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! <sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. <sup>6</sup> For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. <sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

<sup>8</sup> "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

**Ask the Group:** What is unique (surprising) about how Joseph revealed himself to his brothers?

*Possible Answers: After dropping the bomb, he also explains that he is not angry with them for past wrongs. Instead, he points to God as the source of the good things that have come about.*

**Ask the Group:** Imagine you're one of Joseph's brothers. What would be running through your head during this moment?

**Ask the Group:** Joseph's story is just one of many examples in the Bible of how people's plans don't always line up with God's plan. Can you list any others?

*Possible Answers: Abraham's attempt to fulfill God's promise through Hagar, Jonah trying to escape God's calling, those who crucified Jesus, etc.*

*Here are a couple of relevant passages as well:*

*Proverbs 19:21*

*Many are the plans in a person's heart,  
but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.*

Romans 8:28

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

- **Ask the Group:** How have you experienced this reality in your own life? What happened?

### **Part 3: The Covenant Continues**

**Read Aloud to the Group:** Joseph and his brothers reconcile after his “big reveal” and his entire family moves from Canaan to Egypt to live under the blessing Joseph received. The Israelites thrived during this time, increasing in number and prosperity.

#### **Read: Genesis 50:24**

<sup>24</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

**Ask the Group:** How are God’s promises fulfilled in the time of Joseph? How do they remain to be fulfilled?

*Possible Answers: Through Joseph, the promise of blessing begins to be shown to Israel, and the number of descendants are beginning to increase. They still don’t have their own land.*

**Ask the Group:** Now that our study of Genesis is completed, take a minute and reflect. What is our community application of this passage - and of the book of Genesis?

*Leaders Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.*

*Bonus Leaders Note: If you have access to the internet with your small group, feel free to end your discussion with this song from “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat”: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpJvUrSd\\_2k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpJvUrSd_2k)*