

HEROES OF FAITH SERIES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Heroes of Faith: Joseph Part II -

1. This week we focused on the second-half of Joseph's life. In what ways does this part of Joseph's life connect with your life? What do you find interesting or compelling about his story?

2. In our study of the life of Joseph we have seen him endure hardships and heartache time and again. As we begin this week, we find him in prison — a place that he describes as a dungeon. He is an innocent man, trapped by a false accusation, staring out at a questionable future. No doubt, there are times in our lives when we will feel trapped, discouraged and depressed. As people face addictions, financial hardships, difficult relationships, health issues and other problems, it can feel like they're trapped or in a pit. Please tell the story of a time when you felt trapped and discouraged.

Thinking about Joseph in the prison, I said in the sermon, **when you feel discouraged, trapped, and overwhelmed by life remember, God is faithful and provides hope and strength.** Is it hard for you in those times of discouragement to cry out to God receiving his strength and hope? How do you think someone receives God's strength?

3. In Genesis 41, Joseph's life changes dramatically. After using God's power to interpret Pharaoh's dream, Pharaoh promoted him to second in command of all Egypt. He is given a wife and a chariot as well as fine robes and Pharaoh's signet ring (sign of his power and authority). Joseph clearly has entered a time of abundance. We can also find ourselves in times of abundance, when it seems like everything is going our way. In this time of abundance, Joseph has two sons. Joseph names his first son Manasseh saying "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." Manasseh means to forget. This statement reminds us that Joseph is attributing his success and healing to God, desiring to stay faithful to Him. Reflecting on times of abundance in the sermon I said, **In times of abundance we must continue to grow, serving God and staying faithful to him.** For some, when things are difficult, they cling to God but when things go well they rely on themselves and stop growing spiritually. Is it difficult for you in the good times to continue clinging to God? What do you think might be some strategies to employ when things are going well to assure that you stay close to God?

4. The story of Joseph takes a dramatic turn when the brothers who betrayed him are forced to come to Egypt to try to buy grain during the severe famine. Genesis 42 reveals the first time that Joseph has seen his brothers since they betrayed him and sold him into slavery. He recognizes them, but they don't recognize him. After several discussions and plot twists, Joseph eventually reveals himself to his family. As Joseph confronts the issue of forgiving his brothers and all the pain they brought into his life, he reveals a complicated theological truth. This truth is revealed in **Genesis 50:20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.** This verse reminds us that no matter what the agenda of the people we encounter, God is always doing HIS work. Joseph has concluded that it was God who sent him to Egypt, using his brothers as the vehicle to take him there for a future calling. What are your thoughts on Genesis 50:20?

One of the most famous verses in the New Testament reminds us of this same principal, **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.** This led me to say in the sermon, **in times of abundance and severe need, whether we are blessed or mistreated, God is working, working for his purpose and our eventual good.** One writer put it this way, "God is always focused on two things - His Glory and our good". Is it hard for you to believe that God can take even the worst circumstances of our life and use them for good? Is it hard for you to remember that God is always working?

How do you think you might aid the work that God is doing? How might you hinder it?

5. What do you think God is saying to you from our study on the life of Joseph? Take a moment and think back over all of Joseph's life. What life lessons directly apply to you right now?