

Joseph's Family Arrives in Egypt
Genesis 42-45 (45:1-5)
Week 5

Opening

Be sure to hop onto the video call a bit early so group members aren't anxiously, awkwardly waiting. Remember you are the host, so just as if you were welcoming folks into your home, use these first few moments to welcome each participant by name. It means a lot to acknowledge everyone on the call and confirm you can see and hear them.

-if there are new folks joining your group, be sure to introduce them as well

Ask if anyone would like to open in prayer. They can pray on their own or use the prayer printed below. It also might be a good idea to reach out to a group member prior to your meeting and ask them ahead of time if they'd be willing to open in prayer. That's a great way to encourage participation without putting anyone on the spot. [I like the consistency of praying the same pray to center ourselves each week, but once again, feel free to have someone pray differently to open this week.](#)

Holy God, as we gather again virtually, we ask that you Spirit would be at work among us to connect us and renew us by your Word and our fellowship. Give us wisdom and insight and strengthen our bonds with one another and you. In the name of our risen Lord we pray, Amen.

Depending on time constraints you may want to take a bit of extra time to check in with folks and see how they're doing. You could also wait and do this at the end of the session before closing in prayer.

Check-in question

In his sermon this week, Ryan describes Joseph's testing his brothers as a "severe mercy" that helps bring them back into right relationship with God and one another. Can you think of other examples, whether in your own life or elsewhere in the Biblical narrative, when you've seen a similar "severe mercy"?

*since we're doing these meetings on Zoom, some groups may want to add an extra activity to help folks feel at ease. There are some great games out there that you can play via Zoom. Reach out to Sarah if this is something you'd like to try out.

Read: (see attachment on "Ideas for Lengthy Passages") Either all of ch.42-45 or the text Ryan preached on (ch. 45:1-5) or something else all together

In addition to the broader questions below, I am including some other information about this passage and some other ideas to get conversation going; however, don't jump too quickly to these as they shape the discussion. Be sure to first ask what the group thinks, and which parts stand out to them. Trust the Holy Spirit here !

CHAPTER 42

Mistaken identity is a beloved literary device (think of how often Shakespeare used it!), and the narrator has Joseph exploit it to the utmost. One feels for the brothers when Joseph accuses them of spying. They protest that they are "honest men" (v.11), and one can believe that after all they have been through, by now they may actually be!

v.18 – Joseph tells his brothers that he "fears God" which would have been strange to them coming from a high Egyptian officer. The narrator would have us realize the fear of God is indeed the source of Joseph's good name.

Joseph frees the brothers to go home with their purchases on two conditions:

- 1) They leave a hostage with him
- 2) They return with their brother Benjamin (v.19-20)

Why do you think Joseph requires this of his brothers? Why has he not yet revealed his identity?

--some scholars say the by testing them in this way, Joseph will be able to discern if they are indeed honest men and thus right relationship (shalom) can be restored between them and him

v. 26-38 – The brothers discover that at least one of them still has his grain money and can only think that God is punishing them for the evil deeds of their past.

Interesting, isn't it, how much our inner state shapes and colors the picture of God that we draw? What experiences have you had that have affected your view of God (whether for good or evil)?

CHAPTER 43

It is difficult to know why Joseph seems to be playing these "games" with his brothers.

What do you make of his scheming and failure to reveal his identity at the beginning? Is it because he feels the need to draw them to genuine repentance for the wrong they have done, and because they need to be pushed lower and lower into remorse and shame before it will be wise to let them rise from it? Does that feel JUST to you?

Or is Joseph playing games with his brothers because he has some resentment in his heart towards them?

We cannot be sure of the answer to the questions about Joseph's motivation. The effect of the story's unclarity is to put the ball in our court and make us examine ourselves. **If I were Joseph, what would be my motivation? What do I learn from the way I read the story?** Paradoxically, often the Bible works on us by leaving things unclear, making us fill in the gaps, and asking why we fill them in the way we do.

CHAPTER 45

Shortly after the climax of the story, Joseph utters a theological truth, “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God” (45:7-8).

Joseph has feared God and not human, has acknowledged God’s authority, and has been obedient. Although the brothers failed him, Joseph has not failed them, nor has God. Because of Joseph’s faithfulness and God’s power, all of them will be saved.

Remind folks of this claim and how it might ring true in the passage for the week:

Walter Brueggemann names the singular theological claim in the Joseph story is “the purposes of God are at work in hidden and unnoticed ways, but the ways of God are nonetheless reliable and will come to fruition.” This can be the place we come back to each week as we explore the story of Joseph.

1. What from this story confuses, inspires, or resonates with you? What questions or curiosities do you have about this passage?
2. What does this story tell us about God?
3. What does this story tell us about humanity?
4. In what ways does this particular passage relate to Brueggemann’s idea of God’s purposes? How might God’s providence already be at work here?
5. What could this story have to say to us today in the 21st century? What about today during this global pandemic?

The Swedish Method



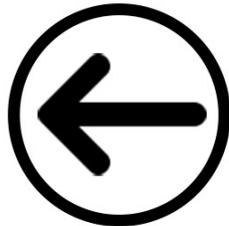
A light bulb should be something that “shines” from the passage — something new or fresh. *What stuck out to you this time through?* Every time we read the Bible, God will be reminding us of things we’ve forgotten and showing us things we haven’t seen before.

And when we read the Bible in a group, he’ll be revealing different things to different people, multiplying the insight and learning. God does not intend for us to see different *meanings*, but to learn the one true multi-dimensional meaning, and then to see some of the limitless implications and applications from that truth.



A question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the text, or a question the reader would like to ask the writer of the passage or the Lord. Did these verses raise any questions as you read? You might stumble over a word or verse, or a connection to another part of the Bible, or a particular theological point.

With every question you ask, try and answer your own question before going to others for help. Some of the deepest, most lasting learning we do comes when we press ourselves to search the Bible for an answer to our own question. The answer might be in the verse we're studying, or in the surrounding chapter or book, or God may bring to mind a verse or verses elsewhere in the Bible. Stop, pray, ask, and do your best. *Then*, turn to others (whether commentaries or other members of your group) for another perspective.



An arrow indicates a personal application for our lives. Identify and commit to something you sense the Spirit is leading you to do in obedience to this text. Make it specific enough that you can do it this week and make it personal enough that you yourself can do it (and not someone else).

A lot of Bible study, both privately and in a group, falls short of applying the text to our personal lives. One of the great things about studying the Bible in a group is that there's built-in accountability. If you talk out loud with others through steps to take toward greater obedience, you have other people around you to follow up and ask you how those particular things are going.

Arrow (Example): When I do my personal Bible reading, I am going to regularly ask if God might be 1) teaching me something, 2) telling me to stop doing something I am doing, 3)

correcting some wrong thinking or behavior, or 4) preparing me to live more effectively for him.

Closing

Remind the group of the Project 15:25 mission partner for the week and ways they can help. Perhaps your COB as a whole wants to join together to support the ministry.

Check in if you haven't already done so and ask for any prayer requests. Encourage group members to write down these requests and follow up as necessary. Close with prayer.