

Small Group Guide – Week 3

GOD WHO SUSTAINS

The Church at Brook Hills,

January 18-24, 2010

Genesis 37-50

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Encourage learners to share about a time when they endured a difficult circumstance and later saw a divine purpose in it. Ask: **How did this experience affect how you viewed other difficulties in your life?**

Explain that today we will look at how God is in control of even the most difficult circumstances in our lives.

Option 2

Invite learners to describe events that make people question God and His goodness in their lives. Ask: **Why is it easy to question God in these situations?**

Explain that today we will look at how God is intimately involved in our lives, even when it seems otherwise.

Review the Message . . .

Story Review

Divide the passage in Genesis into three sections by chapters 37-39, 40-45, and 46-50, and enlist three learners (or more) to summarize the events of Joseph's life in these chapters.

Discussion

- Describe Joseph's actions throughout all of these events?
- Did Joseph do anything to deserve or cause His circumstances—good or bad?
- Describe God's role in Joseph's life. How is God's character revealed through these events?

Application . . .

- Why do we desire to place blame on someone for our circumstances?
- Why are we quick to believe we can work for and deserve good situations but do not deserve unfavorable circumstances?

- How and why do we tend to believe that our obedience to God should result in our safety and comfort?
- Why is our attitude toward God often negative when bad things happen? How should the story of Joseph change our attitude toward God about bad things that happen to us?

God is sovereign over . . .

- **People**
 - **His purpose was not dependent on people.**
 - **His purpose was not deterred by people.**

Discussion

- Read Genesis 39:2-6 and 21-23. Looking at Joseph's time in Potiphar's house and in prison, did God rely on these men or Joseph's abilities to make him successful in those places?
- How does Joseph's complete lack of control over his life reflect God's ultimate control?
- How did Joseph's faithfulness allow him to be usable by God?
- How did the cupbearer's forgetfulness in Gen. 40:23 affect Joseph's chances to get out of prison? Why is God's independence of him important?
- Think about the decisions of Joseph's brothers, Potiphar's wife, and Potiphar. How do their actions seem to contradict God's plans?
- How does God's independence of people illustrate His sovereignty?

Application . . .

- How does it make you feel to know that God is not dependent on you for His purposes?
- How does it make you feel to know that you or anyone else cannot keep God's purposes from being accomplished?
- How can we allow Him to change our hearts so that we become a godly vessel for His purpose?
- How does our belief in these truths affect how we view the world around us, and our own life at this very moment?

- **Circumstances**
 - **God guided the details to sustain Joseph through His protection and through His presence.**
 - **God used and caused events to accomplish His purpose.**

Discussion

- Enlist two learners to read Genesis 37:26-27 and 39:20. How did God protect Joseph's life in these situations?
- How was the outcome seemingly horrible and unfair to Joseph even though his life was spared? How did God sustain Joseph in these circumstances?
- Enlist three learners to read Genesis 37:36, 39:20, and 41:15-16. How did God direct what appears to be coincidence in these situations?
- How did Joseph's locations put him in the right places at the right times for God to work through him?

Application . . .

- In what ways is it easy to miss God's work in our circumstances?
- What is most often our attitude toward God when our plans are "messed up"?
- How does this illustrate our desire to control our lives and tendency to forget God in our plans and dreams?
- How do our attitudes toward our own plans often interfere with our praise of God for His work in our lives?
- What is our responsibility in being active toward what we believe to be God's plan for our lives?
- How should we view our circumstances when our plans don't turn out like we expected?

- **Outcome**

- **God directed the final outcome.**
- **God directed all the details for His purpose.**

Discussion

- Enlist a learner to read Genesis 45:9-11. What was God's purpose in Joseph's life?
- Remind learners that Joseph's family was part of God's chosen people and the beginnings of the nation of Israel.
- Name all of the minute details that God controlled to get Joseph to the place of preserving his family.
- How did God use the sin of Joseph's brothers to bring about their ultimate redemption?
- How is God's love for His people evident through His actions?

Application . . .

- Why is it easier to see God's hand in our lives as we look to the past?
- Knowing God has His hand in our lives at all times, why is it difficult to trust His sovereignty in our present situations?
- How is our trust in Him reflected in our faithfulness at all points in our lives?
- How did God use the sin of wicked people to bring about your ultimate redemption?

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- How does God's direction of our lives for His purposes give us hope?