

# The Gospel Project® for Adults

## Daily Discipleship Guide CSB, Unit 4, Session 2

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### God Redeems Adversity

Session in a Sentence: God works providentially in our lives, even through adversity, for His glory and our good.

Main Passages: Genesis 39:1-6a,19-23; 41:14-16

German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a smart, independent thinker who stood apart from his peers and true to his Christian convictions. Bonhoeffer's father, a physician and professor, had taught his son to live his beliefs, not merely hold them. This lesson greatly influenced Bonhoeffer's life, but it also led indirectly to his death by Germany's fascist government. They were able to silence his voice, yet Bonhoeffer's conviction continues to speak to the Christian world today.

What thoughts and feelings do you have about Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life story?

### Group Time

#### Point 1: God is present even when we seem alone (Gen. 39:1-6a).

**1** Now Joseph had been taken to Egypt. An Egyptian named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guards, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. **2** The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, serving in the household of his Egyptian master. **3** When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful, **4** Joseph found favor with his master and became his personal attendant. Potiphar also put him in charge of his household and placed all that he owned under his authority. **5** From the time that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph. The LORD's blessing was on all that he owned, in his house and in his fields. **6a** He left all that he owned under Joseph's authority; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

What do you think Joseph might have thought and felt during his journey to Egypt and purchase by Potiphar?

Joseph's situation was difficult: betrayed by his brothers, torn from his family, and taken to a foreign land as a slave. And to make matters worse, his brothers lied to their father, making it look as if Joseph were dead. So he was alone, and no one was going to look for him. But he was never really alone: "The LORD was with Joseph" (39:2).

**God Is Omnipresent:** God's omnipresence refers to His presence in all time and all places simultaneously. Because God exists apart from and outside of time and space, He is \_\_\_\_\_ by their constraints. God's omnipresence is a \_\_\_\_\_ for sin, and a source of great \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for believers.

When have you experienced God's presence in adversity or loneliness?

#### Point 2: God is kind even when our situation is difficult (Gen. 39:19-23).

**19** When his master heard the story his wife told him—"These are the things your slave did to me"—he was furious **20** and had him thrown into prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. So Joseph was there in prison.

**21** But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him. He granted him favor with the prison warden. **22** The warden put all the prisoners who were in the prison under Joseph's authority, and he was responsible for everything that was done there. **23** The warden did not bother with anything under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him, and the LORD made everything that he did successful.

Joseph was wronged for a second time because of what he wore, but he still did not turn from God, nor God from him. First, his brothers were enraged by the coat of many colors their father had given him. Now Potiphar became furious because of Joseph's

garment his wife gave to him along with her sordid story. For doing the right thing and fleeing a tempting and dangerous situation, he was thrown into prison (39:6b-20).

1. How do you tend to respond when you are treated unjustly?
2. How do you tend to respond when you see injustice toward others?

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Curse God / Seek Vengeance

Indifferent

Trust God for Justice

Though Joseph was treated unjustly and his circumstances declined, his hope in God did not waver. Joseph knew that the situation he was facing was not good but God always is. Adversity and injustice were a constant refrain in Joseph's life for many years in Egypt, but so were God's presence and kindness. And so, whether in Potiphar's house or in prison, he continued serving God, accepting God's kindness to him and extending it to others, and God made everything Joseph did successful.

### Voices from Church History

"Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain; But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul." 1

—Negro spiritual

### Point 3: God is at work even when we can't see it (Gen. 41:14-16).

**14 Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon. He shaved, changed his clothes, and went to Pharaoh.**

**15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said about you that you can hear a dream and interpret it."**

**16 "I am not able to," Joseph answered Pharaoh. "It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."**

Joseph found favor with God and gave God the glory whether he was in the pit or the palace. Likewise, as believers, we must stand firm on the Word of God and always seek God's glory. But we have an advantage over Joseph: We have heard the message about Jesus Christ as Savior and know the end of the story (see Rom. 8:28). Consequently, we are to submit to God's plan even when we cannot understand it. We are to believe in the God of the promise even when it is difficult to believe in the promise of God.

What are some reasons we might find it difficult to give God the credit due Him for His wisdom and power?

It was difficult for Joseph to see God at work during each link in the chain of events that led to his exaltation in Egypt, but without each one, Joseph never would have stood before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. With no interpretation, there would have been no preparation and people would have died from starvation, including Joseph's family. The promises of a Messiah would have come to naught but for God's providential work in the pains and trials of Joseph's life. Like Joseph, we might not be able to see God's plan at any given moment, but we will see it one day.

**God's Providence:** *Providence* refers to God's \_\_\_\_\_ work and involvement in His creation. Christians believe in God's personal and direct intervention in the world—as opposed to a hands-off approach to creation—that affects not only the \_\_\_\_\_ but also the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ within human history.

## My Mission

Because God is faithful and sovereign, we live with full trust in Him, knowing that even when obstacles appear to thwart His mission, He may use those very obstacles as part of His plan to bring glory to His Son.

- **How will you respond when it is difficult to feel God's presence or trust in Him and His promises?**
- **What are some ways we can encourage one another to continue trusting in God and His promises in difficult circumstances?**
- **How can you begin to view obstacles in your life as opportunities to share Christ with others?**

# Daily Study

## Day 1: Read Genesis 39:1-6a

We shouldn't read past verse 1 too quickly. Instead, we should sit with it for a few minutes and consider how what it is telling us impacted Joseph. Before, he had lived with his people in his land. But now, because of his brothers' betrayal, he was a slave in a distant land with a people not his own. We need to appreciate the loneliness Joseph must have felt because when we do, we can see the beauty of verse 2: "The LORD was with Joseph."

We all go through times when we feel alone, but the amazing promise of Scripture is that as followers of Christ, we are never alone (Matt. 28:20). Our reality is greater than our feelings.

- We may feel like Joseph did because we too are away from our families. But the truth is that we are not alone. God is with us.
- We may feel like Joseph did because those we care about—those we thought loved us—betrayed us and wounded us deeply. But the truth is that we are not alone. God is with us.
- We may feel like Joseph did because we cannot relate to anyone around us. But the truth is that we are not alone. God is with us.

This is the promise of Christ we must allow the Holy Spirit to preach to our minds and hearts day by day. If that was all God did for us, it would be more than enough. But He did more. He has also given us the church, another family with ties deeper than bloodline, so that we might have community. God, in His triune nature, is a relational God. Relationships matter to Him. He is anti-alone. This is why He has given Himself to us, and this is why He has given us the church—so we are never alone.

How are you fostering meaningful, deep relationships within your church? What additional steps can you take?

### Voices from Church History

"The world's fierce winds are blowing, Temptation's sharp and keen, I have a peace in knowing My Savior stands between—He stands to shield me from danger, When earthly friends are gone, He promised never to leave me, Never to leave me alone." 2

—Anonymous (19th century)

## Day 2: Read Genesis 39:6b-23

Genesis 38 focused on Judah, one of Joseph's many brothers. Some time after his wife died (v. 12), he saw a veiled woman he thought was a prostitute and went over to her and asked to sleep with her (v. 16). This account of Judah seeking out a prostitute is contrasted with Joseph in Potiphar's house in the next chapter.

Joseph's obedience to God eventually cost him greatly. Potiphar's wife, weary of being scorned, accused Joseph of attempting to rape her, and Potiphar had his prized slave thrown into prison. Because of sin, our hearts are hard-wired toward moralism. We believe that if we do good things, if we obey God, then we will experience "good" things in life, that He will reward us. Yet like Joseph, we may suffer *because* of our obedience. As we will see, God was in the middle of that suffering. It didn't *seem* good to Joseph. It didn't *feel* good to him. But it *was* good. And God will be in the middle of our suffering too. But as we suffer for obeying Him, we can know that God is working through it and that we are following in the footsteps of Christ who suffered in His obedience to the Father.

How do you know when it is time to speak up about an injustice done to you or to remain silent?

## Day 3: Read Genesis 40:1-23

God had given Joseph the gift of a couple of prophetic dreams in his youth, and He also gave him the ability to interpret dreams. Surely God had given the cupbearer his dream to be favorably interpreted by Joseph for a reason. And yet, the chapter closes this way: "The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him."

God was using all of these letdowns in Joseph's life for a greater good. All of his pain and adversity would be redeemed one day. As we strive to be faithful to God, we need to remember this too. We might experience adversity because of our faithful obedience but never see God bring good from it, at least in this life. God has promised to work all things together for His glory

and our good, but He has *not* promised that we will see how he does that. As God's people, then, we must seek to serve God and trust Him, whether we see gain and reward or not.

How has God brought good from adversity you have experienced because of your obedience? How have you experienced adversity without seeing good yet come from it?

## **Day 4: Read Genesis 41:1-36**

Two years had passed since what seemed to be Joseph's greatest opportunity to be released from prison. The cupbearer had forgotten Joseph. But then one day, Joseph was summoned from prison. The cupbearer finally remembered his promise, and Joseph was to appear before Pharaoh to interpret two dreams he had about fat cows and skinny cows, about good grains and scorched grains.

Joseph then shared God's interpretation of the dreams: seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of lack. Joseph did what Pharaoh asked of him. But then he continued.

In a bold move, the Hebrew slave offered counsel to the king of Egypt. As followers of Christ, our role is similar to Joseph's—we are to be prophetic voices warning people of the coming judgment. But at the same time, we are called on to share the answer—the saving gospel of Jesus—that people need to trust in to be delivered from that judgment.

What opportunities to share the gospel with boldness has God given you that you need to take advantage of? What will you do this week?

## **Day 5: Read Genesis 41:37-57**

When we were first introduced to Joseph in Genesis 37, he wore a robe of many colors. But that robe was stripped off of him (37:23). After more than a decade of adversity, with many days seeming more bitter than the ones before, Joseph was clothed once more in fine linen garments (41:42). His story was coming full circle. God's providence was coming into focus. Joseph's garment marking royalty within a family had given way to a garment marking royalty in one of the world's most powerful nations of his day. God was restoring Joseph, not just to a context as good as before but even better.

This is the heartbeat of God. We see it here with Joseph. We saw it with Job. Most notably, we will see it again when Christ returns and makes all things new. Christ's work of reconciliation will not only purge every last semblance of the fall, He will not only return creation to its condition before the fall, He will usher in His kingdom where everything is even better than before. This is our hope—a hope greater than Joseph ever dared dream—our hope in Christ.

When you think of the new heavens and new earth, what excites you the most? Why?

## **Encourage One Another**

*Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.*

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God is present even when we seem alone (Gen. 39:1-6a).
- God is kind even when our situation is difficult (Gen. 39:19-23).
- God is at work even when we can't see it (Gen. 41:14-16).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

What are some ways God's presence and blessing in your life have seemed evident to you this week? What do you plan to do when you do not sense God's presence?

How does the gospel free us and others from living in a way that depends on the quality of our circumstances?

## References

1. "There Is a Balm in Gilead," Hymnary.org, accessed April 30, 2018, [https://hymnary.org/text/sometimes\\_i\\_feel\\_discouraged\\_spiritual](https://hymnary.org/text/sometimes_i_feel_discouraged_spiritual).
2. "Never Alone," Hymnary.org, accessed May 16, 2018, [https://hymnary.org/text/ive\\_seen\\_the\\_lightning\\_flashing](https://hymnary.org/text/ive_seen_the_lightning_flashing).