

3. God Weaves Together Good from Evil

Genesis 50:19-21 NLT - 19 But Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. 21 No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children." So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

Joseph's perspective had clearly changed when he told his brothers that God intended their actions for good. God is able to take the evil man does and make good come from it.

1 chashab- to fabricate or weave, to purpose

Romans 8:28 NLT - 28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Just as God brought Joseph through suffering so that he could save the lives of many, He also brought Jesus through suffering and death so that we could live. God takes evil and weaves it together for good.

Have you seen God take evil or suffering and use it for good? Is there someone you need to pray for and encourage who is going through hard times right now, but needs to know the good news that God can turn the worst situations around and bring good from them?

WRAP-UP

Joseph's life probably didn't follow a path he expected or wanted. But he kept his focus on God and trusted that God was controlling his life. When faced with an opportunity to forgive those who hurt him, Joseph was slow to respond, but when he did forgive, he was able to experience joy and realize the good God was bringing about from the pain and suffering of his life.

Memory Verse

You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good...

Genesis 50:20a NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- If you are estranged from anyone who has caused you pain, ask God for an opportunity to begin reconciliation.

"Have a Greater Perspective"

"2020" #3

INTRODUCTION

Part of having clear vision is understanding what influences your perspective. What are the filters or angles from which you view your life? All of us have scenes, chapters, defining moments we pass through over the course of time. But whether these are viewed as good or evil will be a matter of our perspective, a matter of where we fix our focus. Joseph recognized the Lord was with him in all circumstances. How do we keep that perspective in our own lives?

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)



Which do you see first in the image, faces or vases?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Making it One Day at a Time

Joseph faced more than his share of challenges along the route to ruling Egypt. He was betrayed by his brothers, made a slave, and imprisoned. Certainly, this wasn't what he pictured when God gave him a dream that his family would bow before him. But even after he made it through those trials and ruled during the time of bounty in Egypt, he had to deal with his feelings of what he had been through and why God had chosen to bring him down this path.

Genesis 41:51-52 NLT - 51 Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, "God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father's family." 52 Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, "God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief."

What do the names of his two sons reveal about Joseph's perspective on his life? At this point, what was his perspective on his family (v. 51)? What feelings was he equating with Egypt (v. 52)?

Sometimes we try to forget or ignore a source of our pain and suffering. It appears Joseph wanted to erase everyone in his family

from his memory. Joseph's perspective was limited. He didn't see the whole story – God was going to bring restoration between Joseph and his brothers.

To move beyond just “making it one day at a time” you may need to change your perspective from – “Forget the past” to “God's not finished yet.”

Are there some painful areas of your past that are yet unresolved? God may not be finished with that chapter of your life. Have you, like Joseph, chosen to forget or ignore someone who caused you grief or pain? If so, you may want to acknowledge that to your group and pray that those with unresolved pain will allow God to continue to work in that relationship.

2. Forgiveness Breaks the Cycle

Genesis 42:1-3 NLT - 1 When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you standing around looking at one another? 2 I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we'll die." 3 So Joseph's ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain.

God had set His plan in motion for Joseph and his brothers to be reconciled. But it didn't happen immediately. Joseph took his time getting to a place of forgiveness.

Genesis 42:7, 17 NLT - 7 Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where are you from?" he demanded. "From the land of Canaan," they replied. "We have come to buy food." ... 17 So Joseph put them all in prison for three days.

Joseph seems bent on repaying his brothers for the pain they inflicted on him.

Genesis 43:18 NLT - 18 The brothers were terrified when they saw that they were being taken into Joseph's house. "It's because of the money someone put in our sacks last time we were here," they said. "He plans to pretend that we stole it. Then he will seize us, make us slaves, and take our donkeys."

Genesis 42:21, 24 NLT - 21 Speaking among themselves, they said, "Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn't listen. That's why we're in this trouble." ... 24 Now he turned away from them and began to weep. When he regained his composure, he spoke to them again. Then he chose Simeon from among them and had him tied up right before their eyes.

Genesis 45:2 NLT - 2 Then he [Joseph] broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh's palace.

Joseph was confined in a pit, sold as a slave, falsely accused and put in prison. As governor of Egypt he now had the power to do the same to his brothers. The brothers had been held 3 days in confinement, falsely accused as spies and thieves, threatened with slavery (Gen 44:9), and Simeon was forgotten in prison when the brothers returned to Canaan.

What do you think Joseph hoped to gain when he did this to his brothers? Do you think Joseph found satisfaction by doing so (Gen 45:2)? Is there anyone you've held a grudge against that God is urging you to forgive? Forgiveness is difficult, but the cycle of pain and suffering is only broken when you choose to forgive.

It appears in attempting to hurt his brothers, Joseph caused himself greater pain (Gen 45:2). It wasn't until he forgave his brothers that Joseph experienced joy.

Genesis 45:14-15 NLT - 14 Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same. 15 Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

Our natural reaction when we are wronged is probably to retaliate. But unforgiveness causes us greater pain. Mark 11:25 tells us that by holding a grudge we prevent the Father from forgiving us. When Joseph acknowledged that God had planned his life's path, his perspective changed.