

Series: Joseph

Scripture and Background Information for November 6-12.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

The vast majority of our stories get lived in the gap between our dreams and our destiny. Whichever direction we believe our story is trending, very few of us ever feel like we're "living the dream" for very long. If God has a dream for our life, why does so little of our life feel like we're living inside it? What do we do when our dreams are deferred, or detoured, or... dead? During this series we'll look at a man whose extraordinary story begins with a dream and ends with a destiny that looks exactly like the dream... and nothing like it at all. We'll discover what to expect from our God-sized dreams, specific ways to keep them on track, and how to live when our dreams feel more like a nightmare. Ultimately we'll discover that with every twist, turn, and test of the dream, there is a Dream Weaver we can trust. Even (maybe especially) when He is most difficult to see.

Background for Genesis 50:15-19:

In Genesis 42-45 we see Joseph encounter his brothers as they come to Egypt to buy grain during the famine. In God's providence, they stand before Joseph and don't recognize him, while Joseph recognizes them. Joseph pursues reconciliation with them and ultimately the family is all united together along with Jacob in Egypt. Despite all that Joseph had experienced and suffering he had endured, when faced with the chance to get even with his brothers, he instead seeks something higher and greater, reconciliation. When we think about the dreams we have and the tests to those dreams, the relational test is one of the most difficult. In Genesis 50, we find the family together shortly after Jacob (Joseph's father) has died. Once again, Joseph is put to the test as the brothers worry that perhaps now Joseph will seek vengeance for what they had done for them. Instead, Joseph affirms God's hand at work in his circumstances and reminds us that the relationship test isn't a one time challenge, but ongoing. God's invitation to us is to pursue reconciliation with others not once, but for a lifetime. In doing so we are able to be his instruments, showing and telling of His goodness by the way we live and treat those who have harmed us.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. As we see Joseph's example, what do you find most striking about the way he receives his brothers? How is his example challenging and encouraging to you personally?
2. Between the time Joseph encountered his brothers again in Egypt until the passage in Genesis 50 would have been several years and still his brothers worried that he would seek vengeance. This is such a great reminder that forgiveness and reconciliation are not one time decisions, but a consistent test to choose unity and forgiveness over bitterness and payback. What do we lose if we choose to go back on initial forgiveness or reconciliation?
3. Here in Genesis 50 Joseph affirms God's providence at work behind the evil his brothers had done to him. Are there moments or experiences in your life where you could also see brokenness at work that God brought some good from?
4. When you think about the relational test you may have encountered, what makes it so challenging in your mind?