



GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

The Church of the Resurrection – Weekly Guide

July 10, 2016 *Joseph and the Dreamcoat*

Scripture: Genesis 37:2b-4

Joseph was 17 years old and tended the flock with his brothers. While he was helping the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, Joseph told their father unflattering things about them. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born when Jacob was old. Jacob had made for him a long robe. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him and couldn't even talk nicely to him.

"The story of a boy whose dream came true"

MONDAY 7.11.16 Genesis 30:22-24, 37:1-36, 39:1-23

(Joseph's story of is one of the most readable, entertaining, and moving stories in the Bible. Read the first part quickly today, the way you'd read a short story. We will look at various parts of the story in more detail the rest of this week.)

Joseph's story came very early in Israel's history. Abraham was Joseph's great-grandfather, so he arrived only four generations into Genesis' epic story. Jacob made some serious mistakes as a father, and relations between Joseph and his brothers were far more strained than any family would wish. But after a rocky start, we also see that Joseph showed strong character and resilience.

✚ Genesis said when Jacob, Joseph's father, was born, he came out "gripping Esau's [his twin brother's] heel" (cf. Genesis 25:26). To "grasp the heel" was a Hebrew expression for a devious, manipulative person. (We still call people like that "heels"!) By Genesis 32:22-32, Jacob had grown enough that he wrestled with God all night, and received a profound blessing. What does it say about God that flawed Jacob could be a chosen patriarch, while God's presence kept nudging him lifelong to grow beyond his flaws?

✚ In Genesis 37 and 39, we see that Joseph moved from being a rather spoiled, arrogant kid to a slave who rose above his tragic circumstances and won the trust of his Egyptian masters. How might Joseph have been tempted to spend his days in Egypt sulking and feeling depressed? What do you believe kept him from doing that?

Prayer: Lord God, you call me to be part of this epic story you are writing in human history. Please work in my life, leading me beyond my flaws, as you did in the lives of Jacob and Joseph so long ago. Amen.

"Could it be that I was born for higher things than you?"

TUESDAY 7.12.16 Genesis 37:2-11

Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife (cf. Genesis 29:16-30), one reason he favored Joseph, Rachel's first son. The "dreamcoat" showed Joseph's favored status. (The Hebrew text may be about the coat's length, but the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, said it was "many-colored"). Family therapists today know that being a "chosen child" like Joseph often skews emotional growth and relationships. Joseph's strutting misuse of his ability to

receive and interpret dreams eventually upset even Jacob.

✚ Jacob should have known the danger of parental bias from his own parents (cf. Genesis 25:28), but he didn't. Based on your growing up years, is it easier for you to identify with young Joseph, enjoying his privileged status, or with his brothers, feeling undervalued and ignored? How have you found that God, the source of what the Bible called "steadfast love," can be a "fixed point" helping you grow beyond the wounds family dynamics can leave on any of us?

✚ It's so easy (and such fun!) to feel superior to others, as Joseph did. But our faith teaches us that all lives have value and dignity, and calls us to honor that. Are you able to see clearly the value in your own gifts and temperament, and in those of others? Choose one thing you will do this week to show respect to a person to whom you are tempted to feel superior.

Prayer: Lord God, whether as a parent, a sibling, a grandparent or in any other capacity, help me to honor and value each one of your children I have a chance to influence. Help me find healing in you for any wounds I carry from earlier life experiences. Amen.

"The dreamer has to go"

WEDNESDAY 7.13.16 Genesis 37:12-20

As the lyrics in *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat* say, "Jacob could not see the danger." He cluelessly sent Joseph to visit his brothers, far from home. They acted on their outrage at the way their brother lorded it over them and their father undervalued them. In a reflection of the primitive, violent ethics they saw in the cultures around them, they wanted to kill Joseph.

✚ Put yourself in Joseph's shoes. Life has been easy. There are stresses between you and your brothers, but they're still your brothers and you can trust them, right? Wrong. Those closest to him betrayed Joseph terribly. Have you ever felt the pain of betrayal? Did that experience tend to weaken or strengthen your faith? In what ways has surviving that painful time helped you grow stronger?

✚ In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder.... The simple moral fact is that words kill" (Matthew 5:21-22, *The Message*). We're more refined than Joseph's brothers (usually), but we face the same inward feelings and urges. Whose reputation (if not their life) have you wished you could kill? What steps might you take to correct any damage you caused them?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, people betrayed you, but you did not allow that to knock you off course. Help me find in your love the source of strength to move beyond any pain I experience from others. Amen.

"Poor, poor Joseph"

THURSDAY 7.14.16 Genesis 37:21-36

Older brothers Reuben and Judah talked the brothers out of killing Joseph outright. Instead, they sold Joseph to traders going to Egypt. Their choice was only slightly better—as the traders took Joseph away, the brothers pretty clearly assumed they would never see him again. They dipped Joseph's distinctive coat in animal blood, and tricked Jacob (something he'd often done to others). He believed his favorite was dead, and mourned the loss bitterly.

- ✚ Reuben and Judah had enough moral courage to stand up to their brothers and say, “No, don’t kill Joseph. We don’t want blood on our hands.” On the other hand, they didn’t have the courage to say, “Dad, Joseph isn’t dead. We sold him to traders going to Egypt.” How morally courageous are you? In what areas do you want to become braver?
- ✚ To the brothers’ limited viewpoint, slavery in Egypt was virtually a death sentence. But at least they didn’t do something irreversible—without realizing it, they left room for God to work. The apostle Paul wrote, “Don’t try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath. It is written, ‘Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord’” (Romans 12:19). How can you (perhaps more purposely than Joseph’s brothers) live out that wise counsel?

Prayer: O God, free me from the desire for revenge on others. Instead, give me the moral courage to stand for what is right, especially on behalf of those who are powerless. Amen.

“Potiphar could see that Joseph was a cut above the others”

FRIDAY 7.15.16 Genesis 39:1-6

A spoiled son of privilege became a slave in a foreign land. How would a story like that play out? Somewhat surprisingly, instead of sinking into depression and bitterness, Joseph became a man of such capable integrity that Potiphar, his Egyptian master, “put everything he had under Joseph’s supervision.” But Genesis didn’t just say, “Joseph was amazing.” Instead, the historian said, “The Lord was with Joseph.”

- ✚ When Joseph became a slave in Egypt, all hope for a productive life must have seemed lost. Instead, as he rose to trust and influence in Potiphar’s household, Genesis said God’s power was at work. The apostle Paul exclaimed: “God’s riches, wisdom, and knowledge are so deep! They are as mysterious as his judgments, and they are as hard to track as his paths!” (Romans 11:33) When has God carried you through a painful or challenging time? When have you seen God work in ways mysterious to human wisdom?
- ✚ Partly because it’s told in broad brushstrokes, this story makes Joseph’s rise sound almost effortless. Do you think that was the case, or did Joseph need to work hard and wisely in order to make his Egyptian master’s household run smoothly? Does God’s blessing relieve us of the need for effort and wisdom, or does God tend to work through those qualities in our lives?

Prayer: Lord God, in whatever I do, at work, in school, in my household, I ask for your presence to be with me and to guide me in making my efforts effective in serving and blessing others. Amen.

“Joseph, I’ll see you rot in jail”

SATURDAY 7.16.16 Genesis 39:7-23

Joseph greatly impressed Potiphar, his Egyptian master. Unfortunately, he also greatly impressed Potiphar’s wife. It must have been clear to Joseph, a Hebrew slave, that this woman could cause him problems. Nevertheless, he refused to betray his master’s trust, and rebuffed her advances. Doing the right thing left her holding the garment he abandoned to escape her. She created a “she said-he said” situation, Potiphar had little choice but to believe his wife (even if he didn’t believe her), and sent Joseph to prison. Despite the bad turn of events, Joseph also greatly impressed the jail’s commander.

- ✚ Joseph, knowing how much Potiphar trusted him, might well have gotten some sensual

pleasure and kept his position at the head of the household. But he refused to betray Potiphar's trust, and it cost him—outwardly, at least. Have you ever chosen not to do something wrong, even though you could “get away with it”? As you look back, are you glad you preserved your integrity or not? For what reasons? We may see Joseph as the “hero” of this story, but Genesis had a different viewpoint: “The Lord was with Joseph and remained loyal to him.” How much do you trust that the Lord remains loyal to you in all circumstances?

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for your steadfast love. Thank you that when I am faithful, and even when I wander away, you are always loyal to me and waiting to direct my life's path. Amen.

Family Activity: Even though Joseph was not dead, his brothers tricked his father Jacob into believing that he'd died. Jacob was sad and could not be comforted. Has anyone died who was special in your lives? What brought you comfort? Think of people in your neighborhood, church, or school who may be sad right now. What can your family do to bring them comfort? Often a handmade card with a simple phrase such as “We are praying for you,” or “We love you and so does God” will bring comfort. You might also consider preparing a meal for the family, sending flowers or listening to them. Ask God to help your family comfort others in times of need.