

JOSEPH * the dreamer *

Bible reading guide:

Over the next five weeks we'll study Joseph and the kind of character we need to develop to help make our God-given dreams a reality.

Our Joseph story begins in Genesis 37 and ends with chapter 50.

READ chapters 37-39.

scripture memory: 2 Timothy 1:6-7

* STEP ONE

(If working as a group, you may want to give group members time to do this before you meet or allow sufficient time for reflection when you meet.)

In this weekend's message, we discovered that dreams are one way God speaks to us -- through real dreams, or perhaps dreams found in adventure, passion, conviction, or need.

? TAKE time to consider each of these questions.

WRITE your response and thoughts in your journal:

What's your dream? Do you have a dream? If not, did you have one but gave up on it? Would you consider your dream a God-ordained or God-worthy dream? Why or why not? Have you allowed your dreams to grow, adapt, mature, and perhaps look different from when you first set out? Why or why not? What struggles or setbacks have you faced in pursuit of your dreams? Have you been able to maintain passion for your dreams despite the struggles? Have you given up because circumstances seem to say your dream has been lost?

READ aloud:

"Dreams. They will not be what you expect but something else and that is ok.

It... may even be something better but to some degree they will be different.

Healthy dreams are growing, adapting and maturing.

Let your passion grow up through the struggle, but not be lost.

Hold the detail loosely but the heart unflinchingly.

But you won't find God's realized best or anything else unless you dream.

So, dream." (excerpt from Paul Berthiaume's journal)

PRAY as a group:

Heavenly Father, You are the author of all dreams worthy of pursuit.

Help us recognize and hold fast to those dreams that are given by You.

Forgive us when we lose faith so easily. Forgive us when we turn our backs on our dreams. Help us to dream.

* STEP TWO

LOOK at the dreams God gave the 17 year-old Joseph in Genesis 37:5-7 and Genesis 37:9-10. We may be tempted to see Joseph as a favored child who arrogantly shares his dreams with those he'll one day rule over. Passion for one's dream may be mistaken for pride and arrogance, especially by those who have given up on their dreams.

READ what happens next in Genesis 37:23-28.

"Thank God for being able to see all that you have not yet been.

You have had the vision, but you are not yet to the reality of it.

It is in the valley that most of us turn back.

We are not quite prepared for the bumps and bruises that must come if we are going to be turned into the shape of the vision...

Whether we will let the vision be turned

into actual character depends on us, not God." Oswald Chambers

? DISCUSS the following as a group:

What might "turning back on his dreams" have looked like for Joseph?

Do you think his age had something to do with his unwillingness to turn his back on his dreams? If so, what can we learn from Joseph's determination as we get older?

He had no control over the setbacks/struggles he faced.

Over what did he have control?

* STEP THREE

Whether Joseph's dreams would be realized had very little to do with his circumstances. It had everything to do with his attitude during those struggles/setbacks and whether he'd allow his life to be shaped and transformed by/through them. Although Joseph repeatedly found himself in the "valley," he didn't turn back on his dreams. **What did he do instead?**

FOCUS ~ *Joseph focused on God, what was right, and on whatever task was before him.*

ATTITUDE ~ *Joseph maintained hope and a positive attitude when he had every excuse not to. He avoided the trap of bitterness, the trap of excuses, and the trap of self-pity.*

REFLECTION ~ *Some of his reflection was forced, as he had time to think while in prison. But Joseph was also intentional in his reflection (Genesis 39:8-9).*

AWARENESS ~ *Joseph understood that God was with Him. Despite what others might do and the struggles he'd need to overcome, he knew God maintained authorship of his dreams. READ Genesis 50:19-21.*

GROWTH ~ *Joseph became a person of great character who could live out the dream God gave him.*

LOOK back at the questions about your own dreams from STEP ONE.

TAKE time to listen to the Holy Spirit. WRITE your responses and thoughts.

? Briefly DISCUSS the following questions with your group, then take time this week to REFLECT on them. Let this initial group discussion help you

DISCOVER where to focus your reflection.

CONSIDER: **How have I responded to setbacks and "valleys" in pursuit of my dreams? On what do I focus in regard to my dreams? Do I still have passion for my dreams? If not, what/whom have I allowed to extinguish it? Have I been convinced (by others or myself) that dreams don't come true and dreaming is for the young? Have I (purposefully or otherwise) tried to extinguish someone else's passion for his/her dream?**

CLOSE with this prayer:

Holy Spirit, peel away any disappointment, hurt, or confusion we've allowed to cloud the dreams You've given us. Whisper encouragement to give us hope to dream once again. Forgive us when we turn our focus from You toward other things. Help us discern the paths of bitterness, excuses, and self-pity and forgive us when we stumble onto them. We ask You to reignite Your dreams in and through us. In Jesus' name. Amen.