

JOSEPH

✧ the boy ✧

Bible reading guide:

Continue reading Joseph's story in Genesis chapters 40-42.

scripture memory verse: Galatians 5:22-23

✧ STEP ONE

Every family has its issues - some with more issues than others. Through reflection, we become aware of our family dynamic and the tendencies we have because of it. This can empower and free us to make choices about which behaviors and patterns we want to adopt and which ones we want to reject and grow past.

READ Genesis 27:35-36; 29:25; 34:13, and Genesis 37:31-32; 38:13-16.
Joseph's father was a liar (brothers, too). There was favoritism, jealousy, contempt, and fractured relationships. Family members were victims of violence and they themselves brought violence upon others.

? TAKE time to consider: *What kinds of behaviors and patterns characterize your own family? Which characteristics or behaviors do you want to reject?*

Which characteristics or behaviors would be worthwhile to pursue and nurture?

SHARE one of these with the group.

PRAY the following prayer together as a group:

Holy Spirit, help us to be aware of the patterns and behaviors in our families.

Help us understand our family dynamic in order to learn and grow from it.

Help us to have wisdom to discern what behaviors undermine the development of our character. Build in us the character we need to live the dreams You have for us.

✧ STEP TWO

Snapshots of REUBEN ✧

✧ As firstborn, Reuben should have assumed the role of caregiver and protector of the entire tribe. Although he wanted to (or thought he should) protect Joseph from harm, he didn't have the courage or fortitude to do so. (Genesis 37:21-22, 29-30)

✧ In a self-serving attempt to solidify his own place as the firstborn, he slept with his father's concubine. (Genesis 35:21-22)

✧ Reuben lived with regret, blame, and self-pity. (Genesis 42:22-23)

Snapshots of JUDAH ✧

✧ He looked for shortcuts to get ahead and led his brothers in the decision to sell Joseph. (Genesis 37:26-27)

✧ He dishonored and deceived his daughter-in-law Tamar, by not honoring his promise of his younger son to her in marriage. (Genesis 38:11-14)

✧ He attempted to do what was right but didn't follow through. (Genesis 38:20-23)

✧ When confronted with the truth of his own lack of integrity and dishonesty, Judah was humbled. (Genesis 38:26)

✧ He grew to become mature and a man of sacrifice. (Genesis 43:8-9, 44:18, 32-34)

✧ He became a man of courage, strength, and character. (Genesis 48:8-10)

Snapshots of JOSEPH ✧

✧ He loved and cared for his family. (Genesis 47:11-12)

✧ He was trustworthy and displayed unwavering fortitude in the face of temptation and trying situations. (Genesis 39:7-12)

✧ He displayed discipline and perseverance. (Genesis 39:20-23)

✧ He had an unwavering trust in God. (Genesis 40:8, 41:16)

✧ He served diligently and faithfully as a young boy to his father, as a slave in Potiphar's household, as a prisoner, as an interpreter of dreams, and as a ruler over an entire kingdom.

? Which brother do you most identify with and in what way?

? As a group, CONSIDER and DISCUSS the following:
COMPARE how each brother handled setbacks and difficulties.

What stands out to you about the path each brother takes?

Contrast the two different paths chosen by Reuben and Joseph.

Joseph had every reason to follow in the footsteps of his father and the brothers before him. Being favored by his father could have made him arrogant and selfish. Being despised by his brothers could have caused him to become angry and bitter. Each brother had a choice in the kind of person he'd become and whether he'd be a person of integrity and fortitude. In the same way, we have that choice as well.

Do you agree? Why or why not?

✧ STEP THREE

Joseph embraced character. Again and again he was focused, **not** on his father's praises and treasures, **not** on his brother's jealousy and mistreatment, **not** on the setbacks and injustices he faced, **but rather** on His God and doing what was right in His sight.

? ANSWER and DISCUSS the following questions as a group:

What things are you tempted to focus on when you're discouraged? When you experience success, are you tempted to turn your focus from God onto to yourself or your success? What steps can you take to maintain your focus on God in all circumstances?

READ Galatians 5:22-23.

Individually or as a group, LOOK through the story of Joseph's life in Genesis 37-50. Using scripture verses, GIVE examples of the fruit of the Spirit evidenced in Joseph's character and displayed in his attitude and actions.

Can each fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) be seen in Joseph's character and life? Which other qualities helped him become a person of great character?

? 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: In the midst of your current circumstances (good, bad, or otherwise), *On what/whom am I focusing? What word best describes my attitude?*

What character quality will result from my current focus and attitude?

Is it a quality worthy of pursuit? If so, what can I specifically do to maintain and even strengthen it? If not, what must I do to choose a better direction?

What can I learn from Joseph's life that could help my focus or attitude toward my own family of origin? Is there something I can learn from his life that could help my focus or attitude right now in my current circumstances?

Within community, we can be strengthened, be encouraged, and help one another grow. *With whom can you share the things God is revealing to you? Are you willing to share with him/her and ask him/her to pray for you? What's the next step you'll take this week?*