

## Week 4: Joseph

**Connect:** choose 1 *Connect* question and discuss for 5-7 minutes.

- One word to describe how you are feeling/doing right now.
- Have/are you experienced a major shift in your life situation that at first seems only detrimental? What was/is that like for you?

**Read these passages aloud:**

**Genesis 37:1-8** - Joseph dreams of greatness

**Genesis 37:17b<sup>1</sup>-20; 25-28; 31-36** - Joseph is sold by his brothers

**Genesis 41:14-15; 25-30; 34-45; 53-57** – Joseph’s rise to power in Egypt

**Genesis 42:1-5; 43:1-5; 8-9; 13-15** - Joseph’s brothers go to Egypt

**Genesis 45:1-15**– Joseph reveals himself to his brothers

**Genesis 50:15-21** – Joseph forgives his brothers

**Engage the text as a group:**

1. What do you **observe**?
  - Describe Joseph’s character as the story progresses. What are his brothers like? What’s Jacob like?
  - What is similar about Jacob’s interactions with his sons that you remember from Jacob (his father’s) interactions with his sons (Esau and Jacob)?
2. What **questions** do you have of the text?
  - Where is God at work in the story? In what ways is God named? Not named?
  - What do you think of dreams (when you sleep)? Have they ever been meaningful?
  - Why do you think God allowed for Joseph to be separated so long from his family, sold into slavery?
  - What do you think it was like for Joseph’s brothers all those years knowing what they did to their own little brother?

## Why does Joseph matter?

Joseph’s story is one of deep redemption and restoration in a family and an individual’s life after intense betrayal, decades-long separation, and all its accompanying pain. Joseph’s story is one of hope: hope in the God who is able to bring restoration and goodness and healing out of a situation that just seems impossible.

As Joseph says at the end of Genesis to his brothers, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.” Since the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve’s fall into sin,<sup>2</sup> humankind has had a propensity for self-and-other destruction. Everything is out of kilter—we harm ourselves, we harm each other, we harm our relationship to God, and we harm God’s creation over which we were given to be stewards. But human sin and folly does not ultimately thwart God’s plan of redemption for creation and for humankind.

God uses an arrogant little brother to save his family and entire nations from starvation, while humbling him in the process. The story of Joseph matters because it tells of how God can bring forgiveness and reconciliation to a family divided by favoritism, murderous intent, and separation.

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<sup>1</sup> Start at the second sentence of v.17.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3

### Put this Bible story in one sentence:

“In this story, God\_\_\_\_\_.”

### How does Joseph point us to Jesus?

Just like Joseph, Jesus is the son who would bring salvation to the nations—though now not only from death due to famine, but death due to separation from God. Joseph left his home, was sold for twenty pieces of silver by his brothers’ murderous intent, he was taken to a new place, took on the customs of the land, and ruled for the sake of saving the people.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God became incarnate, leaving heaven to come to earth, becoming human and living with and as one of us to proclaim and bring the kingdom of God powerfully to earth. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver by people with murderous intent, and was tried and killed. But death didn’t conquer him, he rose again. What those who put Jesus to death intended for his harm, God intended for good, to preserve many people.

Jesus Christ brings redemption for us all through his implementation of God the Father’s will, just as Joseph did for pharaoh. Jesus is the ultimate Joseph, but better—he was never arrogant or pompous, instead he humbled himself to death on a cross.<sup>3</sup>

### So What Now?

- What is a situation in your life that has felt impossible?
- What is/was a situation that was difficult to see how it could play out for good?
- Is there an example of something meant for your harm that God worked out for good?
- What is a situation where you have found yourself in an unexpected situation?
- What is something in your life that has humbled you?

### Video:

Watch a video summary of Genesis, now having gone through Hagar, Tamar and Judah, Jacob, and Joseph. (Total 5:05 min.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpbWbyx1008>

### Close in prayer:

*Father God, thank you for your mercies and the way you draw beauty and goodness and reconciliation even out of the most painful and seemingly nonsensical events. Thank you that we can trust you who works all things together for the good of those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who lived, suffered, died, and rose again to make all things new. We worship and adore you. In his name we pray, through the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

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<sup>3</sup> Philippians 2:6-8