

**FALL TRIP**

**DEVOTIONAL BOOK**

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**DEVOTION #1**

**FINDING JOY IN YOUR PAIN**

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| **Please read the passages, write down your thoughts about the questions and share your insights in your small group.** |

**Discuss as a group a time in your life when you experienced pain. How did that pain, whether physical or emotional, affect you? Explain in detail.**

READ **Genesis 37**

During this part of Joseph’s life, a horrible thing happens to him. His brothers – his own family – betray him. They do not simply tease him for being different, get annoyed with him, or settle for calling him mean names behind his back. Joseph’s brothers are so full of jealousy toward their youngest brother that they contemplate killing him! Instead of getting their hands dirty in that way, they decide to sell him into slavery. They kidnap Joseph and force him away from his homeland, his parents, everything that he knows to live in a new country (Egypt). He is taken to a new culture, a new people group, surrounded by a new language… but he does not go as a tourist. No, his brothers sold him AS A SLAVE.

**Have you ever felt betrayed or let down by someone close to you? Explain how you felt:**

**What does it feel like for someone to make a decision about your life that you have no say in? How did you respond to this decision?**

READ **Genesis 39**

THEN, as if things could not get harder for Joseph he is thrown in jail for a crime, a great sin, he did not even commit. Joseph had even RUN AWAY to avoid the temptation of Potiphar’s wife. Yet, despite Joseph’s dedication to avoiding sin, he was still convicted as guilty. Potiphar’s wife was an evil and manipulative woman. There was nothing Joseph could say or do to convince anyone that he was not guilty, even though he had done everything he could to stay away from that evil. Have you ever felt like that? Like no one would take your side or believe what you have to say? It’s not a nice feeling.

AND YET, I want you to notice that both as a slave and a prisoner, Joseph does not pout, he was not lazy, he was not even angry at God. Instead, the Bible says that Joseph knew God was with him and he kept a positive attitude. Joseph not only worked hard, but he did his absolute best in every job he was given. We can see that God blessed him for that!

So here is the big question. Many in Joseph’s position would have given up or been angry at the world. How can we be like Joseph and find joy in our pain? There are a lot of different types of pain… and often the pain that makes us suffer the most is usually not a physical one.

**Would it have helped Joseph to remain angry and resentful at being in Egypt? Why or why not?**

**How did Joseph find joy in his pain?**

**What do you think God expects us to do with our hurts and our pain?**

**What was Joseph’s response to evil and temptations in his life?**

**What kind of hurt, pain, or unfair circumstances do you think are keeping you from finding joy in God right now?**

**List some of the blessing and joys God has placed in your life:**

We all have a lot in common with Joseph. We know hurt, pain, sin, and the unknowns that come with changes in our lives. It is important to remember, like Joseph did, that even in our pain, GOD HAS NOT FORGOTTEN YOU! God understands our pain. Jesus’s death is a powerful example of this. And yet we can choose to live differently, to live joyfully, despite our pain. **Do you live like you believe this?**

**DEVOTION #2**

**FINDING JOY IN YOUR RESPONSIBLIITES**

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| **Please read the passages, write down your thoughts about the questions and share your insights in your small group.** |

READ **Genesis 40 – 41**

In his life, we have seen Joseph went from being his father’s favorite to a servant in a strange land. How would you feel if this happened to you? Joseph did not complain about his situation. He worked hard and took advantage of the opportunity that was before him. He did not just sit around and wait for good things to happen to him, he worked hard for his masters. We saw how while in Potiphar’s home Joseph worked hard as a servant and was given even more responsibility. If we are not responsible in small things, how will we ever manage the greater responsibilities that come with age and growing up. Joseph handled his responsibility well, proved his loyalty and trustworthiness and was promoted.

Later, when he was an innocent prisoner, Joseph still made the most of his time in the prison. He worked to follow God and help people. Joseph still used his gifts and talents for the Lord. When he interprets the Cupbearer and the Baker’s dreams, Joseph says, **“Do not interpretations belong to God?” (Genesis 40:8).** Joseph recognized that any skill or talent he had was given to him by God. This was a great motivator for him to work hard.

When Joseph was promoted to a very high position in the kingdom of Egypt, he still gave credit to God for his successes in keeping up with his responsibilities. He tells Pharaoh – a man who was considered a god among his own people – **“I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.” (Genesis 41:16)**. Joseph once again, recognized that any job or responsibility he had was given to him by God… and that was why he could and would put all his effort and motivation into it.

There are two major things we can learn from this chapter of Joseph’s life.

1. Joseph’s responsibility in the house of his master had prepared him for his responsibility under the King over the nation of Egypt. If he had been lazy or foolish in his master’s house, it is unlikely God or Pharaoh would have seen someone worthy to oversee thousands of people in Egypt. Joseph did not take lightly his job as a servant. In fact, his time in Potiphar’s house, his management of the jail while he was in prison, revealed to others the Spirit of God in Joseph. When Joseph worked it was evident that he was doing the work of God. People could tell that he took his responsibility seriously and that he was not just doing what he wanted to do. He was not selfish and only thinking about himself. He was full of joy in his work and it showed to all those around him.
2. Joseph knew that the approval and a, “good job” from a person (his earthly masters), mattered far less than a, “Good job” from God. A good job from God is everlasting. Joseph could work hard as a slave because he was working for God’s approval. Joseph could find joy in managing the jail as a prisoner because he knew that he was representing God in that prison. And lastly, Joseph could stand confidently before Pharaoh and show how equipped he was to rule and organize a great kingdom because he was working UNDER and FOR the greatest rule of all nations: GOD.

**What does being responsible mean to you?**

**What are some things you are responsible for?**

**Do you manage the responsibility you do have with a joyful attitude? If not, what is the reason for this? Share an example.**

**What is something that sometimes keeps you from showing a joyful attitude in your work and responsibilities?**

To conclude, whether you are doing your math homework, washing dishes to help your mom, or getting paid for doing some work… remember to see these responsibilities as an opportunity to work for God. God blesses those who take their responsibilities seriously and his approval and “Good job,” far outlasts any single man’s praise. Do not work hard just to make people happy. Work hard to make God proud of you. Use your gifts, your talents, your ability to live with a joyful servant’s heart. It is UNKNOWN what kind of responsibility you may have over the years, but every job, every responsibility (wanted or not) is a beautiful way to grow closer to God and find his JOY in a JOB WELL DONE.

**DEVOTION #3**

**FINDING JOY IN FORGIVENESS**

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| **Please read the passages, write down your thoughts about the questions and share your insights in your small group.** |

READ **Genesis 42 – 45**

Joseph was a man who had the right to be bitter and angry about his life and yet he chose to take charge of his heart and feelings and did not let his circumstances control his life.

For example:

* He was hated and mistreated by his brothers.
* He was sold into slavery (by his own family!) and taken from his home country to live in a foreign country
* He went to prison on false charges
* He stayed in prison for years for a crime that he did not commit
* He was forgotten by a fellow prisoner after he had done him a favor and served him well

*These are all “UNKNOWNS” in Joseph’s life that I am sure he never would have planned or expected would happen to him in life.*

When Joseph’s brothers arrive in Egypt he had the chance to get revenge on them, but did not. He could have made them pay for what they did but instead he *took the high road* and chose to forgive them. Yet, Joseph did not only forgive them. Before he revealed himself, the story says that he returned his brothers’ money to their bags after they tried to pay for food! He gave them many gifts and sought to bless them with the wealth and power he had received (power he could have used to hurt them, but chose not to).

Yes, Joseph did test his brothers to see if they still remembered the pain they had caused him. You will also notice that Joseph wept a lot during this part of his story. This is important because it helps us recognize that just because we forgive someone and surrender our pain to God, does not mean that we will never feel hurt or sad. We will still feel sad sometimes, but the beauty is that we can find joy despite our hurt. When Joseph reveals himself to his brother, he is so full of joy and thankfulness. He released his need for justice or revenge and FORGIVES them to the utmost degree. He invites his entire family to come live with him in Egypt so that he can protect and provide for them during the famine.

READ **Genesis 50:15 – 18**

While their father Jacob was still alive, the brothers felt sure that the now powerful Joseph would treat them kindly. However, after their father passed away, they approached Joseph with a lie because they were fearful that he would now get his revenge. Joseph’s brothers did not understand the true meaning of finding joy in forgiveness. Joseph’s reply gives us the most beautiful understanding of what it really looks like.

**Genesis 50:19 – 21**

**“But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, do not be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.”**

Joseph did not just forgive his brothers. Joseph found JOY in FORGIVENESS by seeing that the bad things his brothers did to him… were actually the things ended up saving not only his life, his family’s lives, but also the lives of everyone in Egypt and the surrounding countries. Joseph recognized that by forgiving his brothers, he could see the way that God had transformed TRAGEDY and LOSS into CELEBRATION and GAIN.

Refusing forgiveness and holding onto bitterness and resentment, not only hurts you, but can hurt completely innocent people in your life. Imagine what would have happened to the entire kingdom of Egypt and the surrounding countries if Joseph had refused to forgive his brothers and find joy from God!

**Write down your thoughts on why forgiveness is so hard:**

**Is there someone in your life right now that you need to forgive OR ask for forgiveness from?**

**Write down the benefits and blessings that come from forgiving someone:**

God used Joseph to bless many lives. Despite the very difficult circumstances that he faced, Joseph still chose to see everything that happened to him as coming from God *first****,*** and thrived wherever he was! How did he do it? One of the ways he did it was to forgive those who had harmed him. How could he possibly do that?

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| Dr. Charles Stanley, an American pastor, offers some helpful steps to overcoming lack of forgiveness in our hearts:   * Acknowledge that lack of forgiveness exists in your life * Admit that you are in conflict with the LORD (by not forgiving someone else, we are not obeying God who asks us to forgive others!) * Thank God for what He’s doing in the other person’s life. Even though they hurt you, God is still able to forgive them and maybe even bless them because they have asked for forgiveness from Him) * Do something nice for the person. * Ask the Lord to show you how He views the individual. God still loves the person who might have hurt you. We should try to love them, too. * Refocus your attention on what God is doing in YOUR life. Is God helping you grow through a difficult situation so that you may bless lives later on in your life?) |

Do not forget that the greatest reason we have to forgive others is because God FORGAVE US of EVERYTHING we’ve ever done. Jesus died for our sins so that we could find joy in God’s forgiveness and then share that forgiveness with others.

CONCLUSION

The story of Joseph’s life is an amazing example how we can find JOY in some of the greatest UNKNOWNS of our life. Our pain, our responsibilities, the forgiveness we need to bestow upon other people… all these things are often unexpected and more than a little messy much of the time. Yet, if we follow the lead of Joseph, and more importantly Jesus, we will find that JOY (happiness that is not based on our circumstances) from God is the only thing that can fill us up completely. **Genesis 39:2 – 3 reads, “The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered… his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did…”** This is our wish for your life. That you would FEEL GOD with you – that you would FIND JOY that comes only FROM HIM – And that because of this joy THE LORD WILL BRING YOU SUCCESS in all you do! We must keep in mind that the journey God takes us on, often does not look the way we may expect it. I know Joseph did not expect to experience so much pain in his life. Nor do I believe he anticipated acquiring the responsibilities he did. I am sure he wondered how he would ever find the forgiveness in his heart needed to reconcile with his brothers.

**Yet, he did not rely on his own strength or power. He found his JOY in GOD. Joseph’s GOD is YOUR GOD too. In these thousands of years since Joseph’s life, GOD has not changed. What he did for Joseph, he can 100% do for you! All you must do is let HIM!**