



abclinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on March 7-8, 2009

this week's coreverse

The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

Genesis 40.23

usingablinks

Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage of scripture. Other days you will be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying, answering questions.

Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions act as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to adabile.org>small groups.

See adabile.org>message recaps & Links for ABCLinks archives.



Part Three of a Four Part Sermon Series

"Out of the Pit"

There's an amazing couple who attends and serves Ada Bible Church who love God and love people. Last year the husband lost his job of several years due to the strained economy. The blow was unexpected, unfair and unceremonious. Over time his severance ran out and the savings drained but a glimmer of hope appeared in a job opening on the east coast. While not excited about relocating their family, they were open to wherever God would lead them. He went through the interview process and everything was tracking beautifully. "A job offer is in the mail," he was told. This was surely God in action. Isn't it just like God to raise up provision when resources are expiring? This faithful couple was emotionally prepared to embark on the new adventure God was calling them to. A couple of weeks passed and the mailbox had not produced the promised job offer. Finally he was contacted. The company had decided to take a different hiring direction from within.

Stunned and a bit angry, they began to process this turn of events. It was one thing to lose his job, but then to have a job so promising and hopeful dangled in front of him only to have it disappear, seemed like a cruel joke. And questions began to surface. "Is this how God treats his children?" "Why would a good and loving God allow something like this to happen?" "Will I continue to believe God is good when my life doesn't make sense?" "Do I really believe God is who He says He is?" It felt like God was teasing him. I checked in with the couple to see how they are dealing with the situation. I expected to hear words of discouragement and lost hope. What I received was this:

"It's amazing to see God increase our faith and demonstrate His love for us through His people. We never thought we would be in this situation, but here we are! God is teaching us humility, while still showing His goodness and care! Recently, someone gave us a \$50 gas gift card. Yesterday another friend of mine told me how they are struggling to even put gas in their car. I knew in my heart that God was speaking to me...telling me to give her our gift card. So I did. Guess what? Today, I got a check in the mail from someone we don't know that well for exactly \$50! For a moment I thought, 'But God, we need that gas card.' But somehow God pressed it on me that, 'No you don't need it. Watch Me!' My faith is growing by leaps and bounds! If I had all I needed, I wouldn't know as much about My Provider."

This couple is residing on a battleground, the battleground of hope versus despair. They are living in some of the hardest days, the days of having hopes raised only to see them dashed. But, they are doing one of the most difficult things we can be called to do, serving others in the midst of our suffering. They are not waiting for their situation to change in order for their spirit to change. Their hope remains, because they know whether their situation changes or not, God is good and does not change. They have placed their hope and trust in God and believe He is still good. I told you at the beginning they are amazing. They would tell you God is amazing.



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personal bible studies

dayone

This week, as we pick up the story of Joseph, we find him imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. What makes his punishment even more confusing is not only was he falsely accused, he was acting in a manner that honored God. Begin this week by reviewing this portion of Joseph's journey in **Genesis 39.6b-20**.

What did you expect of God when Joseph was falsely accused?

How does God's response shape your view of Him?

Read Matthew 5.10-12

Jesus said to rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted for acting in a righteous manner. How can being persecuted, falsely accused and insulted for acting righteous effect your faith? What is the potential negative impact? What are the potential benefits?

Read Genesis 39.20b-23

Joseph's imprisonment could easily have felt like a helpless and hopeless situation. He is in a place he does not deserve to be, nor want to be. Observe how Joseph responded.

What do you think Joseph did to gain the favor of the prison warden?

What can you learn from Joseph's behavior while imprisoned?

daytwo

Joseph's imprisonment continued for "some time" before he was joined by two of the King of Egypt's royal officials.

Read Genesis 40.1-19

How does Joseph respond to the cupbearer and baker upon noticing their dejected attitudes? What does Joseph's concern for the two men say about Joseph?

One of the toughest things to do is to serve others while you are in a period of suffering. So often we say, "When my situation changes, then my spirit and attitude will change." Or, "When my situation changes, then I will be able to serve." Joseph is to us an image of a "wounded healer."

Do you find yourself in a difficult situation today? Are you waiting for your circumstances to change before your attitude will change? Are you waiting for your situation to improve before attempting to improve the lives of others? What can you do this week to bring comfort or service to someone in your world regardless of your current situation? (Remember...no good deed, no matter how small, goes unnoticed or unappreciated.)

daythree

Read Genesis 40.20-23

After correctly interpreting the dreams of the chief cupbearer and baker, Joseph makes a plea to the cupbearer to remember him when the next time he appears before Pharaoh. After only three days had passed, the cupbearer was indeed released from prison and restored to his official position. Describe the emotions Joseph must have been feeling as he watched the cupbearer leaving the prison.

Read Genesis 41.1

How much time passed from the cupbearer's release from prison and the time Joseph was brought forth from prison? What questions do you think Joseph may have been asking God during this time?

One of the hardest days you'll ever have is when you have your hopes set sky high only to see them dashed. When was the last time you had your hopes set high for something that didn't come to fruition? How did it feel? How did you respond? What questions did you have for God?

Read Genesis 41.15-40

When given opportunity to appear before Pharaoh, how might Joseph have been tempted to take self credit for the ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams? How does Joseph remain faithful to God? How does God remain faithful to Joseph?

Read Genesis 41.41-57

What names does Joseph give to his two sons? What is the meaning behind each name?

Perhaps you currently find yourself in a difficult situation where hope is fading and you're on the verge of desperation. Ask yourself the following questions...

- Will I trust God?
- Will I believe God is good even though my situation is bad?
- Will I believe God has a plan for my good, even if it's a plan I don't understand or one with which I don't agree?

Read Psalm 77 and remember the God of Joseph is your God too. Your situation has changed. It will change again. God is good. God will not change.



small group discussion

leanin

Would you rather spend a week's vacation at an exclusive resort where you are pampered and cared for, or at a dude ranch where you are pushed and challenged to your physical limits? Explain.

lookdown

As a group, together retell and review the life of Joseph up to this point of his story.

Read Genesis 39.2-6a and Genesis 39.20-23 aloud. What similarities do you see in these two passages? What does this tell you about God?

Read Genesis 37.3-9 and Genesis 41.15-24; 41-43 aloud. What similarities do you see in these two passages?

Read Genesis 37.2-4 and Genesis 41.46 aloud. How much time has Joseph spent in a life of slavery?

In the gap between Joseph's life of favored son to life of becoming Pharaoh's number one official, what questions might Joseph have had for God? What emotional battles must have been taking place in Joseph?

lookout

Where do you see life's battlegrounds between hope and despair being played out? In light of today's economic news, where might people be losing hope?

When do you think people seek God the most? When life is comfortable, peaceful and all makes sense or when life is out of sorts, chaotic and not making any sense at all?

lookin

How do you feel knowing that the path God has laid out for you may lead you into great difficulty?

How do you respond when your intentions, desires, hopes and expectations are drastically shattered? Do you always trust that God is with you and for you? Explain. What are the difficult circumstances in your life right now? How are you responding?

Joseph served in the middle of his disappointment. Who and how is God leading you to serve? What fears might you have if you were to reach out during this season of your life? What hopes would you have?

Perhaps you're currently living on a battleground between hope and despair. There is an opportunity for bitterness and despair to consume you. There is also an opportunity for faith and hope to thrive. Which side is winning? How can you help each other in your small group right now?

Close the group by reading Psalm 77 aloud.