



CORE STUDY #7

God Chose Joseph

Passage: Genesis 37:1-11; 39:1-23

Summary: In our previous study, we read about Jacob as he prepared to meet his brother Esau. Jacob spends the night alone after sending his wives, children and flocks on ahead. As he was alone in Bethel the day he ran away from Esau, Jacob is alone again and once again he encounters God. All night he is engaged in a wrestling match with a “man”, with God himself as Jacob eventually realizes (32:30) who appeared to Jacob in the form of an angel. Just as he is about to enter Canaan, Jacob learns that it is with God that he has wrestled all along, God who holds his destiny in his hands. Jacob refuses to release the “man” until he is blessed. Jacob finally acknowledges that blessing comes from God.

In chapter 37 we are introduced to Joseph, Jacob’s favorite and yet second youngest son. It’s interesting that God instructed Moses, the author of Genesis, to begin the ‘account of Jacob’ (verse 2) by telling us about Joseph. Joseph is the central human character at almost every point in chapters 37, 39-50. Throughout Genesis we have seen that God chooses people, not based upon their birth order or necessarily on anything they have done. Instead, He chooses those whom He foreknows will be faithful to His covenant of blessing and passing on that blessing to others.

An important note about the genre or the ‘style’ Genesis is written in. Genesis, like much of the Bible, is narrative, or story. Who is the Joseph story about? Is it Joseph? Jacob? The brothers? Pharaoh? Joseph is a father’s favorite who seems to arrogantly tell his older brothers of his superiority over everyone else in the family. Later as a slave in Potiphar’s home Joseph becomes a successful administrator. Why? Was it because of his innate administrative abilities? No. The Bible tells us, ‘The Lord was with Joseph The Lord caused all that he did to prosper... The Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for the sake of Joseph’ (39:2-5). Whatever Joseph’s abilities may have been they are secondary to God’s intervention in his life. There is no doubt who is the hero of the story or what is the moral of the story. God is the hero and the moral is that God was with Joseph. This narrative is telling us what God did with an unlikely candidate for success. It does not contain any rules for getting ahead in business or life in general. Joseph goes from one bad situation into a worse one. It is God who arranges for his release from prison and rise to power not Joseph. Even Joseph’s brothers’ evil intent for him was used by God to save Egypt and Joseph’s family from starvation. This narrative is part of a greater narrative: God’s plan for Israel as a nation, a people who were to bring God’s covenant and blessing upon Abraham to the nations of the world. (For more details read pages 78-80 of *How To Read The Bible For All It’s Worth*, Stuart & Fee)

Leaders Preparation: To prepare to lead this study read the passage over a few times, noting what you feel might be the main points of the passage. Keep in mind our main theme for our series of studies: “Blessed to be a Blessing.”

Themes: God’s surprising choice; God’s providence; Joseph’s faithfulness in the midst of sin.

Observation: Using your UCM Leader’s Guide (pp. 22-23 or pp. 27-33), ask some observation questions.

- Ask the who, why, what, where questions.
- Who are the main characters in these verses?
- What is going on in these verses?



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Introduction Question:

- People often blame God when things go wrong but tend to take the credit themselves when things turn out really well. Why do we tend to do this?

Discussion Questions (selection to choose from):

Read Genesis 37: 1-11

1. What do you know about Joseph and his story?
2. Why do you think Joseph was Jacob's favorite son?
3. Do you feel the older brother's hate of Joseph was justified? Why/why not? (*Thought: Joseph is not chosen by God because of anything special he had done.*)

Read Genesis 39:1-23

4. Why do you think God blessed Joseph to the point that others could notice and what do you think this 'blessing' may have looked like? Do you think God blesses like this today?
5. What is Joseph's argument for not going to bed with Potiphar's wife? What does this show us about Joseph's character and perhaps why God chose him to be a channel of His blessings?

Response:

- We often identify with Joseph in this story. Potiphar's wife pursued her own wrong desires. What are some ways perhaps we pursue our own wrong desires?
- Many of you face sexual temptations here at UBC. Consider how Joseph resisted the very explicate invitations of his master's wife? Discuss some practical steps you take to keep yourself from "sinning against God" (verse 9).

Summary:

We have talked about the theme "*Blessed To Be A Blessing*" throughout our study of Genesis. Joseph chose to honour God with his life and as a result became a channel of God's blessing to his family, Egypt and many nations around Egypt.

- In what ways are you choosing to allow God to bless others through you here at UBC?