**Genesis / Hope in discouragement / Genesis 40**

**INTRODUCTION**

**As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.**

**ICE BREAKER QUESTION:** How seriously do we take our dreams today? How is this similar to or different from the way they were typically viewed in the Old Testament?

Although there are accounts in the New Testament of God speaking to His believers through dreams, this occurs in the Old Testament much more frequently. Certainly God can and may choose to speak through dreams today, but most often, He speaks through His Word and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Both grant us wisdom, counsel and understanding.

**Read back through the passage before going through the questions.**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. **What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool’s this past week?**
2. **How was God preparing Joseph by allowing him to go from “personal attendant” of Potiphar to the one who was under prisoners?**

*However it was, the responsibility for their care fell to Joseph. “The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody” (v. 4). Joseph became the servant of men accused of treason and attempted regicide. As the slave of these prisoners, Joseph was at the bottom of the bottom—a servant of infamous felons. Poor Joseph—he seemed destined to rise so that his dreams could be dashed![[1]](#footnote-1)*

*But huge challenges awaited him on the other side of his prison experience, when he would ascend to the vice-regency of Egypt. Just as it is today, the whole ancient world lay in the power of the wicked one (cf. 1 John 5:19)—and Egypt was at the center of the world’s evil. And the ruling class where Joseph would be cast was caught in a web of unbridled ambition, sensuality, and intrigue—like any other aristocratic clan. And more, Joseph was the sole righteous man in Egypt. This meant that Joseph’s tenure would be full of trouble. We must not imagine that his position put him above the junk. Rather, it put him in the middle of it. Joseph would suffer disappointments again and again, despite his skillful management. His pagan associates would be experts at returning evil for good—in spades. So on the eve of his ascent to power, Joseph needed some further honing to ensure greatness. And this is what his final stint in the Egyptian prison would provide.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

1. **What does Joseph’s responses to the prisoner’s attitude and dreams say about how God is working in him? How did Joseph use his difficult circumstances to glorify God?**

*Joseph’s response to the prisoners was deeply revelatory of what had been going on in his developing heart as God was preparing him for greatness.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

*Joseph’s split-second response revealed a profoundly God-dependent man. His decade of ups and, mostly, downs had created an intimate dependence on God. Turning to God was the habit of his mind (cf. 39:9; 41:16, 51, 52; 45:8)—an essential for godly leadership. In this, Joseph was also foreshadowing the way Christ himself would live.[[4]](#footnote-4)*

*Joseph’s preparation for leadership was in full effect. He was now graced with a sensitivity that was aware of and sympathetic to the plight of others. His demonstrated reflex was to first turn to God for wisdom and direction, which is essential to godly leadership.[[5]](#footnote-5)*

Despite Joseph’s obedience to faithfully serve within his circumstances, he was surely very eager to be relieved from prison. As a result, Joseph could have had many incentives to take credit for the interpretation of the men’s dreams—not only out of pride, but in hopes that he would be recognized as wise and powerful in his own might, perhaps being allowed to go free as a result. Even so, Joseph continued to give God all the glory as being the One who alone holds our futures.

1. **Joseph’s opportunity to minister began when he noticed the men looking distraught and expressed concern (v. 40:6-7). What ministry opportunities might you miss by failing to notice and act when someone near you looks the same? How could you become more aware of these opportunities?**

*But now, though he had every reason to ignore the feelings of his fellow inmates, he was tender and solicitous of their feelings. It is apparent that what Joseph had experienced in the famous ups and down of his own life had made him unusually sensitive and compassionate toward others. This is the way life works. You may not feel for those who are lonely until you have suffered loneliness. If you have never suffered serious depression, your suggested cure may be, “Go shopping!” Ever broken a rib so that each breath is painful, and you live in terror that someone may tell you a joke? If so, you will truly sympathize when it happens to others. Through his life experiences, Joseph had been developing a redemptive edge. A sympathetic resonance for others welled in his soul. He knew where other people were and how they felt. And he cared. A great leader was emerging.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

1. **How was God using Joseph’s difficult circumstances of being wrongly thrown in prison and then being forgotten in prison to grow him in faith and humility? When is a time you have experienced something similar?**

The theme of dreams ties into Genesis 37, when Joseph had two dreams where his family—specifically his brothers—bowed down to him. However, Joseph still did not know how or when this dream would be fulfilled. Yet, it is clear that Joseph had grown in humility and maturity in how he handled and interpreted dreams. In Genesis 37, the way Joseph talked about his dreams led his family to be angry and to rebuke him. But in Genesis 40, Joseph did not boast about the interpretations, but gave God the glory for them.

*The experience of delay is written large in the lives of God’s greats. Abraham’s long wait for a son—Moses’ forty years of preparation in the desert—David’s anointing as a boy, and then the long years of delay in the fields of Judea, and then the flight from Saul and hiding in the cave in Adullam.[[7]](#footnote-7)*

*Joseph experienced disappointment after disappointment—his brothers’ murderous rejection, evil for doing good in resisting Potiphar’s wife, the withering disappointment from the forgetful cupbearer. Joseph’s life teaches us that disappointments are essential to spiritual growth because they demand faith and resting all hope upon God. As V. Raymond Edman wrote, “Delay never thwarts God’s purposes; it only polishes his instrument.”[[8]](#footnote-8)*

*Joseph had become a success because God was with him. And his greatest successes were not at the top, but in the pit in Egypt. Joseph’s whole being had undergone the renovating grace of God. [[9]](#footnote-9)God could have conveyed these truths about Joseph’s preparation by simply listing them. But instead he has chosen to illustrate them in the fabric and text of a human life, so that life can be pressed and impressed to ours—life to life. So this fortieth chapter of Genesis records the final living touches upon a man who would be mightily used by God. May we invite the Holy Spirit to infuse Joseph’s virtues into us. May we humbly invite and embrace God’s holy processes.[[10]](#footnote-10)*

1. **Why does God, at times, choose to teach us important truths through our life experiences rather than just telling us?**
2. **Similar to Joseph, how can your obedience and faithfulness to God point others to how big and good He is?**

**Conclusion**

The detailed narrative of Joseph’s life, among many other things, is a loving letter from your Good Shepherd ([John 10:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2010.11)) — the same Good Shepherd who guided Joseph through green pastures and the valley of the shadow of death, pursuing him with good all the days of his life (Psalm 23) — to remind you that no matter what you are experiencing, sweet or bitter, good or evil, no matter how long it has lasted, he has not left you alone (John 14:18). He is with you ([Psalm 23:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2023.4)), he is working all things together for good ([Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.28)), and he will be with you to the end (Matthew 28:20).

**PRAYER**

Thank God for His promises to never forsake us, but faithfully extend His loving kindness. Pray for such confidence in those promises that you remain steadfast, submissive and trusting—even in rejections, setbacks or persecution. Finally, pray that in the midst of those trials, He will grant you success for His glory and make you a vessel of truth to those around you.



**FURTHER STUDY**

**Devotionals –**

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/two-new-prisoners>

**Article –**

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/for-those-feeling-forgotten--2>

**Video –**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/preparation-for-greatness/>

1. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.1-4&off=1152&ctx=them+were+to+blame.%0a~However+it+was%2c+the+), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 469. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.1-23&off=3046&ctx=ndscape+of+Genesis.%0a~But+huge+challenges+), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 468. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.5-8&off=1035&ctx=to+me%E2%80%99%C2%A0%E2%80%9D+(vv.+6%E2%80%938).%0a~Joseph%E2%80%99s+response+to), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 469. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.5-8&off=2794&ctx=n+he+hit+his+thumb!%0a~Joseph%E2%80%99s+split-secon), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 470. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.5-8&off=2101), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 471. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.5-8&off=1470&ctx=elf-centered+child.+~But+now%2c+though+he+h), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 469–470. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.20-23&off=2205&ctx=+Joseph%E2%80%99s+services.%0a~The+experience+of+de), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 473. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.20-23&off=3170&ctx=nd+Mission+emerged.%0a~Joseph+experienced+d), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 473. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.20-23&off=4793&ctx=w+God+was+with+him.+~Joseph+had+become+a+), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 474. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](https://ref.ly/logosres/prwdgen?ref=Bible.Ge40.20-23&off=5522&ctx=in+the+hand+of+God.%0a~God+could+have+conve), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 474. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)