



7 QUESTIONS OF **FAITH** AND **DOUBT**

WISDOM FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

NAME: _____

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK:

- 1. Bring it with to church every Sunday.** Use the Sunday page to take notes and write down different prompts during the service.
- 2. Place it somewhere you will see it every day, and use it!** Use the verses/ suggestions and see where it leads you. You can use the space to write, draw or even get crazy and tape/glue things on the pages. Whatever works for you!
- 3. Check out the Tools, Tips and Tricks at the end of the book (and at whoisgrace.com).** It's full of awesome hints and methods to help you along.

It's one of the most extraordinary life stories you'll ever hear: family drama, attempted murder, false accusations, salacious temptations, years in prison, and then, an almost unimaginable redemption. It's the story of Joseph. At times God seemed silent, but He was far from absent. In fact, God was at work from start to finish in Joseph's life even when everything and everyone seemed like they were conspiring against him. In the end, God demonstrates the healing power of mercy, forgiveness, and restoration.

It's easy to see God in the midst of Joseph's trials now that we know the end of the story, but as it was happening, his life must have been filled with questions. As we walk through the difficulties of this life – questions of faith and doubt are swirling around us at all times. That's why we will use 7 Questions of Faith and Doubt to frame this incredible story of Joseph located in the book of Genesis.

As we begin this journey together, we believe that God is going to meet powerfully each individual who participates through His word and through His Spirit. We'd encourage you at the outset to write down one difficult question that has been plaguing you that you would like to ask God. We'll remind you of it throughout the study and we pray that God will bring you some clarity as we go. Please write that question here:

DIFFICULT QUESTION
→ FOR GOD

Our hope is that God will do big things in your life as a result of our study together!

This devotional book is based on a sermon series from Grace Church of the same title. You can find the corresponding messages on the archives page <http://whoisgrace.com/sermons> or the whoisgrace app.

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GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS EXPERIENCE:

- » **WORSHIP:** Attend all seven weeks.
- » **FACEBOOK LIVE EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 12:15PM:** use your smart phone or computer to join us at [facebook.com/whoisgrace](https://www.facebook.com/whoisgrace) to view and participate.
- » **LEARN TOGETHER:** get with a friend or some LifeGroup members to share what God is teaching you.

INTRODUCTION: JESUS IS THE NEW AND BETTER JOSEPH

Each Friday in this devotional we will explore Jesus as the new and better Joseph. Ultimately the story of Joseph and all Old Testament stories point us to Jesus the Messiah. The following summary comes from HeReadsTruth.com. The rescue Joseph gives his brothers foreshadows and parallels the mission of Jesus, who came to save His people.

JOSEPH	JESUS
Joseph, a shepherd, was dearly loved by his father. (Genesis 37:3)	Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was dearly loved by His Father. (Matthew 3:17)
Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and traded for silver. (Genesis 37:28)	Jesus was betrayed by Judas and traded for silver. (Matthew 26:15)
Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife but did not sin. (Genesis 39:9)	Jesus was tempted by Satan but did not sin. (Hebrews 4:15)
Joseph was thrown into prison with two other prisoners, one who would go free and one who would be executed. (Genesis 40:2-3, 21-22)	Jesus was crucified on the cross with two criminals, one who would be saved and one who would not. (Luke 23:32, 43)
Joseph, though imprisoned, rose to a place of power and authority. (Genesis 41:42-44)	Jesus, though crucified on the cross, rose again and sits at the right hand of the throne of God. (Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:19)
Joseph showed mercy and forgave his betrayers, saving his family and nation. (Genesis 50:20-21)	Jesus shows mercy and forgives His betrayers, saving the world. (Colossians 1:13-14)

The story of Joseph is not about us. It is about Jesus and what He has done for us. In the same way that Joseph foreshadows Jesus, so Joseph's brothers foreshadow us. We have betrayed and denied Christ, yet He has shown us mercy and forgiveness.

WEEK 1 | CAN I OVERCOME A MESSED UP FAMILY?

A simple definition of dysfunctional family; is a family that is not operating according to its original design. If this is true – all our families are messed up. Some families struggle with minimal relational connection, workaholism, gathering around devices but never talking face to face, a lack of love, lack of communication, little time together, affirmation, failure to respect one another, no boundaries, lack of nurturing encouragement, and on and on we could go.

The story of Joseph reminds us that even amidst a really messed up family, God can turn a terrible situation into good. But it might take some time. The kind of blessing that Joseph experienced in the end reminds us that it is always worth the pain of the process. This week we will look at Biblical principles for living in and raising a healthy family.

SUNDAY | SERMON NOTES

MONDAY | FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

READ: GENESIS 37:1-11

MEDITATE:

What were some of the family problems that were caused by Israel's favoritism toward Joseph in verse 3?

How could Joseph have handled things differently in verses 5-10 concerning the dreams that God placed in his heart?

What are the brothers' prevailing emotions as pointed out in verses 4, 8, and 11? How have you personally seen these emotions do damage in a family environment?

In this text, we see Joseph, his father, and his brothers all contributing to the dysfunction of the family.

APPLY:

Let's begin our study on Day 1 with humble confession. Get on your knees today and confess to God some ways you have personally contributed to any dysfunction in your own family. Ask God for forgiveness and grace going forward.

TUESDAY | HOLISTIC FAMILY LIFE

READ: DEUTERONOMY 6:1-25

MEDITATE:

Look at verse 4 - what would it look like for you to love the Lord:

With all your heart?

With all your soul?

With all your might?

Verses 6-9 talk about intentionality in the home in passing on faith to our children. What are the specific instructions and why are they so important?

This passage shows us the kinds of conversations God wants us to have in our homes. What are some of the components of this conversation as seen in verses 20-25? What makes it easy/hard for you to have conversations like this with your kids or other family members?

APPLY:

Have a conversation with a family member today about how God has been faithful in your life.

Pray about your

DIFFICULT QUESTION
→ FOR GOD

WEDNESDAY | THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH FAMILY MEMBER

READ PSALM 139:1-24

MEDITATE

This passage tells us a lot about God and a lot about ourselves. List 3 words that this chapter reveals about God:

List 3 words that this chapter reveals about us:

Verses 13-16 point out the uniqueness of how each person was created. Think of one or two of your family members. How has God created them uniquely when it comes to:

Their body

Their intellect

Their personality

Their emotions

Their soul

APPLY

Send that family member a note/text/snap/etc. to encourage them about how God created them so uniquely.



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THURSDAY | A HEALING HOME

READ: GALATIANS 6:1-10

MEDITATE:

Think of a time that one of your family members helped you to “bear your burden.” Describe what that experience was like for you.

What lessons can be learned from this passage in order to make our home a place of healing and wholeness?

Summarize verses 8-9 in your own words.

APPLY

Read back through each verse of Galatians 1:1-10 one by one. Which verse speaks most clearly to your current situation? Write down one step you could take to obey that verse.

FRIDAY | JESUS IS THE BETTER JOSEPH

READ: JOHN 1:1-18

MEDITATE:

Make a list of what we learn about the nature and role of Jesus in verses 1-5.

Jesus is called the “word” and the “light” in this passage. How do both of those metaphors describe Jesus accurately? How is he a “word” and a “light” in your life?

Isaiah 53 says that Jesus was “despised and rejected” by men. Verses 10-11 describe this phenomenon from John’s perspective. How was this like Joseph’s experience in Genesis 37?

APPLY:

In the same way that Joseph foreshadows Jesus, so Joseph’s brothers foreshadow us. In our sin, we have hated and betrayed Christ, yet He has shown us mercy and forgiveness.

Listen to the song “Forgiven” by David Crowder and use it to worship Jesus for being the new and better Joseph (Video link: whoisgrace.com/JOSEPH).

WEEK 2 | DO I KNOW GOD'S DREAM FOR MY LIFE?

Everyone ends up somewhere in life, but tragically few people end up somewhere on purpose. Are you headed with your life in the way God wants you to head? Is your vision for your life the same as God's vision for your life? When was the last time you asked, "God what do you want from me?" and then began to deal with the consequences of His calling and leading. The truth is; God has a dream for all of us. However, we must be responsible with that dream. We can't ignore it, but we can't flaunt it either. At an early age, Joseph became aware of God's dream for his life, but he showed his immaturity by holding it over his brothers' heads. This week, consider how to discern and chase down God's dream for your life.

SUNDAY | SERMON NOTES

MONDAY | HANDLING GOD'S DREAM PROPERLY

READ: GENESIS 37:5-28

MEDITATE:

In your opinion, what was wise and what was unwise about the way Joseph handled his God-given dreams? Why do you think he told his family about his dreams?

In verses 10-11, note the difference in responses between the father and the brothers. What can you learn from their responses?

What does this passage tell us about our dreams and the rejection of others?

APPLY:

If you knew you wouldn't fail, what is one thing that you'd like to attempt for God in the next year?

Have a conversation with God about that dream and determine who it would be wise/unwise to talk about it with.

TUESDAY | CONTINUING GOD'S WORK

READ: EPHESIANS 2:1-10

MEDITATE:

How does Paul describe the contrast between who they are now in Christ with who they once were?

In verses 4-7, what are the present realities of a believer's relationship with God?

Summarize verse 10 in your own words.

APPLY:

Verse 10 reminds us that God is our creator – but we are not just His masterpiece to admire, we are supposed to continue his creative work. List three responsibilities that you believe God has called you to.

Any progress on your

DIFFICULT QUESTION
→ FOR GOD

WEDNESDAY | THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12

MEDITATE

What do you think is the connection between God's dream for your life and the spiritual gifts that he's given you?

What seemed to be some of the problems that existed in the Corinthian church that Paul addressed in this chapter (see sections 1-2, 4-7, 14-16, 21-23, 25-26)?

According to this passage, what are some reasons that it is important for you to discover and use your spiritual gift?

APPLY

Are you aware of your spiritual gift(s)? If you are list it (them) here and reconsider if you are using it (them) to the fullest.

If you do not know your gift(s), there are additional lists in Romans 12:4-8, Ephesians 4:11-12, and 1 Peter 4:9-11. Read these passages and see if you can identify some that you relate to. Consider registering for the next CORE class where you can take an assessment to begin discovering your gift(s).



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THURSDAY | FAITH TO WALK IN GOD'S DREAM

READ: HEBREWS 11

MEDITATE:

Define "faith" in your own words using Hebrews 11:1 as your guide.

What is the connection between your faith and God's dream for your life?

What do we learn from verse 6? How can our faith grow stronger?

In Hebrews 11:4-34 - what stands out to you in terms of how each person's faith expressed itself as each pursued God's dream for his/her life? What can you learn from them?

What is the sobering reminder of Hebrews 11:35-40?

APPLY

Is there an aspect of God's dream for your life that you are very clear on, but the only thing missing is the faith to obey Him? What would one 'baby-step' of faith look like? Pray that God would give you the courage to take that step.

FRIDAY | JESUS IS THE BETTER JOSEPH

READ: MATTHEW 26:14-75

MEDITATE:

Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and thrown into a pit and sold into slavery. In what ways is Jesus' experience in Matthew 26 like that of Joseph?

Jesus knew that both Judas and Peter would betray him, and yet he shared an intimate meal with them at the Lord's supper. List three emotions you think Jesus was experiencing.

In verse 35, Peter made a promise that he couldn't keep. Confess a time when you made a promise to Jesus that you didn't keep.

What was God's dream for Jesus' life? What can we learn from Jesus' response in Matthew 26:38-46 about when our dreams hit difficult moments?

APPLY:

Joseph endured betrayal by his brothers and eventually saved them. Jesus endured betrayal by his disciples and eventually saved the whole world! Jesus is the better Joseph. He endured God's dream for his life – so you could pursue God's dream for yours. Praise him today for that truth.

WEEK 3 | IS MY INTEGRITY ROCK SOLID?

We deeply admire people with integrity. We trust people with integrity. We follow people with integrity. And yet, people with integrity seem harder and harder to find. The news is full of stories of corruption in every sector of life – sports, politics, business, education, neighborhoods and churches. Why is it that something so admirable is so hard to come by in our world? Because integrity is hard. Choosing right over wrong is fairly easy most of the time. But choosing right over wrong when the pressure's on, when temptation is high, when you're vulnerable – that requires character, conviction, and sacrifice. Building rock solid integrity is not for the faint of heart.

The story of Joseph reminds us of the incredible value of integrity in the face of intense temptation. We see in Joseph a heart that is devoted to honoring God no matter what. This week we will look at Biblical principles for developing integrity.

SUNDAY | SERMON NOTES

MONDAY | WHEN INTEGRITY IS TESTED

READ: GENESIS 39:1-20

MEDITATE:

This passage begins with Joseph experiencing success and gaining influence in the most unlikely situation – being a Jewish slave in an Egyptian officer’s house. What are the reasons for his success?

Why would it have been difficult for Joseph to refuse Potiphar’s wife? What was his motivation for refusing her?

How do you think Joseph felt when he was put in prison for something he didn’t do? How would that have tested his integrity?

APPLY:

On a scale from “weak and feeble” to “rock solid”, how strong is your integrity right now? Is it stronger, weaker, or the same as it was 6 months ago?

What are the areas of greatest temptation in your life? What would refusing to sin look like for you? What is one way you want your heart to be more like Joseph’s this week?

Confess to God your sinful desires that make those temptations so strong. Ask him to help you change your desires and strengthen your integrity – especially in the face of those temptations.

TUESDAY | THE LURE OF ADULTERY

READ: PROVERBS 5 (ENTIRE CHAPTER), 7:21-23, 10:9, 11:3, 20:7, 28:18

MEDITATE:

In Proverbs 5, 6 and 7, Solomon paints a vivid picture of the allure and devastation of adultery. You can picture the situation Joseph was in with Potiphar's wife. Why do you think Solomon focused so much on this specific temptation? What parts of his warning did you find most interesting?

What are some parallels between adultery and other temptations?

The last few proverbs celebrate and encourage integrity for different reasons. According to Solomon, what are the benefits of integrity? What are some of the consequences you've witnessed or experienced personally of not having strong integrity?

APPLY:

Define integrity in your own words. Then write your own Proverb about integrity – as if you were writing to encourage your child or friend. Highlight a benefit of integrity that is valuable to you. (Ex: Those who have integrity _____, but those who are dishonest _____)

Ask God to help you cherish the benefits of integrity and despise the consequences of lacking it. Pray the same thing for the person you had in mind when you wrote your proverb.

Any progress on your

DIFFICULT QUESTION
→ FOR GOD

WEDNESDAY | MADE NEW IN CHRIST

READ: EPHESIANS 4:17-32, 5:1-21

MEDITATE

Paul describes the difference between the old self (not knowing Christ) and the new self (made new in Christ). He describes the new self as “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4:24). Building strong integrity involves desiring and doing what is good and right and true – putting off the old self and putting on the new self.

What role does the Holy Spirit play in this process? (see Romans 8:1-17 and Galatians 5:16-25)

Reread Ephesians and write words and phrases under the appropriate column:

OLD SELF	NEW SELF

APPLY

Look over your lists. Put a star next to words where you have seen God change your heart to be more like his and praise him for that! Circle a few words where you want to see growth and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you and change your heart to be more like his in those areas.



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THURSDAY | CONFESSING SECRET SINS

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:12-13, 6:15-20, JAMES 5:16

MEDITATE:

Joseph's choice to run away from Potiphar's wife showed character - not cowardice. (Genesis 39:11-13) God provided a way of escape and Joseph took it! For him to stay in her presence would have been foolish. What are the ways Potiphar's wife showed a lack of integrity?

Why do you think Paul encourages us to flee (or run away) from sexual immorality? When would you encourage someone to take drastic action and run away from temptation?

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul addresses our tendency to compartmentalize our sin - trying to convince ourselves that certain sins don't affect God or other people. Why do you think we justify our secret sins and avoid talking about them? How does confessing our sin to God and others bring healing?

How are you trying to compartmentalize your sin as separate from your spiritual life? Are there any areas of secret sin that you wouldn't want your spouse or parents or friends to know about? What would it look like to take drastic action and run away from those temptations?

APPLY

Confess your secret sins to God and ask for his forgiveness. Confess your secret sins to another person and ask them to pray for you (ask for their forgiveness if needed). Ask God for wisdom to recognize the way of escape he is providing, and for the courage and self-control to keep your distance (or to run away) from the difficult temptations you are facing.

FRIDAY | JESUS IS THE BETTER JOSEPH

READ: HEBREWS 2:17-18, 4:14-16, MATTHEW 4:1-11

MEDITATE:

Similar to Joseph, Jesus' integrity enabled him to be used by God to save God's people. It is important to remember that even though Jesus was fully God, he was also fully man. He experienced temptation like we experience temptation. How does knowing that affect you? Why is it significant that Jesus was without sin?

Just like Joseph, Jesus was wrongly accused and severely punished for something he didn't do. How would it have felt to be mocked, beaten and crucified as if you were a guilty criminal knowing you were completely innocent? Why would Jesus willingly subject himself to that?

As you read the account of Jesus being tempted by Satan, what stands out to you? What similarities do you see in the way Joseph responded to his tempter? Why is it significant that Jesus was led by the Spirit? That he was fasting? That he responded by quoting Scripture?

APPLY:

How do you want to respond to temptation (and your tempter) differently based on these passages?

Use today's scriptures to pray using the ACTS model:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Adoration | Praise Jesus for who He is! |
| Confess | Confess any ways you've given in to temptation this week.
Confess your need for Jesus' grace and power. |
| Thanksgiving | Thank him for what he has done. |
| Supplication | Ask him to help you in the specific ways you need it. |

WEEK 4 | WILL I ACCEPT GOD'S TIMETABLE?

We cannot escape time. Minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, day-by-day, year-by-year, it can feel like it is inching forward or racing forward, depending on our circumstances. We have a past, a present and a future. But our God has always been, “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 90:2). In fact, the name God revealed to Moses was, “I AM” (Exodus 3:14), a name which suggests a continual present existence. For God, “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). Sometimes we feel trapped by time. Sometimes we’re frustrated that time isn’t moving more quickly. Sometimes we’re overwhelmed by how quickly it seems to have gone by. And sometimes we just want it to stop. We need to know that our God is timeless, that He sees all time, and that He is always present and working.

The story of Joseph reminds us that God is always at work, even when we are waiting. This week we will look at Biblical principles for living in the waiting.

SUNDAY | SERMON NOTES

MONDAY | LIVING IN THE WAITING

READ: GENESIS 39:20-40:23

MEDITATE:

Describe the circumstances for Joseph in these verses. Is there any indication that Joseph understood why God had allowed him to be imprisoned or what God was preparing him for?

Despite Joseph's unawareness of God's plan for his life, how did he live and conduct himself while in prison? How are you living and conducting yourself in your waiting season?

Scripture indicates that thirteen years passed from the time Joseph's brothers sold him (17 years old) until Pharaoh appointed him over the land of Egypt (30 years old). What are some words that you would use to describe HOW Joseph waited?

What are some words that would describe how YOU are at waiting?

APPLY:

Talk to God honestly about how you feel in waiting seasons. Surrender to Him the doubt and confusion about the unknown. Ask Him for peace and assurance of His work in your life even when you can't see what comes next.

Listen to John Waller's worship song, "While I'm Waiting", and use it to reflect on how you are living in the waiting (Video Link: whoisgrace.com/JOSEPH).

TUESDAY | TRUST IN THE LORD

READ: PSALM 130:1-8; PSALM 119:114; PSALM 71:14

MEDITATE:

Psalm 130 is a testimony of trust in the Lord. Reflect on how the Psalm begins (1-4) and ends (5-8). How does the author's tone change?

Describe what it means to wait for the Lord.

What are the advantages of putting your hope in His Word instead of putting your hope in a person or a circumstance or a job, etc? What would it look like for you to put your hope in His Word?

APPLY:

Write your own Psalm, crying out to the Lord about your

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and declaring your trust and hope in Him.

Choose a verse that reminds you to put your hope in the Lord. Put that verse in a prominent place: Write it on a notecard or set it as wallpaper on your computer or phone.

WEDNESDAY | HONEST ANXIETIES

READ MATTHEW 6:25-34; 26:38-39

MEDITATE

Often in our waiting we experience doubt and worry. In Matthew 6:25-34, what does Jesus say about our anxieties?

Summarize verses 33-34 in your own words.

Now read Matthew 26:38-39. In verse 38, how did Jesus feel knowing that he was approaching crucifixion and bearing the penalty of all our sins? How did He surrender those feelings in verse 39?

APPLY

Pray as Jesus did in Gethsemane. Be honest with God about how you feel in your present circumstances. Practice surrendering your feelings and your future to Him.



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THURSDAY | SEARCHING AND KNOWING

READ: PSALM 139:1-24

MEDITATE:

Read through the Psalm once and notice the prayer begins and ends with God “searching and knowing.” Now read through a second time, pausing every six verses to reflect (:1-6, 7-12, 13-18, 19-24). What does it mean for God to search and to know you?

What are some of the specific things from this passage that God knows about you? Why does it matter that God knows you so intimately?

List the ways in which this Psalm gives you hope and comfort for your life right now.

APPLY

Write a short prayer to God telling Him some specific truths from this Psalm that you are choosing to believe.

Pray Psalm 139 for someone else. Who is on your heart today? Are you concerned over a rebellious or absent child? A friend who is on the wrong path? A loved one who is sick? Do you need reassurance that God cares about those you love? Read and pray Psalm 139, inserting the name of your loved one when you come to the words me, my, or I.

FRIDAY | JESUS IS THE BETTER JOSEPH

READ: ROMANS 5:1-8; GALATIANS 4:4-7

MEDITATE:

In Romans 5:3-4, how is it that we grow in suffering? How did that happen in Joseph's life?

In both the Romans and Galatians passages it speaks of God sending Jesus at "just the right time." How did God also use Joseph at just the right time? In what ways has Jesus been present at "just the right time" in your life?

What is the difference in the salvation offered by Joseph during famine and that offered by Christ for all believers?

APPLY:

Meditate on Romans 5:8 and praise Abba, God the Father (Galatians 4:6), for His great love and for Christ's sacrifice for us. Write down some of the great benefits of having Him as your Father. Listen to Good, Good Father as you write (Link at whoisgrace.com/JOSEPH).

WEEK 5 | HOW WILL I HANDLE SUCCESS?

Do you think it's easier to handle success or failure? Thomas Carlyle once said, "For every one hundred people who can handle adversity there is only one who can handle prosperity." Most people can't handle being at the top. It changes them. In fact, success destroys some people. There are many temptations that come with power and position and privilege. People are tempted to abuse power, misuse position, and profit from privilege. After suffering many setbacks in his life, finally in Genesis 41, he was remembered and promoted. He was placed as second in command in Pharaoh's cabinet. And the question we're left wondering is, "will his success change his character?" What about you? How do you respond when things are going well? This week we'll explore what it means to walk in God's definition of success.

SUNDAY | SERMON NOTES

MONDAY | TEMPTED IN SUCCESS

READ: GENESIS 41

MEDITATE:

How long did Joseph wait to get out of prison in verse 1? What do you think his life was like in prison during those 'forgotten years'?

What do verses 15-16 tell us about Joseph's character? How might he have been tempted to handle it differently if his character wasn't as strong?

In verses 38-40, what were the qualities that Joseph was immediately recognized for? What are you known for?

Look back through the chapter and take note of all the instances in which Joseph could have been tempted by his new-found success.

APPLY:

We can see in this chapter that God isn't nearly as concerned about where you are going as He is with who you are becoming. What is one character quality that God wants to work on in you?

TUESDAY | ALLOWING GOD TO BREAK YOUR HEART

READ: NEHEMIAH 1:1-2:8

MEDITATE:

Nehemiah had achieved a position of great success. What news did he receive in verse 3 and how did he respond in verse 4? Why would he respond that way?

In verses 5-11, he prays a beautiful prayer. Read it carefully and decide how you would label the sections of his prayer according to their content.

:5-6a _____

:6b-7 _____

:8-10 _____

:11 _____

How would you summarize in your own words the interaction in 2:1-8 between Nehemiah and the King?

APPLY:

Nehemiah was doing his job, but he became aware of a situation that broke his heart and he had to pursue it. What is it in your world that is breaking your heart? What is God asking you to do about it?

Check in with God about your

DIFFICULT QUESTION
→ FOR GOD

WEDNESDAY | SUCCESS AND SELF-CONTROL

READ: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:16-27

MEDITATE:

What does this passage tell us about Paul's definition of success?

If Paul is telling the truth in verses 19-22 – use your imagination to think of the things he might have been willing to sacrifice in order to become “all things to all people.”

What two athletic events did Paul compare with the Christian life? (verses 24-26) List some ways in which they are similar to the Christian life.

Summarize verse 27 in your own words.

APPLY

One of Paul's main concerns in this text was to serve God and preach the gospel, but to do so with discipline and self-control so as not to put his own salvation in jeopardy. What has been your biggest test of self-control this week? What is God trying to teach you?



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THURSDAY | GOD'S VIEW OF SUCCESS

READ: ROMANS 12

MEDITATE:

In the Old Testament, sacrifices that were made to God were usually dead. What does Paul mean in verse 1 by “living sacrifices” and what does that have to do with your “worship”?

In verse 2, what is the key to true transformation?

Write out five commands that jumped out at you personally as you read through this chapter.

How would you summarize what this chapter has to say about God's view of “success”?

APPLY

Re-read verses 9-10 about love and honor. Write down some ways you live out those verses in the next 24 hours with specific people in your life? Commit it to prayer.

FRIDAY | JESUS IS THE BETTER JOSEPH

READ: MATTHEW 20:1-28

MEDITATE:

Joseph rose in power and popularity to provide grain so his people could live. Jesus rose in power and popularity to give his life so that people could live. Jesus is the better Joseph! In this chapter Jesus contrasts two different approaches to “greatness”.

Why does the parable in verses 1-16 disrupt our idea of fairness and what is Jesus’ point?

Why do you think Matthew (the author) positioned Jesus’ words in verses 17-19 between the Parable of the Vineyard in verses 1-16 and the Mother’s request in verses 20-28?

What contrast does Jesus provide between worldly leadership and godly leadership in verses 25-28?

APPLY:

Identify one situation or relationship in your life where you are using a “worldly” definition of greatness – and what would it take to re-position yourself toward greatness in God’s eyes?

WEEK 6 | **AM I WILLING TO FACE MY PAST?**

“You did then what you knew how to do,
and when you knew better, you did better.” – Maya Angelou

You don't have to look far to find advice on how to face your past. Why? Facing your past is not an easy thing to do. It often requires reliving an event that you would rather forget- a situation that produced pain and suffering. For many people this is too difficult to bear, so they decide to bury the past and just try to forget. This never works. The past will follow you and continue to shape you until it is properly dealt with.

The story of Joseph reminds us that not dealing with your past will rob you of your future. In order to move forward with your life in a Godly way, you must come face to face with your past, acknowledge your part, and recognize where God is at work in it. This week we will explore some wisdom from the Bible about dealing with the past.

SUNDAY | SERMON NOTES

MONDAY | PAST SIN - PRESENT SUFFERING

READ: GENESIS 42

MEDITATE:

What was happening to Joseph's family in the beginning of chapter 42 that caused them to take action?

Egypt had to be the last place the brothers wanted to go to get help. That is where they sold their brother into slavery, and where they assumed he died. Is there anything in your past that seems too scary to face?

Why do you think the hardship of prison reminded the brothers of what they had done to Joseph when he was a boy?

This must have been painful for the brothers to relive this event and experience the guilt of it again. But, this was key for the Holy Spirit to connect their past sin to their present suffering.

APPLY:

Take time now and pray. Is there a present struggle in your life that is connected to a past sin?

Confess and repent for that past sin.

Ask God to reveal where He has been present through this specific hardship.

TUESDAY | DENYING AND DELAYING

READ: GENESIS 43

MEDITATE:

In verse 1, we see that the brothers returned home, and went about their lives, despite having one brother still imprisoned in Egypt. What was the only reason they started to make plans to return to Egypt?

Where is there evidence of denial and delaying of the steps they needed to take to deal with their current situation. Why do you think they chose to deny and delay?

In verses 42:38, and 43:6, we see that their father Israel was continuing in his favoritism toward certain sons, a sin that had already led to family dysfunction. How did Judah help move towards a solution in verses 43:8-10?

APPLY:

How have you been delaying and/or denying what you need to do in order to move forward from your past? Make time to have a conversation with a family member that might be involved in this situation and discuss steps you can take to move forward.

What has God been revealing about your

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WEDNESDAY | THE POWER OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

READ: PSALM 51

MEDITATE:

This Psalm was written after the prophet Nathan confronted David and rebuked him for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba as recorded in 2 Samuel 11-12. In verses 1-6, we see David crying out to God in desperation about what he had done. How would you describe David's heart here?

List some of the aspects of spiritual cleansing as outlined in verses 7-12.

What are some of the outcomes of God's forgiveness in verses 13-17?

God's forgiveness gets you out of your past and on to your future!

APPLY

Use Psalm 51 to write your own Psalm to God asking for forgiveness, and for a broken and contrite heart over your sin.



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THURSDAY | STRAINING TOWARD THE FUTURE

READ PHILIPPIANS 3:12-21

MEDITATE

Paul is very direct here in telling us how to deal with the past. Paul tells us to

_____ what lies behind, and _____
to what lies ahead.

List 3 things from your past that you need to forget:

List 3 things that are ahead of you that you need to strain toward:

How does straining toward the future help us to forget about the past?

Verse 15 states, "let those of us who are mature think this way;" On a scale of 1 to 10, mark where your spiritual maturity is.

1-----10

APPLY

Share with a friend, family member, or life group one of the three things you need to forget, and one of the three things you need to strain forward towards.

FRIDAY | JESUS IS THE BETTER JOSEPH

READ: JOHN 7:1-9, ACTS 1:14

MEDITATE:

From a young age Joseph's brothers did not believe him. In John 7, we see that Jesus had the same experience. Why do you think Jesus' brothers didn't believe Him? (Imagine if your brother claimed to be the son of God!)

How did Jesus respond to his brothers in verses 6-8?

In Acts, we see that his brothers did come to belief, and they were with the disciples praying. They didn't believe until after Jesus' resurrection, but they still did believe eventually. What are some ways that you are like Jesus' brothers?

APPLY:

It is good for us to bring our questions and disbelief to God, He wants us to. This is the only way we will give ourselves fully to Him.

How is your progress with your

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Spend time in prayer continuing to seek God, and working towards trusting Him.

WEEK 7 | WILL I CHOOSE FORGIVENESS?

We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. -Martin Luther King Jr.

Forgiveness comes at a cost—we must take that pain we endured and absorb it into our self. It is one of the most difficult challenges of the human experience, but one we must press into if we are to live with hope and freedom.

Joseph demonstrated an incredible spirit by being willing to forgive his brothers for the wrongs that had been done to him. This week, we will spend time considering how to practice forgiveness in our own lives, and model the great love of God that has been demonstrated to us in the person of Jesus.

SUNDAY | SERMON NOTES

MONDAY | THE HARD WORK OF FORGIVENESS

READ: GENESIS 45; GENESIS 50:20

MEDITATE:

Look at 45:5-8. What is Joseph's reasoning for being able to forgive his brothers?

Describe Joseph's emotions during this exchange with his brothers. Would you have had the same emotional response, or a different one? Why?

What did Joseph risk losing if he didn't do the hard work of forgiveness in this moment? What was at stake?

APPLY:

Ask God to give you His perspective this week when it comes to past burdens you've had to bear and the wounds that have been inflicted in your life. Ask Him to help you see His plan in the midst of your suffering.

Make a list of some of the things that are at stake if you choose not to forgive.

TUESDAY | GOD'S PERFECT FORGIVENESS

READ: PSALM 103:1-12; ROMANS 3:23

MEDITATE:

Summarize 103:1-5 in your own words.

What does 103:8-9 tell us about the character of God?

What does it mean that God has removed our transgressions “as far from the east is from the west” (12)?

Romans 3 tells us that we all have fallen short of the glory of God. What does it do in your heart to know that even though you have sinned, that God has chosen to offer you forgiveness?

APPLY:

What are some of the things that God has forgiven you for? Write them down. Read them back and let your heart be broken for the ways in which you have sinned, but also joy filled because God has already forgiven you for them. Let the intense forgiving love of God overwhelm you.

Check in with God on your

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WEDNESDAY | GIVING AND RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

READ MATTHEW 6:5-15

MEDITATE

The Lord's Prayer ends with a section on forgiveness. How might this prayer help you grow in your ability to forgive others?

In verses 14-15, why do you think God places an emphasis on our ability to forgive when talking about His forgiveness for us?

What does an unforgiving spirit tell us about a person's ability to receive forgiveness from God?

APPLY

Get in a posture of prayer (on your knees or with open hands, etc.) and call to mind specific people that you have a hard time forgiving.

Pray that you would have the ability to forgive them in light of the forgiveness you have received from God. Ask him to make His forgiveness so plain to you, that it would begin to change your heart towards love and forgiveness for those who still owe you a debt.



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THURSDAY | CANCELLING THE DEBT

READ: MATTHEW 18:21-35; MATTHEW 5:43-45

MEDITATE:

Why do you think Peter asks the question in 18:21?

In verse 22 – how many times did Jesus say we should forgive? What do you think his answer means?

Summarize the main point of the parable that Jesus tells in :23-35?

What effects does not practicing forgiveness have on our lives?

What did Jesus want to happen in Peter's life as a result of the parable? What does he want to happen in yours?

In Matthew 5:45 – what is the result of forgiving our enemies?

APPLY

Make a list of some people in your life who are hardest to forgive. Maybe even people you would consider "enemies." Next to their name, write down what you consider the "debt" that each person owes you. Be specific. Then take each one to God in prayer, and ask Him to help you cancel each debt. Especially in light of the fact that He has cancelled all of your debts.

FRIDAY | JESUS IS THE BETTER JOSEPH

READ: LUKE 23:33-38; ROMANS 5:8

MEDITATE:

Joseph was able to find forgiveness for his brothers after all that he suffered through. Not only that, but he says “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20).

In Jesus, we see the ultimate example of something that was meant for evil being turned into good. In the face of great suffering on the cross, Jesus offered forgiveness. Imagine if he hadn’t—choosing to suffer for your sins and offering forgiveness was the key act upon which the future of humanity lay.

How does knowing about what Jesus did for you (unlike Joseph, who only had an incomplete picture of the love and forgiveness of God) give you the ability to live in such a way that you can love and forgive in a greater manner than even Joseph could?

APPLY:

In light of all that Jesus has done for you, the forgiveness and mercy He has shown you, send a text, an email, or a letter to someone who God is calling you to forgive.

Any clarity on your

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TOOLS | TIPS | TRICKS

Find more online at whoisgrace.com/JOSEPH

BIBLE STUDY IN 15 MINUTES (FOR THOSE JUST STARTING OUT):

- 1. Find your chair (2 min.):** Find your way to that chair where you meet with God. Be still. slow down. Get a cup of coffee, light a candle, cue up some worship music, open your hands, whatever might help you to prepare your heart to meet with God. Take a few deep breaths and let God know you're ready and expectant that He will speak to you through His word.
- 2. Read the Word (4 min.):** Read the assigned passage for the day. It often helps concentration to read out loud. As you are reading, reflect on what God might be saying to you. Notice any repeated themes or words that get your attention.
- 3. Meditate on the Word (4 min.):** Consider the meaning of the passage. Use the questions provided in this book to interact with the text, and write down your thoughts.
- 4. Apply the Word (2 min.):** Determine what you need to do about what you read. Write out a personal application in the space provided in this devotional. The best applications are specific and measurable.
- 5. Pray (3 min.):** Conclude your quiet time by talking to God about what He has shown you and making your requests from your prayer list.

COMMON PROBLEMS WITH DAILY DEVOTIONS

- » **Discipline.** Go to bed on time, get up immediately upon waking, be aware of time robbers (TV, phone, Netflix, etc.), go to bed thinking of scripture.
- » **Dry Spells.** Don't base your success on fuzzy feelings. If you miss a day or a couple of days – don't give up all together – just pick up where you left off and keep going. Saturdays will be a catch-up day for this study.
- » **Concentration.** Give God the best part of your day. If you're a morning person – meet him in the morning, and if you're a late-night person – do it at night. Other tips to help you concentrate; be awake, read and pray aloud, walk while you pray, record things in your devotional book, find an accountability partner.
- » **Discouragement.** Consider making a covenant with God, expect the devil's excuses and attacks, share your intentions with your Life Group or accountability partner, leave your Bible open the night before to the passage you're going to read the next day



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