

Bible Essentials

Scripture Passage: Genesis 40:1-23

As a group, share something about your past week. For example, share prayer requests and answers to prayer. Share the best and worst moments of your week (highs and lows). Write prayer requests here. Open with prayer for these requests and for God to open your hearts to this week's study.

Have you ever gotten in trouble for something you didn't do? What happened?

Read today's passage. Discuss your initial impressions of the passage. Write any major points here.

Here is some context for Genesis 40:1-23.

Let's quickly review where we are in Joseph's story. Joseph is the 11th of 12 sons born to Jacob, but he is also the firstborn of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. This means that Jacob loved Joseph more than his other brothers, and Joseph's brothers were jealous and hated Joseph. Out of their hatred, they sold Joseph into slavery and told their father that he was dead.

Through Midianite traders, Joseph made his way to Egypt, where he became a slave in the house of Potiphar, one of the Pharaoh's officials. After some time, Potiphar's wife noticed her attraction to Joseph and tried to seduce him. When Joseph refused, she made up a story that he had tried to seduce her. This made Potiphar angry, and he had Joseph thrown in prison.

Through all of this, God was with Joseph and blessed all the work he did. Potiphar noticed God's presence with Joseph and put him in charge of all he owned, until his wife deceived him and he had Joseph thrown in prison. While in prison, the prison warden also noticed God's presence with Joseph and put him in charge of all the prisoners. So this is where we find Joseph in today's story—in prison, overseeing the prisoners.

One thing of context that I got from reading this week's passage that I hadn't ever paid attention to before—the prison where Joseph was being kept was in Potiphar's house. Genesis 39:1 tells us that Potiphar was captain of the guard. Genesis 40:3 says that Joseph was confined in the prison that was in the house of the captain of the guard. Later, in Genesis 40:7, it tells us that the two officials were in custody with Joseph in his master's house. His master is Potiphar. So even though Joseph was in prison, Potiphar seemingly still had contact with him, and indeed still favored him, as he allowed Joseph to be in charge of the other prisoners. I guess I always imagined Joseph in a dark dungeon-like prison that was far away from Potiphar and his wife. But that appears to not be the case.

What are your thoughts about the context? Discuss the context as a group. Write some key points here.

Read the passage again. Use a different Bible version if you have one available. Have someone summarize the passage in their own words, and use this space to record that summary.

Look closely at the passage and answer the following questions as a group. Write notes in the space provided.

What does the passage say about God?

What does the passage say about people?

What does the passage say about God's plan?

What else strikes you about this passage?

Understanding how a passage fits into the overarching story of the Bible is important.

In this week's passage, we see that when God works in our lives, he may only give us one tiny step forward before we have a period of waiting again. In Joseph's life, his first step on his path to Pharaoh was being sold into slavery. Once he was sold to Potiphar, there was a period of waiting before the next step—being thrown in prison. Once he was in prison, there was a period of waiting until he came in contact with the cupbearer and baker. Once they were in prison, there was a period of waiting until they had their dreams and Joseph interpreted them. Once the cupbearer was restored, there was another period of waiting because the cupbearer forgot about Joseph and didn't mention him to Pharaoh. God only allows forward steps to happen in his timing, and often, that timing doesn't make sense to us.

We see this also in Jesus' life. There were many times when Jesus didn't act the way his disciples or the crowds wanted him to act because "my time has not yet come" (see John 2:1-11, John 7:6-8). Only when the time was right did Jesus act. Only in John 17, at the cusp of his betrayal and crucifixion, did Jesus say, "the hour has come." Each step that Jesus took was a deliberate act to get him to the cross, but there were also times

when Jesus said, no, now is a time of waiting. He didn't start doing miracles when he was a kid (at least that we know). He didn't go out and try to persuade the crowds to rise up and make him king (at least, not an earthly king). He often told people he healed to not tell anyone (see Matthew 9:27-31). He knew that each step of his life needed to be in God's timing, and he knew when the time was not yet right—and he knew when it was right.

In our lives, we can trust that God knows the right timing for each step that will get us to the destination he wants for us. If it feels like you are in a period of waiting, trust that God has given you that time to learn to trust in him. Along the way, take every opportunity presented to you to be kind and compassionate to others. You never know which connection will make the difference.

What are your thoughts on how this passage fits into the overarching story of the Bible? Discuss as a group. What questions do you have individually or as a group? Discuss potential answers.

As a group, use the following questions to apply today's Scripture passage to your life. How does this passage affect how you view God?

How does this passage affect how you view yourself?

How does this passage affect how you will live your life?

Close in prayer, asking God to help you apply what you learned today.