

It's Not Fair

Genesis 41:1-46

Week of July 7, 2024

BELONG

Ask this Ice Breaker Question: Briefly share a story about a time when you were utterly lost (geographically) and how you got back on track.

BELIEVE

Have someone in your group read aloud: Genesis 41:1-46

Leader Context (not to be read aloud):

From the time Joseph was rejected by his brothers, he seemed destined to experience sorrow and heartache. Far from a family that in any case did not seem to want him, he found himself enslaved and consigned to a painful existence. For a brief time, he rose to prominence in the household of Potiphar, but even that degree of relief was soon lost. It seemed for a period that Joseph had been appointed to grow old rapidly in the confines of an Egyptian prison. As so often happens in Scripture, however, appearances were deceiving. Genesis 41-42 provides the remarkable account of how God elevated Joseph to the rule of Egypt and brought his guilty brothers before him for the first time in thirteen years. Instead of immediately taking his revenge, however, Joseph wisely set out to discover the spiritual condition of his siblings. After insightful questioning, he determined to seek their welfare in spite of their former treatment of him. Throughout the whole process, he modeled the proper Christian response to adversity and anticipated the behavior that will be seen later in Israel's Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask these questions to prompt group discussion:

- 1. Why is it important for us to know the lapse of time mentioned in verse 1? What effect do you think this time had on Joseph?**

Leader Context (Not to be read aloud):

Of all Joseph's disappointments, the failure of Pharaoh's cupbearer to remember him provides the severest test. For two full years, Joseph waits and nothing happens. His kindness toward another man in trouble seems to have been forgotten. God, however, has plans to relieve Joseph's confinement in a way that neither he nor anyone else could have imagined. In the interim, like his great-grandfather Abraham, Joseph had to wait and wonder what God was up to. In trying situations like these we see unique opportunities to worship God through lament (e.g. Ps 77).

- 2. The timing of this episode is again pointed out as crucial in verse 9 ("today"). If the cupbearer had kept his promise at the time of his release, would things have gone as well for Joseph as they did? What do you learn here about God's timing?**



Leader Context (Not to be read aloud):

Happily for Joseph, the Pharaoh fails to find anyone who understands the significance of his dreams. In this narrative, Pharaoh unwittingly becomes an illustration of a biblical proverb. Solomon wrote, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases" (Prov. 21:1). Though Joseph's elevation in Egypt seems like the product of a simple case of insomnia, in reality the Pharaoh is dancing to God's tune. Believers can trust the God of heaven to move even the most spiritually indifferent people to accomplish His purposes. Furthermore, we can trust His timing is always perfect (despite our attempts to tell Him otherwise when we are in seasons of waiting). As John Piper says in his book/film on the life of Job, "Beware the thought that all is vain; In time God's wisdom will be plain." His ways are often easier to discern in the rear-view mirror.

3. Joseph became viceroy of Egypt at Pharaoh's command. He would prove to be outstanding at his work. What training did he receive that enabled him to exhibit such excellence? Do you see a spiritual principle here?

Leader Context (Not to be read aloud):

While he gained some experience under Jacob's roof, it was his times as prisoner and steward that he would have gained not only tactical wisdom (esp from Potiphar, but perhaps also the jail warden) but personal wisdom and grit that comes through trials. Add to this the fact that Joseph lived by the principle "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7) and was under the Abrahamic blessing (Gen 12:1-3) and you have a powerful recipe.

BECOME:

Ask this question:

4. Read Rom 5:3-4 together (if time also Psalm 77). Waiting on God is hard. How can these passages, and Joseph's example, encourage and anchor your soul?

Leader Context (Not to be read aloud):

For further study and encouragement on the topic of lament, you may find these helpful:

- *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy* (book by Mark Vroegop)
- *A Sacred Sorrow* (book by Michael Card)
- *The Silence of God* (song by Andrew Peterson)
- *The Misery of Job and the Mercy of God* (book and animation film by John Piper)

Close by praying together.