

It's Not Fair

Genesis 39:2-20

Week of June 16, 2024

BELONG

Ask this Ice Breaker Question: Share a recent book, movie, or podcast you have been impacted by recently and one takeaway you have gleaned from it.

BELIEVE

Have someone in your group read aloud: Genesis 39:2-20

Leader Context (not to be read aloud):

Few people in history have faced Joseph's obstacles: undeserved hatred, family rejection, slavery, and inexperience—just to name a few. With God's help, he overcame them all and became an example of how God would have believers act in the face of adversity. Joseph's integrity leads him into additional terrors, for he will not yield his godly character under any circumstances. He exhibits the proper way to cope with disappointment, for the more he behaves righteously, the more difficult his life seems to become. Joseph's conduct in dealing with his master's wife shows the difference between himself and his father. Jacob spent much of his life looking for ways to deceive and take advantage of others. In the process he often seemed merely reactive as one person and then another tugged him in various directions. Joseph, by contrast, is a man of conviction. He does not look for advantage, but only for a way to obey Yahweh. He proves to be an exemplary Israelite.

Ask these questions to prompt group discussion:

- 1. Read verse 9 again, along with Acts 5:3-4. Whom did Joseph identify as the primary offended party if he had sinned? Why does that matter?**

Leader Context (Not to be read aloud):

While Potiphar would have certainly been affected and offended, any sin is first and foremost against our holy God. See also Ps 7:11-13, Luke 12:4-5 and 1 Peter 1:15-16.

- 2. What boundaries do we see Joseph put in place to guard himself against the schemes of Potiphar's wife?**

Leader Context (Not to be read aloud):

In taking his stand, Joseph does not assume an arrogant, holier-than-thou attitude. He carefully defends himself on the grounds that sexual relations with her would be treacherous. He would be betraying a man who has been unusually kind to him. At the same time, such actions can only be characterized as wicked and an offense against God. Joseph is careful not to stay near her for long periods of time, for he recognizes his danger. He knows that the freedom God gives to mankind is



a freedom within fences. Neither Joseph nor Mrs. Potiphar nor anyone else is free to indulge in unbridled sexual license. Sexual relations constitute a gift that God intends to be enjoyed only within the confines of marriage.

3. In her report, Potiphar's wife not only lied but used condescending tone & language when referring to Joseph. Although Potiphar was angry and threw Joseph in prison, is there anything that would suggest he doubted the truthfulness of her story?

Leader Context (Not to be read aloud):

In Mrs. Potiphar's twisted account of events to her husband, she uses a cleverly ambiguous phrase that suggests, "That Hebrew slave you brought us to make sport of me came to me." By using such language, she may have been making a subtle dig at what she perceived as Potiphar's hateful attitude toward her. Potiphar may well have been angry with his wife, since now he would again have to take charge of the household. Appearances had to be honored, however, and Potiphar determined to punish what he sees as rank treachery on his steward's part. He could have had Joseph executed, but (perhaps because of his past service) has him thrown into prison instead.

BECOME:

Ask this question:

4. Have you ever been wrongfully accused? What did that feel like, and what can we learn from Joseph on how we can respond?

Leader Context (Not to be read aloud):

Instead of becoming bitter, Joseph will soon follow Peter's advice for just such circumstances: "It is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God" (1 Pet. 2:19-20). From time to time believers find themselves in circumstances where temptation is unavoidable. Joseph's behavior in Potiphar's household provides an example of how to be above reproach at such times. Righteous behavior, however, may still produce painful results. Joseph will soon display what it means to bear up under such pain.

Close by praying together.