

#### Day Four

No doubt you have heard the expression: Misery loves company. What does that mean?

Let's pick up Joseph's story . . . where he gets more company in the midst of his trouble. Read Genesis 40:1-15.

Whose situation is the worst--Joseph's, the cupbearer's, or the baker's? Why?

What happened last time Joseph had any dealings with dreams?

How could that past experience have left him feeling about dreams and what God does in and through them?

Has Joseph any track record to indicate that dreams either come from the Lord or that they give any indication of what the Lord intends to have happen? Why or why not?

Given Joseph's experience with dreams, what kind of response might have been reasonable when the cupbearer and the baker raised the issue with Joseph? How could the idea of "misery loving company" have come into play in this moment in Joseph's life?

What does Joseph's reply (in Genesis 40:8) tell you about what is going on in his mind and heart as he listens to the stories of the cupbearer and the baker?

It goes without saying that Joseph is not perfect. And, we are not being told his story simply to serve as a "moral example" for us. We need to be attentive to what God is

doing and how Joseph relates to Him in the midst of this story. After all, ultimately we are reading the story of what God is doing! Nevertheless, Joseph is living well in God's story. What are you seeing in Joseph that might nudge you toward a healthier way for you to live in God's story?

#### Day Five

Jesus talks to His friends about what it looks like to live in the story that God is writing in Matthew 5:38-48.

What ways do people respond to injustice and unfair treatment when they don't realize that God is up to something in the world?

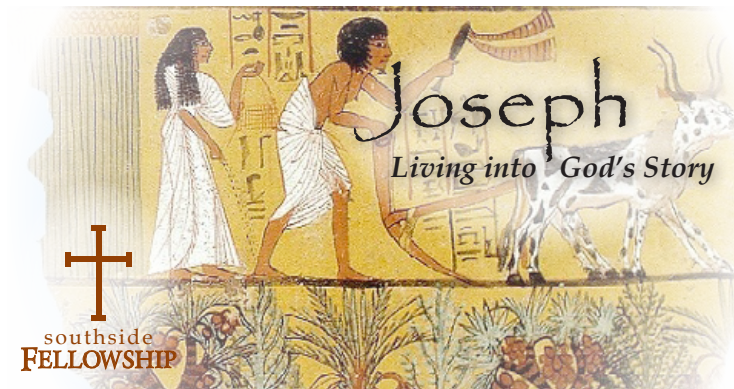
What ways does Jesus invite us to live out our understanding that we are in the story God is writing?

What will be the result of our living well in the midst of mistreatment, trouble, and challenges?

Does Jesus promise that if we love our enemies they will repent and treat us well? Does Jesus tell us that praying for those who abuse us will necessarily result in our receiving better treatment? If so, why? If not, what *is* the promise He holds out for us?

How do you see this passage in Matthew serving as a kind of "commentary" on how Joseph lived? Where do the themes or ideas intersect and overlap?

Spend time today talking to Jesus about the hard places and challenging relationships you are facing in life. Be honest with Him about all you are facing. Then, ask Him for insight and wisdom to see how you could live in those tough times and places as if you really were living in His story.



Weekly Devotional Guide

February 28, 2010

Genesis 40: Doing What You Do

#### Day One

When we read Biblical accounts, we have to guard against "Hollywood-izing" them--to not imagine the scenes in a kind of sanitized "movie" version. That is important as we look to Joseph's situation in Egypt. What kind of image do you have of Joseph's "prison"? His prison was no orderly, airy, well-lit "holding place" for criminals under the care and watchful eye of humane well-trained guards. Think of a sunless, below ground pit where prisoners are treated little better than caged animals. And with that in mind, read Genesis 39:19-40:8.

When Joseph first met his new "jailer," what do you think that jailer must have thought about him?

How would the jailer likely take to a "foreigner" (as Joseph was)?

How might the jailer treat someone who was only a slave--to be bought and sold (as Joseph was)?

Joseph had been esteemed in Potiphar's eyes--much higher than the jailer who also served Potiphar. What might that have meant for the way this jailer saw Joseph?

And think about the crime Joseph is charged with-- a slave stupidly or foolishly trying to steal away his

master's wife. What kind of initial impression might that have left in the mind of the jailer?

We don't want to read into the text what is not there; but we do want to read the text honestly. So, thinking along those lines, what kind of *natural affinity* would you have expected between the jailer and Joseph?

What kind of relationship with the jailer did Joseph ultimately have?

What explanation does the text offer you as to how or why Joseph ended up with this kind of relationship with the chief jailer?

This passage does not promise us that God will always turn the relationships we have with others in favorable directions, but it does underscore the reality that even in the worst of circumstances favorable relationships are in the hands of the Lord. Seeing this, how might you think differently about those with whom you are in relationship--even in those hard places in life?

### *Day Two*

Joseph ends up in relationship with two significant "heavy hitters" in Egypt--Potiphar, the captain of the guard, and the keeper of Pharaoh's prison. Read back over Genesis 39:1-23, and make a comparison of how Joseph's relationship with these men played out:

*Joseph as a slave in  
Potiphar's house*

*Joseph as a prisoner  
in Pharaoh's prison*

What do you note about God's presence?

Gen. 39:2

Gen. 39:20-21

What do you see about Joseph's treatment?

Gen. 39:4

Gen. 39:21

What can be said about Joseph's role?

Gen. 39:4

Gen. 39:22

What was the result of Joseph's service?

Gen. 39:6

Gen. 39:23

To what can we attribute the way things are playing out in Joseph's life?

Gen. 39:2

Gen. 39:23

How would you describe the "pattern" that you see pictured here in Joseph's life?

We cannot insist that God must do with us what He did with and for Joseph. However, we can often end up complaining too easily about the situation in which we find ourselves. "If only I didn't have to face this! If only things were different!" But sometimes we are *in* the situation we find ourselves; we're going to be there for awhile. Joseph's situation was hardly optimal; it clearly couldn't have been what he wanted. But watching Joseph respond--watching him live in the midst of less than optimal conditions--what can you learn that might help you live well, in step with the Lord, in those hard times in life?

### *Day Three*

Let's do a little "synthesis." That is, let's try and step back from the details of the story we have been reading and make sure that we are getting a grasp on the major movements of what is going on in Joseph's life. Feel free to glance back through chapters 37 through 39 as you reflect on and answer the following questions.

How does Joseph's father feel toward him? How does he treat Joseph?

How do Joseph's brothers feel toward him? How do they treat him?

How does Potiphar initially feel toward Joseph? How does he treat Joseph?

How does Potiphar's wife feel toward Joseph? How does she end up treating him?

How does Potiphar come to feel about Joseph? What does he ultimately do with Joseph?

How does the jailer end up feeling toward Joseph? How does he end up treating Joseph?

On the surface of it, who would you have anticipated would have had the best relationship with Joseph: his family or pagan foreigners? Why?

Perhaps there is a lesson for us in this bigger picture of how Joseph's life is playing out. Complete this sentence the way you *tend to think life will play out*:

If I live right in relationship with others they will . . .

How does Joseph's story challenge or shape your thinking about what God might be doing in your life through your relationships with others?