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**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Take some time to build relationships with the students:

* Ask for each student’s high and low from the week.
* Today’s RBQ (Relationship Building Question): If a theme song played every time you entered a room, what song would you choose? Why?

**INTRODUCTION**

The story of Joseph may be a familiar one. You may know of Joseph and his “coat of many colors.” But unlike the bright, vibrant coat you may have in your mind, the story of Joseph also includes sin, deception, slavery, and suffering. While we may never suffer in quite the same ways as Joseph, we will undoubtedly experience suffering in life. While we may not sin in quite the same ways as Joseph’s brothers, we do sin. How do we respond? Do we allow the hardships of life to keep us down? Do we let our sin have the final say in who we are? Or do we live with the confidence that God is sovereign over all? The story of Joseph is a picture of the gospel. Just as God remained with Joseph throughout his life, God remains with us. God keeps his promises and works everything out for the good of those that love him (Rom. 8:28). Though we are sinful, Christ died for our sins and rose again, so that we may live in relationship with Him. At the end of this lesson, you should have a renewed appreciation for the gospel and a renewed love for Christ as he continually demonstrates his love and mercy toward us.

**What types of things distract you from God’s work in your life – is it how others treat you, is it sin in your life?**

***READ GENESIS 37:1-11***

1. Have you ever had a dream or calling from God that may not have been supported by others around you? What steps can you take to trust God and follow where God is leading?
2. Have you ever been envious of what God is doing in someone else’s life? How can you focus on the good things God is doing in and through you rather than looking elsewhere?

***READ GENESIS 37:12-36***

1. Have you ever felt so deep in sin that it felt impossible to reverse course?
2. Think of a time when you have been treated unfairly. How did you respond? How can we model Jesus Christ by forgiving those that have wronged us?

**WRAP UP**

**Put today's lesson into action: How can you apply it to your life?**

Do you identify with Joseph or his brothers? Perhaps, both? Regardless of which season you are in, how will you trust God and live out the gospel?

*Ask for any prayer requests and pray for one another.*

**EXTENDED CUT**

Joseph follows the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Genesis 12, God makes a covenant with Abraham, promising to bless him and his descendants (Gen. 12: 1-3). God fulfills his promises to Abraham and continues to fulfill his promises through Joseph. The story of Joseph is a long and winding one with 13 chapters in Genesis covering his life (Gen. 37-50). This lesson only deals with the beginning of Joseph’s journey. After being sold in slavery to Egypt, Joseph works for the Potiphar, spends time in prison, rises to a position of authority in Egypt, helps Egypt, and reconciles with his brothers. Later in the Joseph story, God uses Joseph to bless the nations during a famine (Gen. 41). Even throughout the early struggles that we see in this lesson, God uses Joseph to demonstrate His providence for his people and sovereignty over all. While Joseph consistently demonstrates his solid character during his life and remains faithful to God, that is not the focus. Ultimately, the story is about God. God keeps his covenant and fulfills his promises to his people. Despite sibling jealousy, deception, slavery, and famine, God remains with his people and provides for them. The story of Joseph reflects the story of Jesus, the suffering servant, who is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises. All of God’s promises find their “Yes” in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

**1. Have you ever had a dream or calling from God that may not have been supported by others around you? What steps can you take to trust God and follow where God is leading?**

All of us have been called to live with Jesus and for him (Phil. 3:14). God has also created every person with a unique purpose and set of gifts. Discerning where God is calling us to can be difficult. God can speak through dreams and through other people. The primary way God calls us is through his Word (2 Tim. 3:16). If those around you are not supportive of your calling, turn to Scripture to see if such a calling is consistent with God’s teaching. Does your calling glorify God? Moreover, seek counsel from trusted Christian leaders, mentors, and friends. Are those you are talking with wise, trusted friends and leaders who love the Lord and have your best interest at heart or are they individuals who could be jealous themselves? In these moments, continue to pray and seek wisdom from God through his Word.

**2. Have you ever been envious of what God is doing in someone else’s life? How can you focus on the good things God is doing in and through you rather than looking elsewhere?**

The brothers are jealous of Joseph’s grand dreams foreshadowing power and authority. They probably cannot imagine nor fathom bowing down to their brother in such a way. How would you react if your brother or friend all of a sudden said you would submit to their authority and rule one day? Probably not great. Jealousy though is a form of hatred and followers of Christ are called to love. Rather than look upon others with envy, celebrate with others. And in moments of jealousy, focus on what God has done and is doing in your life. God has uniquely made and gifted you. Your journey is going to be different from others’. Trust that God will continue to work in and through you. Continue to talk to God in prayer and rely on his Word for wisdom.

**3. Have you ever felt so deep in sin that it felt impossible to reverse course?**

Sin compounds. One sin can easily lead to another if not addressed. Sin can blind us and cause us to act in ways that are counter to Christ. And sin always leads to suffering. We see this with Joseph’s brothers. Their jealousy toward Joseph led to the murder plot which led to the selling of Joseph into slavery which led to them lying to Jacob about Joseph’s “death.” Joseph’s brothers quickly go from their jealousy and animosity toward Joseph to plotting to kill him. As we begin to justify our sin to ourselves, we forget the presence of God in our lives. All of us have been born into sin; we cannot escape it (Eph. 2:1-3). We can, however, remember that God is sovereign over all sin. Through his sinless life and death on the cross, God in Jesus Christ conquered sin and death so that we may be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:18). While sin can sometimes seem like shackles holding us in place, Jesus provides us freedom from sin. All we need to do is respond to the grace of God by placing our faith in Christ.

**4. Think of a time when you have been treated unfairly. How did you respond? How can we model Jesus Christ by forgiving those that have wronged us?**

The story of Joseph goes through Genesis 50. Later in the story, Joseph rises to a place of authority and leadership in Egypt. Joseph leads the people through a famine. It is during the famine that Joseph reconnects with his brothers and ultimately forgives them. Joseph trusts in God and forgives his brothers (Gen. 50:20). Forgiveness is never easy. It is easy to hold onto grudges. As followers of Christ though, we are called to forgive others just as Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:32). Jesus did not deserve the pain and suffering he endured on the cross. We did. In response to God’s grace for us, we should forgive others and live out the gospel. If it is difficult for you to forgive someone, ask God for assistance and pray for that person. While not easy, forgiveness is a choice and God can give you the strength and wisdom to forgive.