

COMMUNITY GROUP GUIDE

Grace in the midst of chaos

INTRODUCTION |

Life can throw difficulties at you from out of nowhere. Why is this? Even if we reflect on the circumstances it is impossible to understand that chaos. Joseph himself had these kind of “what is the meaning of all of this” experiences. When he was sold into slavery by his brothers in Egypt, although his master took great interest and care of him and even though he obeyed the commands of God, his master's wife acted with malice towards him and had him arrested. In the midst of this chaos, we can often forget God's love, God's power and even His existence. Yet, as we look at the Joseph story, his chaotic circumstances we must ask, where was God? Furthermore, what is God telling us about himself?

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 39:20-40:8, 40:12-15, 41:14-16, 41:37-40, 45:4-8

And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. 21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

Joseph Interprets Two Prisoners' Dreams

40 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody. 5 And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” 8 They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpret them to belong to God? Please tell them to me.”

40:12 Then Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. 13 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. 14 Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. 15 For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.”

41:14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”

41:37 This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.”

45:4 So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.

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QUESTIONS |

- 1: When Joseph was in prison where was God? (39:21-23) Why is this expression repeated multiple times? When we are in the midst of chaotic times, how is it an encouragement to know that the Lord is with us?
- 2: If you look at the whole story, why did God allow Joseph to be thrown in prison? How did being thrown in prison connect with a good result (Gen 50:20). In our lives, if we believe God is working all things together for good, what kind of change does this effect in us?
- 3: What do we understand of God's power from this story? At this time, the king of Egypt was considered to be all powerful. How would you compare the king of Egypt with God? How are you encouraged by having God with you?
- 4: What do we understand of God's love from this story? what do we understand of God's love for Joseph, Israel and Egypt? If we can see that God surpasses our understanding in His love, how does this change our perspective of life's difficulties?
- 5: Seen from God's perspective, everything is according to His timing, but could Joseph understand this reality? From this story, what can we learn of perseverance?
- 6: God was with Joseph in silence. Jesus' is called Immanuel "God with us". What does Christ's existence confirm for us about God (Mat 28:20)? Joseph through his struggle was used as a tool to save the world. How is Christ like Joseph and how is he different? How does knowing that God is using our suffering help to encourage us?

REFERENCES |

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

PRAYER |

- Let us look for the grace of God in hot midst of difficulty!
- Pastor Fukuda has been hospitalized. Please pray for his recovery.

UPCOMING EVENTS | This Week & Next Week

Gospel choir (11/14)
Lunchtime meetings (11/15 Kudanshita, 11/16 Kasumigaseki, 11/17 Otemachi)
Obento Project (11/19)
Sunday corporate worship (11/20 KDdI Hall: 2 services 13:00~ & 15:30~)
Lunchtime meetings (11/24 Otemachi)
Sunday corporate worship (11/27 KDDI hall)