



HOME GROUPS

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Series: **Joseph Week 2**

Kensington Commons

Read: Genesis 37:1-11

SUMMARY:

Last week we looked at Joseph's predecessors, Abraham and Jacob, to set the stage for the series and grappled with the ideas of a detour and starting afresh as well as our experience of struggle as part of our encounter with the divine.

This week we are getting started with the story of Joseph. This is how Nahum Sarna describes the story of Joseph: "By far the longest and most complete narrative in Genesis, it is set forth by a master storyteller who employs with consummate skill the novelistic techniques of character delineation, psychological manipulation, and dramatic suspense."¹ As we dig through the story, you are invited to pay attention to how this beautiful narrative is put together and to listen to those particular moments when it speaks to us about what it means to be human.

¹ Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, 284.

² W. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 289.

³ "could not speak a kind word to him" could also be translated as "could not so much as greet him." B. Waltke, *Genesis*, 500.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As you come together to look at the beginning of the Joseph story, which for the most part does not mention God directly and instead shows that "the purposes of God are at work in hidden and unnoticed ways"², share about some things or experiences from this past week for which you are grateful, and if there was anything that you've experienced as depleting or frustrating.
2. Read Genesis 37:1-4, noticing the main characters in the story and their relationships. Get 37:1 can be literally translated as "Jacob sat where his father had walked." In what ways does it challenge our contemporary idea of a self-made person? If you were to name one person in your life, a parent, friend, mentor, coach, etc, on whose shoulders you stand, or who's played a huge role in your own story, who would that be?
3. What does the narrator want us to know about this family?³

Walter Brueggemann believes that this story “contacts our life, for each of us lives at some point in such triangles as one having been loved too much (Joseph), one loving too much (Jacob), or one feeling loved too little (the brothers).” In what way can you relate to that?

4. Read Genesis 37:5-11, paying attention to the intensifiers, repeated events, key words or phrases, as well as the characters’ actions and emotions.⁴ What elements here foreshadow the coming disaster? How does the writer structure the flow of the story to build up tension?

5. What is the substance of Joseph’s dreams? Why does he share them? And what kind of reaction do they produce in his family members?⁵

6. What has been your experience like with receiving or giving criticism? In what ways has it helped you learn and grow? And how has it prevented you from dreaming?

7. This week, take some time to reflect on whether there are some dreams in your life that have been shut down too soon and which you would like to recover. Or, if there are things that are just for you, things that God wants you to sit with to allow them to germinate for a bit longer. You can spend some

time journaling, praying, maybe joining the labyrinth prayer on Saturday.

BENEDICTION from the sermon:

*May you dream well this week,
May you sit and ponder and hold the matter in your mind,
May you find the safe spaces to share your story with the
right people,
And when the time is right,
Might you pursue where God calls you, with everything you
have.*

⁴ “The predictive aspect of dreams was universally assumed in the ancient world, and this was reason enough for the brothers to take Joseph seriously. However, since the dream was also recognized to be inseparable from the personality of the dreamer, reflecting his own needs and wishes, Joseph bore, in the eyes of his brothers, a measure of responsibility for his highly egocentric vision of superiority and lordship.” Sarna, Genesis, 286.

⁵ - “to reign over” comes from “melek” which means king, and it means to be appointed over, but “to rule” comes from “mashal”, which, according to the medieval rabbi Ibn Ezra, suggests someone who usurps power more like a tyrant or an oppressor (in Joseph Week 2)

- “and what he had said”, literally in Hebrew, “and for his words”, meaning not only the information, but the way Joseph said it. (Waltke, 501)