



## — Calling All Dreamers —

Genesis 37, 39, 41, 42, 45

### Small Group Plan

*Faith is better understood as a verb than as a noun, as a process than as a possession. It is on-again-off-again rather than once-and-for-all. Faith is not being sure of where you're going but going anyway. A journey without maps. Tillich said that doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith.*

— From ***Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC***  
by Frederick Buechner

Joseph was a dreamer, but he was a cocky dreamer. Being the favorite son who received special treatment had made him arrogant. So, when God gave him a dream that he would one day lead his family, he rubbed it in. He was young and lacked experience, insight, and especially humility. His father reprimanded him, but his brothers wanted a tougher consequence. They wanted revenge. And so began a painful process that took Joseph from castaway, to slave, to prisoner, and finally, to national leader. It was God's process. He was becoming, not just a dreamer, but a humble dreamer..

### OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How does it feel to know exactly where you are going?
- How does it feel to have your plans forcefully misunderstood?

### LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

## — THE DREAMS OF A FAVORED SON —

Genesis 37:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. <sup>3</sup> Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. <sup>4</sup> When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. <sup>5</sup> Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: <sup>7</sup> We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." <sup>8</sup> His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

- Why did his brothers sell him instead of kill him?
- If you had a brother like Joseph, how would you feel & what would you do?
- If you were a family therapist, how would you approach this family?

## — THE DREAMS OF A FORGOTTEN SLAVE —

### Genesis 39:11-23

<sup>11</sup> One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. <sup>12</sup> She caught him by his cloak and said, “Come to bed with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. <sup>13</sup> When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, <sup>14</sup> she called her household servants. “Look,” she said to them, “this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. <sup>15</sup> When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.” <sup>16</sup> She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. <sup>17</sup> Then she told him this story: “That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. <sup>18</sup> But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.” <sup>19</sup> When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, “This is how your slave treated me,” he burned with anger. <sup>20</sup> Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, <sup>21</sup> the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. <sup>22</sup> So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. <sup>23</sup> The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

- How was Joseph able to resist Potiphar’s wife?
- When God granted Joseph “favor in the eyes of the prison warden” what had God actually done: (1) change the warden’s viewpoint. (2) hide Joseph’s real character. (3) give him an opportunity to show his skills and character. (4) something else?
- Why did the warden put Joseph in charge of the entire prison?

### Genesis 41:1-13

<sup>1</sup> When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, <sup>2</sup> when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. <sup>3</sup> After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. <sup>4</sup> And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. <sup>5</sup> He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. <sup>6</sup> After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted — thin and scorched by the east wind. <sup>7</sup> The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. <sup>8</sup> In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. <sup>9</sup> Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. <sup>10</sup> Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. <sup>11</sup> Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. <sup>12</sup> Now a

young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. <sup>13</sup> And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged.”

- How would it feel to be in prison for a period of years for something you did not do?
- In this part of the story, what part of Joseph’s character is most impressive to you?

## — THE DREAMS OF A FAMOUS STATESMAN —

### Genesis 41:14-43

<sup>14</sup> So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. <sup>15</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” <sup>16</sup> “I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.” <sup>17</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, <sup>18</sup> when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. <sup>19</sup> After them, seven other cows came up — scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup> The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. <sup>21</sup> But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up. <sup>22</sup> “In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. <sup>23</sup> After them, seven other heads sprouted — withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. <sup>24</sup> The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me.” <sup>25</sup> Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>26</sup> The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. <sup>27</sup> The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. <sup>28</sup> “It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>29</sup> Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. <sup>31</sup> The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. <sup>32</sup> The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon. <sup>33</sup> “And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. <sup>34</sup> Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. <sup>35</sup> They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. <sup>36</sup> This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.” <sup>37</sup> The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. <sup>38</sup> So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?” <sup>39</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. <sup>40</sup> You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.” <sup>41</sup> So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I

hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” <sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. <sup>43</sup> He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

- What did Pharaoh see in Joseph that caused him to trust him?
- What does it mean that the dreams are something God “is about to do” (v. 25, 28)?

## — THE DREAMS OF A FORGIVING SIBLING —

### Genesis 42:1-13

<sup>1</sup> When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?” <sup>2</sup> He continued, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.” <sup>3</sup> Then ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. <sup>4</sup> But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. <sup>5</sup> So Israel’s sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. <sup>6</sup> Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph’s brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup> As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where do you come from?” he asked. “From the land of Canaan,” they replied, “to buy food.” <sup>8</sup> Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. <sup>9</sup> Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.” <sup>10</sup> “No, my lord,” they answered. “Your servants have come to buy food. <sup>11</sup> We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.” <sup>12</sup> “No!” he said to them. “You have come to see where our land is unprotected.” <sup>13</sup> But they replied, “Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.”

- Why does Joseph initially react as a “harsh” (v. 7) stranger?
- Why does Joseph force his brothers to feel some of what he had to endure — revenge / repentance / understanding /etc.?

### Genesis 45:1-11

<sup>1</sup> Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it. <sup>3</sup> Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. <sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! <sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. <sup>6</sup> For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. <sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup> “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. <sup>9</sup> Now hurry back to my father and say to him,

*'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. <sup>10</sup> You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me — you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. <sup>11</sup> I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'*

- Why did Joseph wait so long before he revealed his true identity?
- If you were one of the brothers, how would you have felt when he revealed himself?
- How could Joseph forgive and accept his brothers after all they had done to him?
- How is Joseph's ultimate dream (desire) finally coming true?

### **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- When and why have your dreams for the future not received acceptance by others?
- How do you respond when (like Joseph) you are betrayed by people close to you?
- What part of Joseph's character do you need the most — his patience, his forgiving spirit, his visionary insight, his faithfulness to God, etc.?
- Why are forgiveness, flexibility and acceptance vital to our creative, dreaming process?
- Pray for a heart like Joseph's — willing to endure, adapt, change forgive and grow.