

Human Trafficking Prevention: Bible Study/Small Group Guide

Our goal through this curriculum is to give you the tools to stop trafficking before it starts in your own home/community. If every adult (and specifically, parent) was aware of the issues and complexities surrounding labor and sex trafficking, they could take steps so that their children would not be sold and the supply would cease. We hope through this Bible study to equip you to protect your children and to make sure you are not adding to the “supply” of human trafficking. Join us in stopping trafficking one family at a time.

In each lesson you will find:

Leader guide:

This will help the small group or bible study leader prepare for their group time and learn about the Scripture passage being studied. We recommend reading through the entire guide and focusing on Scripture and the trafficking sections. If you need more information than provided, feel free to email faast@faastinternational.org

Group Guide:

This will guide the leader during the study in reading Scripture, application points and discussion questions in a group setting. This section contains a part on how the Scripture relates to human trafficking both in biblical times and now. It also contains a section for parents to learn about preventative measures in guarding their children and community against human trafficking schemes and situations. This section ends with a suggested activity for parents to do at home with their children.

If you find this study helpful we would ask that you **donate** to help further future FAAST projects so that we can continue to equip God’s people to end human trafficking. Give online at faastinternational.org or by mail. All donations are tax deductible.

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Leader Guide

Week 1: Joseph

Genesis 37:1-36; 39-45

Story Synopsis:

Joseph's brothers saw him as a nuisance and sold him into slavery. The traders saw him as a source of profit. Potiphar valued Joseph for his labor; Potiphar's wife wanted him for his body. Yet God had different plans for Joseph. Even through his slavery and unjust imprisonment God was with Joseph. He rescued Joseph and out of this great evil, God brought a great good and the salvation of many lives. (Gen. 50:19-20) Through the study of Joseph, our goal is to learn that you and your family are precious in God's sight and that God has a good plan for our lives.

The Story:

The favorite son, the aging father, the jealous brothers, an unfaithful wife, a worried king, and the innocent prisoner: Joseph's story of betrayal, forgiveness, and restoration is a soap-opera-worthy plot. But it is also a powerful story of God's ability to bring restoration out of our most desperate circumstances. God was with Joseph in his journey from privilege to prison to power. What the enemy meant for evil, God used for good and the salvation of many lives.

Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob, born in Jacob's old age to Jacob's favorite wife, and Jacob's favorite son. As a sign of his favor, Jacob gave Joseph a multicolored tunic, a "coat of many colors." While we don't know exactly what this coat may have looked like, it was unmistakably a sign of Joseph's favored position. It may have also signaled that Joseph, rather than one of his 10 older brothers, would be Jacob's heir. No wonder his brothers were so jealous that they "hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms" (Gen. 37:3-4).

To make matters worse, Joseph was a dreamer. Joseph's dreams revealed both his brothers and his father and mother bowing down before him. Even Jacob rebuked him. His brothers hated Joseph even more on account of his dreams and his words (Gen 37:5, 8).

Matters finally came to a head when Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers, who were pasturing their flocks near Shechem. The brothers saw Joseph coming from a long way off and had time to plot against this little brother who they sarcastically called a "master of dreams" (Gen. 37:20). They planned to kill him and throw him into a cistern, then lie to their father and say that he was killed by a "wild beast." Reuben, the eldest of the brothers,

attempted to save Joseph by encouraging the brothers to simply throw Joseph into a pit. Reuben intended to rescue Joseph later, but the brothers accepted his ruse. They avoided getting their hands dirty by throwing Joseph into a dry well so that exposure would do their work for them. But another plan presented itself: while Reuben was occupied with the flocks, a caravan of slave traders approached. At Judah's suggestion, the brothers sold Joseph to slave traders for 20 shekels of silver, the average slave price for a healthy male slave. Judah's words to his brothers as he proposed to sell Joseph rather than kill him ironically testified to the magnitude of their crime: they had sold their own brother, their own flesh and blood (Gen. 37:27).

Though his brothers betrayed Joseph, "the Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man" (Genesis 39:2). God had not abandoned Joseph. In time, Joseph rose to favor in the eyes of his master. Potiphar also recognized God's presence with Joseph and made Joseph overseer over his entire household (Gen. 39:4). It is ironic that this Egyptian recognized what Joseph's brothers did not: God's favor was on Joseph. Rather than wallowing in anger and bitterness at his unjust treatment, Joseph remained faithful and worked diligently. God also blessed Potiphar for his treatment of Joseph.

Someone else also valued Joseph, but for very different reasons. Potiphar's wife saw that Joseph was "handsome in form and appearance" (Genesis 39:7) and she attempted to seduce him. This was not a one-time occurrence, but an ongoing temptation as "day after day" she blatantly urged him to have sex with her. Joseph's refusal centered around the facts that sleeping with his master's wife would be a sin against both his master and God. Joseph was a model of integrity under pressure.

Matters escalated when Potiphar's wife reached out and grasped Joseph's coat, saying "lie with me!" Joseph fled, leaving both her and the garment behind. Spurned, Potiphar's wife cried "rape" and used Joseph's coat to support her false accusation. Joseph was falsely accused and wrongfully imprisoned. The normal punishment for a slave who dared to attack a member of the household would be death. Since Potiphar threw him into prison rather than ordering his execution, it may be that Potiphar did not totally believe his wife's story. Still, Joseph experienced another reversal of fortune.

Yet, even in prison, "the Lord was with Joseph." Joseph again rose to favor, this time in the eyes of the chief jailer. In time, Joseph had a chance to interpret dreams for two of Pharaoh's servants: his cupbearer and baker. Their respective dreams meant that the baker would be executed, but the cupbearer would be restored to his position. Events unfolded just as Joseph had said, but the cupbearer forgot his promise to remember Joseph. Joseph's hopes were dashed once more.

Proverbs 21:1 says that “the heart of the king is like water in the hand of the Lord.” Pharaoh was no exception. Two years after Joseph interpreted the dreams for Pharaoh’s servants, Pharaoh had his own troubling dreams: a dream of seven starving cows devouring seven healthy cows and a dream of seven withered ears of grain devouring seven healthy ears. None of Pharaoh’s magicians or wise men were able to interpret the dream for him. In God’s timing, the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him.

Pharaoh quickly sent for Joseph and asked if it was true that he could interpret dreams. Joseph attributed his ability to God rather than himself, and God gave Joseph the meaning of the dream: God would send seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. The Egyptians must prepare for the time of famine during the time of plenty. Like Potiphar, Pharaoh recognized God’s hand on Joseph and appointed him steward over the preparations. Joseph, former shepherd, former slave, former prisoner, was now placed by God as second only to Pharaoh over the entire land of Egypt.

God was not done yet. Driven by famine, Joseph’s brothers eventually came to Egypt and God orchestrated reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. Under Joseph’s protection, the entire family—now a large tribe—settled in Egypt, setting the stage for God’s salvation through the Exodus some 400 years later. When Joseph’s brothers begged his forgiveness, Joseph summarized the story this way: “Don’t be afraid, for am I in God’s place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Genesis 50:19, 20; see also Romans 8:28). God never abandoned Joseph. What his brothers intended for evil, God used for good and the fulfillment of his greater purposes.

Points of Application

- Joseph made choices. Joseph had many opportunities to indulge in bitterness, self-pity, or to try to find his own way out of his problems. Yet Joseph consistently chose obedience to God, even when that obedience wasn’t rewarded.
- God never abandoned Joseph. Joseph was betrayed by his family, enslaved, falsely accused, and wrongfully imprisoned, but God’s presence was always with him. Though people disappointed him, God never failed Joseph.
- What others meant for evil, God was able to use for good. Sometimes others will try to harm us or use us for their own benefit. Sometimes they succeed. But God is never blind to our pain. God sees. God knows. God cares. God is able to bring both healing and restoration.

Group Guide

Week 1: Joseph

Genesis 37:1-36; 39-45

Opener

Getting to Know Each Other: Have each person use the letters in your name to create a poem. For example, Bill could write

Big

Intelligent

Laughing

Loud

Each person must include words that tell something about yourselves -- for example, something you like to do or a personality or physical trait. This activity is a fun one that enables you to learn about each other.

Study the Scripture

Read through Genesis 37:1-36, 39-45:15 as a group

Less time? Read the synopsis in the leader guide.

Questions for Reflection

- What are some main points of this story that stand out to you?
- Why do you think Joseph was Jacob's favorite son? Why was this wrong? What if you "click" better with one of your children or have a blended family, how can you stop yourself from showing favoritism?
- Consider some of the different ways people in the story—Joseph's brothers, Potiphar, Potiphar's wife, Pharaoh—saw Joseph. What was different about the way God saw Joseph?
- In the story of Joseph, we see an example of how God used something that was meant for evil and turned it into something good. How have you seen God do the same thing in your life or in the lives of others?
- Even in the darkest times of his life, God was still with Joseph. How have you experienced God's presence with you in difficult times?

Joseph and Trafficking

Joseph was a victim of human trafficking. Human trafficking is the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons, by the means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”¹

Estimates of the number of women, men, and children in forced labor, forced bondage, and prostitution around the world are from 21 to 29 million.² The DOJ also estimates that between 14,500 and 17,500 individuals are brought across US borders for trafficking purposes each year, including men, women, and children.³ Human trafficking victims are either used for the purposes of labor or sexual exploitation.

It is not only children from other countries who are at risk. Each year, as many as 100,000-300,000 American children are at risk of being trafficked for commercial sex in the United States.⁴ They are commercially sexually exploited in homes, brothels, massage parlors, street corners, and on the internet. The sexual exploitation of children through pornography and prostitution yields billions of dollars in profit each year to their predators and pimps. The average age at which a child is first recruited into prostitution is between the ages of 12 and 14.

Potiphar’s wife attempted to use seduction to further exploit Joseph’s vulnerability. As the master’s wife, Potiphar’s wife was in a position of power over Joseph. The Bible doesn’t give many details about how Potiphar’s wife attempted to seduce Joseph other than her sheer persistence. Did she offer him money? Power? Freedom? Did she threaten him? She clearly attempted to take revenge once she understood that his rejection was final. Accusing a slave of rape could have easily been a death sentence.

Today, people are lured into sexual abuse and exploitation through a variety of recruitment techniques. Most often they are lured through false promises on the part of the trafficker. The trafficker may promise the victim a romantic relationship, work, or money to build a false sense of trust with the victim. Once the victim is under the trafficker’s control,

¹ Beth Grant and Cindy Lopez, *Hands that Heal Community Edition: International Curriculum to Train Caregivers of Trafficking Survivors*; Project rescue (2007), 37.

² <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm>;
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210737.pdf>;
<http://www.globallslaveryindex.org/report/?download>

³ Angelo P. Giardino and Robert D Sanborn (2011), “Human Trafficking: Awareness, Data, and Policy.” In *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk*. Vol 2, no 1. Article 2.

<http://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1040&context=childrenatrisk>

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice

threats, violence, fear, and guilt can keep them from leaving. Most of the time the chains that hold a victim are not actual chains, but a mixture of fear and love; making this a complicated issue. Other victims are abducted, forced into prostitution by threats against the victim or his/her family, or sold by a family member. With advances in technology, traffickers recruit their victims online through the use of social networks, in chat rooms, in clubs, on the street, through friends, and in shopping malls. Sometimes they use other children to recruit their friends at school or in after-school programs. They seek out those who are most vulnerable and lacking self-confidence, often targeting girls from single-parent homes who need the validation of a father figure. Children who have already been the target of sexual abuse are at increased risk.

God does not approve of slavery. In the story of Joseph we see that God used something that men meant for evil and instead used it for good. This is not an endorsement of evil, but a testimony to God's redeeming work. As we look at the biblical picture of slavery, we must acknowledge that the Bible never expressly forbids slavery. That does not mean that it condones it, however. In the Old Testament, God supported commands of social justice with exhortation for the Israelites to "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 24:17-22). The Old Testament law also includes specific injunctions on the treatment and welfare of slaves, including provisions under which slaves were to be granted their freedom (Exodus 21:26-27, Deut. 15:12-18). Kidnapping a fellow Israelite and treating or selling him as a slave was punishable by death (Deut. 24:7).

The New Testament also does not expressly forbid slavery. Rome greatly feared slave revolts, and if the early church had publicly advocated abolition, it would have bathed the infant religion in blood. Yet what we do see is that while the New Testament never expressly forbids slavery, it creates an environment in which slavery would eventually wither and die. Within the church, master and slave were equal. "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Group Activity

1. Force, Coercion and Fraud are tactics commonly used in human trafficking.
 - Force = Using violence to control someone
 - Coercion = Using threats to control someone
 - Fraud = Using lies to control someone

Describe how each of these was used towards Joseph.

2. What if it was you: Have each participant write a short, first person, fictional essay from the point of view of a trafficking victim. Participants should explain in the

essay how they were forced, coerced and subject to fraud leading them into trafficking by the trafficker.

Closing Prayer

May God bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
So that you may live deep within your heart.
May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.
May God bless you with tears
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, starvation and war
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them
And to turn their pain into joy.
And may God bless you with enough foolishness
To believe that you can make a difference in the world,
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done.
Amen.

- Franciscan Benediction

Taking it home

It is important to know that any child can be recruited into a false employment scheme or into the commercial sex industry--even yours. We don't say this to scare you, but to make you aware that you need to protect your child. Consider watching Lacy's story to hear how people in your own community or even church are being trafficked:

<http://vimeo.com/53178554>

Joseph's narrative begins when he is seventeen years old (Genesis 37:2) and his story is a long one filled with heartache and redemption.

Ask God to help you share this story with your children in a way that will show them God's love and plans for them. If you can, share part of what God has done in your own life to get you through hard times around the dinner table this week. An example where circumstances were out of your control, but you still chose to do the right thing with God's help (just as Joseph did), can be especially helpful for a child who is struggling.

When you are taking time to share a story about God's faithfulness through a situation that was really tough, ask your kids to share a Scripture with you that has helped them, and share one of yours. Talk about ways you can give this kind of support to other people you know--especially people who may not have a parent to lean on or Jesus to go to.

Feel free to share these Scriptures for hard times:

- James 1:2-3
- Zephaniah 3:17
- Romans 8:26-28
- Psalms 23, 40
- Proverbs 16:3, 7

Family activities

- Make posters of your favorite verses and hang them around the house.
- If you or your child knows a foster child, make a gift basket for them. Put small toys or books in the basket to let the child know how special he or she is to you and to God.
- Create a poster to build awareness about trafficking. Using a piece of poster board, make some human trafficking awareness signs. Get some ideas from the websites below and include the National Trafficking Hotline number (1-888-373-7888) on the posters.
 - <http://www.polarisproject.org/resources/outreach-and-awareness-materials>
 - <http://archive.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/factsheets.html>

Check out the Change Agents Action Kit for more ideas: faastinternational.org