

INTRODUCTION: Message - "Manasseh and Ephraim" (Genesis chs 37, 39-41)

One of satan's most effective tactics is to attack our faith at times when we are the weakest. Our weak moments come during sufferings and afflictions. Satan wants us to be discouraged and turn our attention away from the source of our strength... God. Our minds have a way of replaying a mental "tape recorder" over and over about wrongs done to us, bad decisions we've made, and lingering guilt over past sins. The mind is where many battles are fought against satan.

The topic of FAITH can hardly be discussed without mentioning Joseph. Over 10 chapters (out of 50) are devoted to Joseph's story. What can we learn from Joseph's story? Is there any comparison to his afflictions and our own circumstances today? Where does God fit in all this?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Read 2 Corinthians 2:11. Think of situations where satan was able to get an advantage over you. How did he accomplish this? Are you now more conscious of satan's methods to attack you? Do you know your own weaknesses and how to establish counter-measures?
2. Read Genesis 37:18-20. Killing Joseph would have prevented his dreams from coming true. So what happened to change their plans?
3. Read Genesis 37:24-28. What do you think Joseph could hear being said about him?
4. Read Genesis 39:7-9. Who was Joseph most concerned about? (v9)

SO WHAT?:

Joseph suffered for 13 years. Hated by his brothers, he was sold into slavery. Joseph served prison time for a crime he didn't commit. Joseph looked to God for strength in the roughest times of his young life. Joseph is a real champion of faith. Joseph's story teaches us that **how** we react to our circumstances reveals our trust (our faith) in God. It would be so easy to conclude that God has abandoned us when in reality God has important plans for us. Will your circumstances drive you further away from God OR closer to God? It is possible to keep faith in difficult circumstances. The choice is yours.

THINK ABOUT IT:

"(6) **do not be anxious about anything**, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (8) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (11) Not that I am speaking of being in need, for **I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.**" (Philippians 4:6-8, 11, English Standard Version - ESV)