

Small Group Guide: How to Survive a Famine

Series: The Story of Joseph: Seeing the Bigger Picture (Week 16)

Scripture: Genesis 47:13-31

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: What is the most challenging situation you've had to manage while dealing with multiple responsibilities at once? How did you handle it?

Sermon Recap (5 minutes)

This week we saw Joseph navigate an increasingly severe famine while managing both his family reunion and national responsibilities. Despite the mounting pressure, Joseph remained faithful to what God placed before him. The passage reminds us that God sustains His people even when circumstances worsen, and that our current provision is not our final home.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Managing Multiple Pressures

1. Joseph moved from one major life event (family reunion) to another (national crisis management) in a short time. What pressures or transitions are you currently navigating in your own life?
2. How do you typically respond when life demands more from you than you feel capable of handling? What does Joseph's example teach us about handling multiple responsibilities?
3. Read Genesis 47:13-14. The famine was "very severe" and getting worse. When have you experienced a situation that kept getting harder rather than better? How did that affect your faith?

Section 2: Wisdom in Crisis

4. At first glance, Joseph's plan might seem unfair or harsh. Why do you think the people responded by saying "You have saved our lives" (v. 25) instead of resenting him?
5. What does Joseph's strategic planning during the famine teach us about the relationship between faith and wisdom? How can we balance trusting God with taking practical action?
6. Joseph gave the people seed and only required a 20% tax. What does this reveal about Joseph's character and his concern for the people's future, not just their immediate survival?

Section 3: Remembering Our True Home

7. Read Genesis 47:27-31. Why was it so important to Jacob that he be buried in Canaan rather than Egypt, even though Egypt had become a place of provision and comfort?
 8. The sermon states: "Egypt may be where God provides for now, but it is not our final home." How does this perspective change the way we view our current circumstances, both good and bad?
 9. What are some "Egypt" in our modern lives—places of provision or comfort that we might mistake for our final destination?
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Key Takeaways

Write these down and share which one resonates most with you:

1. **God sustains His people even when the famine gets worse.** Worsening circumstances do not mean God's absence.
 2. **Faithfulness means taking the next wise step.** Joseph couldn't remove the famine, but he could be faithful with what God placed before him.
 3. **Receive God's provision with humility and thankfulness.** The Egyptians recognized Joseph's plan saved their lives rather than resenting the cost.
 4. **Remember your true home.** Current provision and comfort should not cause us to forget our eternal destination.
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Take the Next Wise Step

- Identify one area of pressure or difficulty in your life
- Rather than being overwhelmed by the entire situation, ask God: "What is the next wise step rooted in Scripture and the Spirit?"
- Take that one step this week

Option 2: Practice Gratitude in Difficulty

- Each day, write down one way God is sustaining you even in the midst of your current "famine"
- Thank Him specifically for His provision, even if circumstances haven't improved

Option 3: Remember Your True Home

- Identify one comfort or provision in your life that you may be holding too tightly
- Spend time in prayer acknowledging that while you're grateful for it, it's not your final home

- Ask God to help you hold it with open hands
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Prayer Prompts

Spend time praying together for:

- Wisdom to take the next right step in areas of pressure or difficulty
 - Eyes to see God's sustaining presence even when circumstances worsen
 - Hearts of gratitude for God's provision in our lives
 - Perspective to remember that earth is not our final home
 - Anyone in the group facing their own "famine" season
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For Further Reflection

This week, meditate on these passages:

- Hebrews 11:13-16 (Living as strangers and exiles)
 - Philippians 4:11-13 (Contentment in all circumstances)
 - James 1:5 (Asking God for wisdom)
 - Psalm 37:25 (God's faithful provision)
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Closing Thought

"Joseph could not remove the famine, but he could be faithful with what God placed in front of him. And God used Joseph's faithfulness to preserve life."

Where is God calling you to faithfulness today, even if you cannot change your circumstances?

Next Week: Continue in The Story of Joseph series