



**WEEK 1**

HIS TIMING IS PERFECT

As Joseph's story begins, we find him with his brothers, but their family is far from the ideal. Jacob's household, where Joseph is the second youngest, is fractured by anger, jealousy, favoritism, and pride. These tensions set the stage for the events to come. Yet, even amidst this brokenness, we remember that God is the true hero of this narrative. As you step into this messy beginning, consider: What is God's purpose in all of this? Because just as a broken bone must be reset to heal, Joseph's family is about to experience a painful but necessary transformation. God is about to harness their evil motives and actions to unfold a plan in His perfect timing.

**THE SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 37:1-36**

<sup>1</sup> Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. <sup>3</sup> Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. <sup>4</sup> But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. <sup>5</sup> Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: <sup>7</sup> Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." <sup>8</sup> His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. <sup>9</sup> Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." <sup>10</sup> But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" <sup>11</sup> And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. <sup>12</sup> Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. <sup>13</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them."

And he said to him, "Here I am."<sup>14</sup> So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word." So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.<sup>15</sup> And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, "What are you seeking?"<sup>16</sup> "I am seeking my brothers," he said. "Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock."<sup>17</sup> And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.' " So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.<sup>18</sup> They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him.<sup>19</sup> They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer.<sup>20</sup> Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams."<sup>21</sup> But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life."<sup>22</sup> And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father.<sup>23</sup> So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore.<sup>24</sup> And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.<sup>25</sup> Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt.<sup>26</sup> Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?<sup>27</sup> Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him.<sup>28</sup> Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.<sup>29</sup> When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes<sup>30</sup> and returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?"<sup>31</sup> Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood.<sup>32</sup> And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not."<sup>33</sup> And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces."<sup>34</sup> Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.<sup>35</sup> All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father wept for him.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

## LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS: WEEK 1

For this first glimpse into Joseph's life, create a memorable one-sentence summary and write it below. As you'll be asked to do this each week, consider how you might create a flow for the stories you'll read.

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### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Can you recall a time when you were eager for something to happen, but your timing was not God's timing?
2. When was the last time you were greatly misunderstood? How about greatly jealous?

### DIVING DEEPER

3. Using only verses 2, 3, and 4 of chapter 37, what kinds of details are we given about Joseph?
4. In verses 5 through 11, we read that Joseph is given two similar dreams. Use the chart below to summarize each.

	<i>Verses</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Dream #1			
Dream #2			

5. In this first section of his story, we get an indication that Joseph is greatly disliked by his brothers, and even misunderstood by his own father, Jacob. In the text on the previous pages, circle each instance pointing to this hostility in verses 1-11. What, according to this text, is ultimately at the root of the brothers' hostility?
  
6. Who do you think is to blame for this family discord at this point, and why?
  
7. Have you seen jealousy, favoritism, and anger destroy family and friendships in your life?
  
8. Do you think Joseph should have kept God's revelation to himself for the sake of peace and humility, or did he do well to declare it to his family? Why do you think God choose to reveal to Joseph what he would someday become, but to do so at such an early and immature age?
  
9. As Joseph locates his brothers with his father's flock, his brothers conspire to kill him. Do you find this progression from jealous to murder startling? Why or why not?
  
10. Compare Genesis 37:18-20 to James 1:15. How could the brothers have stopped their desire before it led to sin?
  
11. Consider Genesis 37:21-22 and also 37:26. Which two brothers present alternatives to killing Joseph? How do both of those alternatives actually speak to selfishness and sin?

12. Describe the fallout for this family once Joseph's demise is falsely reported?
  
13. While the temptation in many Old Testament stories is to consider the chief characters as those mentioned, we understand that the real hero is always God. Viewed from this perspective, how would you describe the true hero's actions in this chapter?
  
14. Is there something specific in your life right now where you feel like God is delaying? What might be some reasons for this delay from God's perspective? What evidence do you see in your life of God's providing hand even in the midst of difficulty?