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INTRODUCTION

Joseph's story works out in his favor: he rises from suffering to power; his brothers bow in submission to him; and, he saves the Near East from famine. We have in our possession an after-the-fact assessment of Joseph's story. In the midst of his situation, however, his reality might have seemed bleaker.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Read Genesis 42-45

1. What repetitions do you see in these chapters? What do you consider most surprising about the turns this story takes?
2. Joseph gets back at his brothers for selling him into slavery. Do you consider Joseph's treatment of his brothers in chapters 42-44 as fair? How do Joseph's interactions with his brothers change over these three chapters?
3. Everything seems to have worked out perfectly for Joseph when his brothers arrive. How might Joseph's response have differed had his situation not turned out so positively? He doesn't seem to blame his brothers for his situation, to whom does he credit his rise to power? And for what purpose? (cf. Romans 8:18-28)
4. Joseph credits God with his journey to leadership (Genesis 45:5-8). He seems to overlook the negatives in his journey, how is this possible? Should God get credit for both the negative and the positive events? Is this a hard-and-fast rule?

5. What should trust in God look like as you go through dark times (1 Peter 5:6-11)? Is this even possible? How can a person who trusts in God continue trusting God when he could be the cause of the problem?

6. The Psalms provide an amazing window into the sufferer's cry, and their source of hope and healing. Read Psalm 13. Do verses 5 and 6 makes sense in light of his struggle? What makes God' trustworthy in the mind of the author?

7. How does Psalm 139 describe the relationship between God and man? Give at least 4 reasons why the author trusts God despite going down to the darkest places of the earth (i.e. *Sheol*, v. 8-10).

8. Even Jesus finds comfort in Psalm 22 during his greatest period of injustice and affliction (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34). Does Jesus' use of Psalm 22 affect your understanding of who goes through suffering? Is Jesus abandoned in suffering? (Consider Acts 2:22-28)

9. Does Jesus' own experience change your concept of suffering? Do you find comfort that the leader of the Christian movement and Son of God would come to earth, experience its pain, injustice and evil?

10. What hope does Jesus' experience provide? Does it provide hope here-and-now, in the midst of pain? Why or why not?

MOVING FORWARD

Pain and suffering are natural consequences of a flawed world and humanity. Why God permits these, there is no clear answer. But there is a promise that a restoration of all things will come. In the interim, the challenge to creation is to pursue its creator and trust his overall design and plan. This week, pray for a patient heart that is given to trust and slow to become resentful.