

***First Week of Advent***

**WELCOME (15 minutes)**

- **Ice Breaker:** Looking back at just 2015 – What is a way (big or small) that you've experienced God's faithfulness?

**WORSHIP (10 minutes)**

- Have someone read aloud **Romans 15:12-13** and proclaim together, "***We have HOPE because God is FAITHFUL.***"
- Then sing #3, 4, & 15, from the **Small Group CHRISTMAS Worship CD**. (*Sing these carols worshipfully – not simply traditionally!*)

**WIN (15 minutes)**

- **PRAY** for those you as a group are seeking to extend Jesus toward!

**WORD (25 minutes)**

**Read:** We saw how Joseph suffered grave injustices, and yet through every difficulty Joseph experienced, he remained a man of steadfast faith. In this session, we see how the story of Joseph reveals that God remains faithful to His covenant. God is sovereign and He will bring good out of evil circumstances.

***Have everyone open their Bibles to Genesis 41***

Point #1 – God brings fruit out of our affliction – Have someone read Gen. 41:46-57

**Read:** Quoting Chrysostom (circa 347-407) – “[Joseph] bore distress with endurance, endurance gave him character, having such character he acted in hope, and hope did not disappoint him.”

**Discuss:** Joseph was 30 years old when he came to power in Egypt. He executed His plan to store up food in the cities during the seven years of abundance. In an echo of God's promise to bless Abraham's offspring, the text says that Joseph stored up grain “like the sand of the sea” (Gen 41:49). What are some challenges you've faced that you see others facing? In what ways can God bring fruit out of YOUR past affliction by leading you to minister to others in similar circumstances?

Point #2 – God shows us a picture of forgiveness – Have someone read Gen. 45:1-15.

**Discuss:** Why is it difficult for us to forgive those who wrong us? What is it about forgiveness that is so painful?

**Discuss:** The reason Joseph could forgive his brothers was because he saw that it was really God who had sent him to Egypt for this very purpose – to save his family from famine. God was keeping His covenant promise to Abraham. He rescued and sustained Jacob's family through this suffering, humiliation, and exaltation of Joseph to power in Egypt. Christ's forgiveness of our sins is the fuel to forgive those who sin against us. Refusing to forgive is not just disobedience, it's unbelief. Holding a grudge reveals that you believe the cross of Christ is enough to forgive the sins you commit against God but not enough to forgive the sins committed against you. Talk about how holding a grudge contradicts the gospel. How can meditating on the gospel empower you to be patient with and forgive others?

Point #3 – God overrules evil with good – Have someone read Gen. 50:15-21.

**Discuss:** Joseph's life was a preview of the coming Messiah who would forgive those who wronged Him. Joseph knew that God used his brothers' sinful actions to save many people. Jesus would be mistreated, betrayed for silver, handed over to captivity, and ultimately exalted at the hands of evil men. God took the evil deeds of Joseph's brothers and used them for His greater plan of providing salvation from the famine. In the same way, God used the evil injustice of those who put His Son, Jesus, on the cross to bring about His master plan of providing salvation from sin and death. How does the gospel help you put the bad things that happen in your life in the right perspective?

**Read:** Quoting Christopher Wright – “The cross shows us that God can take the worst possible evil and through it accomplish the greatest possible good – the destruction of evil itself.”

**Discuss:** How does God's faithfulness to bring fruit out of our affliction encourage you to remain faithful during desperate and trying times?

***For next time encourage your people to read Exodus 1-3.***

## **WORKS (25 minutes)**

- Break into smaller groups of **2 or 3's of the same gender** to pray for each other!