

## THE WEEKLY

### *New Life Small Group Guide*

## **The God Whose Plan Involves Suffering** For groups meeting **Nov 15-21, 2015**

### **WELCOME** (15 minutes)

- **Ice Breaker:** Tell about whatever your Thanksgiving Day/ weekend plans entail.

### **WORSHIP** (10 minutes)

- Sing together #16, "Nothing is Wasted" from the **2015 Worship CD**.

### **WIN** (15 minutes)

- **PRAY** for your list of unsaved friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family!
- **PLAN** something FUN or something to do as a MINISTRY for the holiday season!

### **WORD** (25 minutes)

**Read:** The Bible never guarantees that faith in God will lead to a pain-free life! Believing that God is a grand "bargainer" who rewards people's obedience with a suffering-free life is detrimental to our faith. In this session we see how God used the suffering in Joseph's life to accomplish His plan to save many lives.

#### ***Have everyone open their Bibles to Genesis 37***

Point #1 – Trust in God's plan for the future - Have someone read aloud Gen. 37:3-11.

**Discuss:** God gave the family a picture of His plan through Joseph's dreams. It's not surprising that Joseph's brothers did not like the plan, but as we'll see later in the end, the dream pointed to the way God would save them from famine and certain death. When you read the text, do you get the sense that Joseph was justified in telling his family about the dreams – or do you see him as proud and arrogant? Why?

**Read:** "Joseph had a great deal of trouble before him, and therefore God gave him [beforehand] this prospect of his advancement, to support and comfort him." – John Wesley

Point #2 – Trust in God's process of preparing us for the future - Have someone read aloud Gen. 37:23-28.

**Discuss:** Kenneth A. Mathews says, "The irony is that the sale of Joseph actualizes the dreams that the brothers meant to subvert." What does this say to you about God's sovereign plans?

**Discuss:** God knows what it will take to prepare us for the wonderful future awaiting us. That's why sometimes He does not rescue us instantly from hardship and suffering. Instead, He lets us be trained by the peril, the distress, and the want. This horrific act of

betrayal and injustice was part of the process God would use to accomplish His plan of rescuing Israel and the world. What are some challenges you have faced that prepared you to handle future challenges and blessings?

**Read:** Scripture teaches that God is all-knowing. He is the One who “has perfect knowledge” (Job 37:16), and this knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. His knowledge is complete, and as He is outside of time, He has known from all eternity whatever will come to pass. In response to God’s omniscience, we admit our finite knowledge and trust His decisions as wise and good.

Point #3 – Trust God’s presence when He seems absent - Have someone read aloud Gen. 39:6b-23.

**Discuss:** Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery. God was with him and he became a servant in the house of Potiphar. God was with Joseph and prospered everything that he did. But just as things were looking up, they went from bad to worse. Joseph did the right thing in rejecting the sexual advances of his master’s wife. Even so, he was falsely accused, and despite his innocence, he was thrown into prison. What lessons can we learn from Joseph’s victory over temptation?

**Discuss:** Too many Christians have the false idea that if God is with us, then nothing bad will happen. What are some instances in your life where you were tempted to think that God was absent? What are some instances where you clearly felt His presence? Why do we assume God is there in the good times and gone in the bad?

**Discuss:** Joseph’s life points forward to Jesus. Jesus would be betrayed, handed over to captivity, but the rejection and humiliation of Jesus was God’s plan to save Israel and the world! We get a glimpse of this plan in Joseph’s life. It seemed as if he was abandoned, but God was with him and God was accomplishing His good plan. His humiliation would eventually lead to his exaltation to bless Israel and all nations. How does the knowledge that God is with you in hardship help you battle things like discouragement, depression, and isolation?

**Read:** “One day God would send another Prince, a young Prince whose heart would break. Like Joseph, he would leave his home and his Father. His brothers would hate him and want him dead. He would be sold for pieces of silver. He would be punished even though he had done nothing wrong. But God would use everything that happened to this young Prince – even the bad things – to do something good: to forgive the sins of the whole world.” – Sally Lloyd-Jones

**For next time, in anticipation of Thanksgiving, encourage your people to read: Psalms 95:2; 7:17; 100:4; and 106:1. Also 2 Corinthians 9:11-12 and 4:15-16.**

## **WORKS (25 minutes)**

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