

Study notes, Sunday 9th June 2019

Dungeons, dreams and discouragement (Genesis 40)

Starter Question

- When was the last time you had that “sinking feeling”, or felt forgotten? How did you respond?

Worship

- Read either Psalm 9 or Psalm 103 and let it lead you into praise of our God who does not abandon us or forget us, even in times of difficulty or discouragement.

Word – Dungeons, dreams and discouragements (Genesis 40)...

Re-cap...

Unjustly treated, wrongly imprisoned and in the midst of discouragement, Joseph:

1. Looks outwards (towards others), v6 – rather than focussing on his own predicament, he keeps his eyes open for others and their welfare.
2. Listens (doesn't presume), v7 – he takes the trouble to ask after his fellow prisoners and to listen to what is really bothering them.
3. Looks and points upwards (to God), v8 – he takes no credit himself for the dream interpretations he accurately makes, but immediately credits God.
4. Speaks out (the truth in love) – despite the fact that he has both good news and bad news to share, he does not hesitate to communicate the truth, as revealed to him by God.

Even though, the cupbearer forgot Joseph's request to help him once he was released, God did not forget him. Joseph was patient and never gave up hope and all the time God was preparing him for important things still to come.

Possible discussion questions (select a few)

- What do you think it was that the prison warden/captain of the guard saw in Joseph that encouraged him to give Joseph responsibility, despite him being in prison? What is it that the people we encounter are looking for in us as followers of the living God?
- Why do you think Joseph was able to avoid getting absorbed in self-pity, despite the unjust treatment he had suffered?
- Are we being selfish if we find ourselves focussing on our own issues during tough times, rather than keeping the same sort of outward focus that Joseph does?
- Is it our business to take an active interest in the welfare of those around us, even those we don't really know, or is it just being “nosy” / unrealistic?
- Do you agree that Joseph's question in v7 (“Why do you look so sad today?”) is a surprising one? Why/why not?
- In what ways do the people around us exhibit signs of spiritual hunger, even if they don't always seem to be looking in the right places?
- How is it that Joseph is so confident that God will enable him to interpret the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker?
- What are the reasons why we, sometimes, fail to speak out so confidently in acknowledging God's work in our lives? How can we seek to become more confident in pointing other people towards God and acknowledging the work he is doing in us/the gifts he has given us?
- Is the message of the Bible one just of “Good News”, or both “Good News” and “Bad News”? If the former, is it our role to speak to others of God's judgment, or simply of his love and forgiveness?
- How can we remain hopeful in the midst of discouragement?
- Are there any times when you have felt let down, abandoned, discouraged and God has used it for his purposes?

Prayer and witness

- Pray for each other, particularly for any tough situations/discouragements that you are facing.
- Consider what you might be able to do collectively as a group to encourage and show God's love to someone who is struggling at the moment.
- Pray for each other in your witness to those around you – colleagues, friends, family.