

COME MEET THE FAMILY

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, August 8 2010, by Rev (Dr) Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

August 8 2010

Introduction:

In modern-day terms, Joseph came from a dysfunctional family. Indeed, we all came from a dysfunctional background because sin makes people dysfunctional. But when you take all the sins of a large number of selfish people and mix them together in a family, you have an entity badly out of alignment with wheels turning in different directions.

Joseph's Background

We need to remember that in the rough-and-tumble of a less-than-perfect family life, God was preparing Joseph for the role that God had planned for Joseph.

As a matter of fact, the only explanation for the life of Joseph and the role he played is found in the electing grace of God. There is no human reason whatsoever that Joseph should have emerged from the emotional and spiritual wreckage of his family life to be the great man of God that he was. The only way we can explain it is that God purposed that it should be so. God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. God plants His footsteps in the sea of life and He rides upon the storm.

Joseph's background all too often sounds very close to many of ours in an increasingly fragmented modern Singapore.

What can we learn?

In scheming families, people often get hurt, and those hurts run deep and last a lifetime. Only the intervention of a gracious God can turn parental conflict and sibling rivalry into good. We mustn't allow our circumstances and disappointments to become the excuse for the choices we make in life. God is greater than all of that, and He can bring beauty out of ashes.

"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (Isaiah 61:3).

Augustine said, *"Our trials come...to prove us...and to improve us."*

Discuss:

1. The mosaic of Joseph's background provides us with a striking reminder of the impact a father's (Jacob's) life has on his children.
 - Jacob was not a good model of integrity.
 - He did poorly when it came to decisiveness.
 - He was slow when it came to action.
 - He tended to avoid issues rather than face them.But God chose to use this imperfect father to raise the boy chosen to redeem God's people from famine. Why?
2. What about us parents? What is the legacy we are leaving? What stories will our children tell? When they stand and gaze at our tombstone, what then? Is it even possible in today's affluent society to de-couple materialism from our life values? How?
3. Out of the chaos of Joseph's background came a man that God used as a stirring example of God's grace (unmerited favour). Are you such a person? Why or why not? What do we need to change, if any, to be such a person?

Prayer:

Help us, loving Lord, to repair our damaged relationships, beginning with our family, then our friends and finally with society. With God's grace, we can be the soothing balm that brings healing and relief to the pain and suffering around us. Amen.