

JOURNEYS WITH JOSEPH
DEVOTIONAL
FOR RFK VOLUNTEERS



Dear RFK Volunteer,

We are thrilled that you have taken this step of faith to serve God and His KIDS this summer at a Royal Family KIDS Camp. It is important that you spend time with God in His word to prepare for this life changing week. The following devotions are based on the Bible passages used in the Journeys with Joseph Curriculum. Ask God to prepare your heart for the week of camp as you read and journal using the questions. Your RFK Camp Director may ask you to discuss or share your thoughts during the staff meetings in a small group format or collectively if you feel comfortable doing so.

To Camp Directors/Devotional Leaders: Staff meetings are short and time does not allow for complete review of the extensive passages being covered each day in the Bible Lesson. Joseph's life story parallels what many campers have experienced, such as difficult family circumstances, being removed from their homes, experiencing harsh and unfair treatment while away from home. The scripture repeats how God was with Joseph all the way through. We can be confident that God is with us and with our campers as well. When we turn to Him for help, we can be confident He will hear us. Things may get worse – they may stay the same or they may get better. No matter the outcome we see the underlying principle that God is faithful and we can trust Him no matter what.

As you or one of your staff lead the devotional thoughts each day – look for ways to direct them to God. It is best not to have all the answers. Pointing people to Him will result in their personal growth. People are more likely to remember lessons learned through personal discovery. As they wrestle with God through scripture, prayer and meditation, He will teach them. God works at many levels before, during and after the week at camp.

Your staff and volunteers will benefit from reading the passages prior to camp. You may want to have a short discussion time using the questions. You could wrap up with personal testimony or summarize thoughts shared during that time. Or, you may just give a brief synopsis of the passage and use the questions to spark discussion and wrap up with a devotional thought.

Pre-Camp Preparation:

All the hours of preparation and planning for camp will amount to nothing in God's eyes unless we are relying upon Him to work in us and through us. (John 15: 5) We encourage you to take some time before camp to do a spiritual inventory of your heart. Use the following verse as a prayer and listen to what God reveals. Journal and pray through those things. Use the spaces below each section for journaling.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

Use this time to bring personal pain to God. He may use the pain you are experiencing to help a camper. Ask God for help to be at peace despite this pain. Ask His help to hear His voice in it. Surrender it to Him for His healing and His use. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Ask God to reveal any relational issues that are unresolved. Prayerfully and humbly surrender yourself to go to that person to make amends prior to camp. Matthew 5:21-23

Ask Him to help you learn to depend on Him in prayer as a moment by moment exercise. Begin now to develop habits of drawing upon the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit every day. Nothing is too small for Him. Nothing is too hard for Him. Nothing is too big for Him. Write a prayer about something you will depend upon Him for today.

Ask Him to show you where you are taking on worries and cares rather than depending upon Him. Make a list of those things throughout the day. Ask yourself, "Why do I choose to carry these burdens? What keeps me from bringing them to Him?"

The underlying theme throughout this curriculum is from Proverbs 3:5-6. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.”

As we meditate on this verse, here is a suggestion on how to apply it to our lives in prayer as we prepare for camp.

Dear Lord,

Thank you that I can trust in You with all my heart. You are completely trustworthy. All You say and do is good and right and just. There has never been a time that You have failed to keep Your promises. You are faithful in all things. You reveal Yourself to me in Your word.

The children I will meet at camp have been failed by those they trusted. Use me to show them they can trust in You. They will not understand why bad things have happened to them. I will not be able to understand either. Help me to trust in You when I don't understand. Use me to show them they can trust in You when they don't understand.

You have promised to reveal Your will to all who ask You. Help me to seek Your will in every situation at camp. Show me who to sit with. Show me who to smile at. Give me the words of encouragement You want a camper or a counselor or a staff member to hear. Help me to hear You speak to me in difficult circumstances. When I am at the end of my rope, show me what to do. Let me not act out of my human understanding. Use me to give grace and love in every situation.

Help me to lay down my life this week for the sake of the campers and my fellow volunteers. Show me the opportunities to serve and sacrifice. I don't want to miss a single one! Help me remember that it's not about me!

Add anything else the Lord may be leading you to ask in prayer in the space below.

Day One: Read Genesis 37

Theme: I will trust God even when life is in the pits.

Describe Joseph's home environment and family dynamics.

Describe Joseph's character and that of his brothers.

How did Joseph interact with his family? Do you think he could have done things differently to improve his relationships? If so, what would you recommend?

Describe Jacob's parenting style. From what you know about his parents, how might his upbringing have influenced him?

Now think about your family of origin. What words describe your childhood environment?

How did your parents' upbringing influence the way they raised you? What forgiveness or encouragement could you extend to them? How will you trust God to lead you in this process?

Sometimes it is just as hard to trust God with our past as it is to trust Him with our future. "If only I had done such and such..." or, "I wish I had not reacted in such a _____ way." "I wish I could have a do-over". Everyone in this story could have done better – but they didn't! Great pain was caused by cruelty, jealousy and irresponsibility. Parental favoritism caused all kinds of issues. Jacob was out of touch with the family and failed to discipline his sons. Life gets into the pits for all kinds of reasons. Though you may have had an "idyllic" childhood, you still have difficult memories because we live in a world that has been infected with sin. The root of all pain is sin.

Though Joseph's exit from his family of origin was full of pain and harsh treatment, it was part of the process he had to endure to become the one who would save many. When we see how Jesus left His home with His Father in heaven and endured harsh treatment here on earth, we can be assured He knows the pain in our campers. He wants them to know they can trust Him – He is not the cause of their pain. He wants them to come to Him in their pain – not run the other way. How can you demonstrate His love by coming to them with a smile, a kind word, a note or a prayer?

Dear Lord,

I sometimes wonder why You placed me in the family I have. Help me to trust Your wisdom and Your love for me even though it has been hard. Thank you for the ways You have developed me through those experiences. Help me to see how You can use the pain of my past to comfort someone else today. Give me a new perspective on how my early years may have prepared me for who I will meet this week at camp. As I choose to let go of past pain, develop in me a deeper compassion for the campers. Let me have Your heart for them. Use me as part of their healing.

Day Two: Read Genesis 39

Theme: I will trust God to help me do right.

Circle or underline all the places in this chapter that refer to the Lord. What do you observe about these references?

How did knowing God was with Joseph through this transition from favored son to a slave in Egypt encourage you?

How did Joseph's attitude of obedience to God protect him in the situation with Potiphar's wife? Look up 1 Corinthians 10:13. How did God provide the way out for Joseph?

Can you think of a time in your life when you were unjustly treated or accused of something you didn't do? What was the outcome?

How is Joseph's success explained in this chapter?

When you think about "God's presence and favor", what comes to mind? Good health? Financial stability? Comfortable living environment? A relaxing vacation? Close family ties? Most of us would not associate the circumstances of this passage with "God being with us" yet it is repeated several times throughout. Joseph's character was tested and revealed by the way he responded to each circumstance of unfairness and false accusations. Many would feel justified to act out in self-pity, anger and resentment. Joseph did not let himself go in that direction. He had dreams that God had given him as a youth (Chapter 37). Those dreams were to him what the scriptures are to us today. Joseph was holding on to God's promise that He had a plan for his future. Rather than despair, he believed God would be faithful to His promises. Joseph lived and worked in confidence of God's faithfulness. Though his work prospered his master and his prison warden, he did his best. God honored Joseph's faith. We can encourage the campers to live in confidence that God sees our efforts to honor Him though the world will not. Joseph put his trust in the Lord and did not lean on his own understanding. He refused to sin against God.

Dear Lord,

I confess I feel inadequate to encourage these campers to trust in you when life has been so difficult for them. I wonder if I would be capable of trusting You myself if I had been through what they have been through. Help me to encourage them to turn to You when they feel like everything is out of control. Show me something from Your word to hold on to when I feel discouraged in my efforts to help them. Use me to point them to You.

Day Three – Read Genesis 40:1-23

Theme: * I will trust God even when I have been forgotten.

How would you describe the way Joseph took care of the prisoners assigned to him?

How did Joseph approach the task of interpreting both the dreams of the Cup Bearer and the Baker?

What do you notice in the way Joseph asked the Cup Bearer to remember him?

Who has forgotten the kindness you have done for them? How will you forgive them?

Whose kindnesses toward you have you forgotten? How will you show them gratitude today?

How have the campers had promises broken to them? How can this help you understand their mistrust or even their desperation to get any kind of attention?

An Egyptian prison was a vile environment, yet Joseph thrived and found purpose even there. Prisoners assigned to Joseph received compassionate care in a harsh environment. Rather than bemoan his circumstances, Joseph rose to the occasion and showed compassion to his despondent prisoners. When he asked them why their faces were down, a door was opened to direct his prisoners to God as he interpreted their dreams. Perhaps your kindness and compassion will open a door to help a camper express concerns or fears. Joseph's focus was on helping them and he only briefly mentioned himself. He gave a plea for his own case using only one sentence. All he asked was to be remembered and mentioned to Pharaoh. Though the Cup Bearer forgot Joseph, God brought Joseph to mind at the perfect time. God's faithful timing kept Joseph from leaving Egypt and missing the purpose for which God had brought him there – to save many lives.

Dear Lord,

Thank you that You are faithful to every promise you make. Help me point a child to trust in You despite the human promises which have been broken. Keep me from making promises that I cannot keep. Even though the kindness I extend to campers may be forgotten, help me to bring Your life and light into their darkness today. Give me the chance to show compassion and speak truth. Will you open a door for a healing conversation today?

**This theme is not one of the Curriculum themes.*

Day Four - Read Genesis 41

Theme: I will Trust God because He has big plans for me.

Think about where you were two years ago today. Imagine waiting since that date for someone to remember a kindness they had promised to you. What do you think Joseph did to keep himself from losing hope during that time?

How did Joseph present himself and his skills to Pharaoh in verses 16, 25, 28 and 32? What do you see in Joseph's character and his understanding of God's character?

Genesis 41:50-52 describe Joseph's family in his new life as the Governor of Egypt. He named his sons Manasseh and Ephraim. What do these names mean according to the passage? How do these names describe the way God worked in Joseph's heart?

What disappointment and pain from your past needs a new name? Will you ask God to help you see how He was with you in those times? What new name will you give to that old pain in gratitude to God?

What did God teach you in those times that you could not have learned in any other way?

Joseph learned what was in the heart of man during his years of cruel treatment. Rather than entrust himself to men, he developed strong faith in God. God's faithfulness was the focus of his trust rather than the broken promises of men. We have one week to help these campers learn that God is with them and really does have big plans for them. All these plans are in His word and His word is full of promises for them! They really can develop habits of trusting in God at their age by learning to take all their cares and questions to Him in prayer. Joseph learned early that God's unchanging character must be the foundation of faith. Joseph believed that God was with him throughout all the circumstances of his life, both the good and the bad. Joseph's faith may not have developed to this level had he remained home under his father's protective care. Faith is most developed when the only thing we can do is turn to God. When He is all we have, it is then we learn that He is all we need. How will you thank God for those dark periods in your life? Perhaps you are in a dark time today. How will you trust His purpose in allowing it?

Dear Lord,

By faith I tell you I am grateful for the pain and sorrow You have allowed me to experience. Help me trust the promises of Your Word instead of the conditions of my circumstances. Forgive me for the times I have turned away from You instead of trusting in You for Your promised help. Use me to help these campers learn to turn to You for help in their darkest moments.

Day 5 – Read Genesis 45:1-15 (If you have time skim 42-45:15 for the full story)

Theme: I will trust God to help me forgive instead of getting even.

Chapters 42-44 describe how Joseph tested his brothers to see what was in their hearts. This was a painful emotional ordeal for him, yet he managed to carry it out with wisdom and discretion. What do you think Joseph learned about his brothers and his father in the process? Why was this process important?

Genesis 44:18-33 Judah speaks on behalf of the brothers explaining if they left Benjamin in Egypt their father Jacob would not survive the grief. How does this help you understand Joseph's emotions in 45:1-2?

When do you think Joseph forgave his brothers? What do you learn about the process of forgiveness from this passage?

What did Joseph communicate to his brothers in verses 45:3-8? How do his words communicate His trust in God?

Who needs your forgiveness? From whom do you need to ask forgiveness?

Joseph's moment of reconciliation with his family had finally come. While he did not minimize what they had done to him, he spoke of how God had sent him ahead of them to preserve their lives. Because he had not allowed his heart to become bitter and resentful, this was a beautiful healing moment for him and for his brothers. His practice of forgiveness and trust in God prepared him to receive his brothers and invite them to come close to him; 45:4. For Joseph, his long obedience was rewarded by healing and reconciliation. This story of forgiveness brings glory to God and gives hope to all who read it.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray He included forgiveness as part of our daily prayers. "And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Matthew 6:12. Forgiveness is to be a daily part of life for all believers. Forgiveness is costly. Jesus chose to bear the pain and suffering our sin caused Him while we were still sinning. As we follow His example and begin the process of forgiveness without waiting to be asked we will personally experience the power of God at work in our hearts. This demonstrates faith. God will meet you in this process if you are willing to lay down your personal pain and choose the road of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a choice we make. God does the healing in our heart.

Dear Lord,

You promise that when I confess my sins to you, I can be confident that I will be cleansed completely. (1 John 1:9) Thank you for removing my sins from me as far as the east is from the west. (Psalm 103:12) Now I ask You to show me who I need to forgive. I choose to repent of the bitterness and resentment I have held on to. Heal me of the desire to get even. Thank you for your complete forgiveness and my complete cleansing. Use me to bring the comfort of Your forgiveness to the campers and my fellow RFK volunteers today.