

Bible study in four parts for small group discussion of Rev. Grace Imathiu's Saturday Bible study on the story of Joseph in Genesis 37–50.

LESSON 1

- Begin with prayer. Ask God to be present in your study, offering help for listening to each other, and the Holy Spirit for understanding and application of God's wisdom to our life circumstances.
- Cue up the video (<https://2023.michiganumc.org/>) and listen to the first 14 minutes and 55 seconds.
- For discussion:
 - Sing together or read in unison the words from the hymn "Blessed Assurance" by Fanny Crosby (#369, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, words in the public domain).

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain: This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight.
Angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love. [Refrain]

Perfect submission, all is at rest;
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love. [Refrain]

Fanny Crosby describes what seems to be a state of emotional happiness that is linked to our relationship with Jesus. Have you ever had feelings of peace like the hymn describes? Are these feelings enduring? Have you ever experienced feelings as a Christian that God was absent? Have you ever been angry at God? Doubted God? If so, what are we to do with those feelings?

- Grace Imathiu speaks about the real experience of God’s assurance. Who does she quote as noteworthy people who have experienced and written about God’s assurance? What can we learn from these spiritual leaders of our past about their experiences?
 - Have you ever had an experience of God’s assurance? If so, what was it like? What does God want to assure us of? What difference does or should God’s assurance mean for us?
 - Imathiu mentions that Joseph wanted assurance from his brothers that they would carry his bones home to Canaan when he died. What assurance would you want to receive from your family and friends with your last wish?
- Closing prayer: Ask God for the ability to continue to trust in the assurance of divine love.

LESSON 2

- Begin with prayer. Ask God to be present in your study, offering help for listening to each other, and the Holy Spirit for understanding and application of God’s wisdom to our life circumstances.
- Cue up the video (<https://2023.michiganumc.org/>) and listen from 14:55 to 27 minutes.
- For discussion:
 - Review the story of Joseph and discuss. Daddy’s favorite of his 12 sons. Jealous brothers sell him into Egyptian slavery and lie to Jacob, claiming his death. Servant of Potiphar. Accused of sexual misconduct by a lying Mrs. Potiphar. Imprisoned. Saved by his ability to interpret dreams for Pharaoh. Promoted to manager of famine relief. Meets and confronts his brothers. Saves his family.
 - What examples of trauma does Grace Imathiu share? Pandemic? Disaffiliations? Stress of survival as a church? What evidence of trauma do you see?
 - What traumas have you experienced in your life?
- Closing prayer: Ask God for an awareness of and trust in God’s goodness even in the midst of life’s challenges.

LESSON 3

- Begin with prayer. Ask God to be present in your study, offering help for listening to each other, and the Holy Spirit for understanding and application of God’s wisdom to our life circumstances.
- Cue up the video (<https://2023.michiganumc.org/>) and listen from 27 minutes to 44 minutes.
- For discussion:
 - Grace Imathiu describes Joseph’s lamentation. What do you remember about how scripture describes his lament?
 - Have you ever experienced lament in your own life? How does our culture make room for lament? How long does lament last?
 - What does Imathiu say about why lamenting is important? How is God at work in our lamenting?
 - Did you know that 65 out of the 150 Psalms in the Bible are Psalms of lament? Psalms 3, 13, 22, and 60 are just a few of them. Jesus remembers Psalm 22 on the cross. Take time to read Psalm 22 aloud. Why do you think the Psalms spend so much time focused on lament? Why did Jesus lament on the cross?
 - Read Lamentations 3:19-26. How can these words of great hope be uttered amid such profound grief and loss?
- Closing prayer: Ask each person, if comfortable, to share one thing they lament as the prayer travels around the circle, “Lord, I lament . . .” Follow each lament with “Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.”

LESSON 4

- Begin with prayer. Ask God to be present in your study, offering help for listening to each other, and the Holy Spirit for understanding and application of God’s wisdom to our life circumstances.
- Cue up the video (<https://2023.michiganumc.org/>) and listen from 44 minutes to 57 minutes.

- For discussion:
 - Imathiu warns in her message of the danger of privilege, which can trick us into thinking that our history is the only history. Have you ever met anyone whose view of history is different from yours? In what ways is it different?
 - What do you know about your own personal family history? How does that history influence your life?
 - How does our community make room for people with different histories? Is there evidence of racial and cultural prejudice against others in our community? How does Imathiu help us understand this idea of multiple histories?
 - What do you think of Imathiu's claim that we are all siblings in God's story?
 - With the Joseph story, Imathiu points out an example that having power is not as important as our relationships with our siblings. God's assurance in difficult times brings us closer to each other. Do you agree with this idea? If so, explain why. If not, why not?
- Closing prayer: Silently pray for one person you know whose story differs from yours. Ask God for help in listening and understanding persons different from you.

One-part Bible study for small group discussion of Rev. Grace Imathiu's Sunday sermon on Matthew 15:22-28 and Jesus' interaction with the Canaanite woman.

- Begin with prayer. Ask God to be present in your study, offering help for listening to each other, and the Holy Spirit for understanding and application of God's wisdom to our life circumstances.
- Watch the video (<https://2023.michiganumc.org/>). It's about 22 minutes in length.
- For discussion:
 - Grace Imathiu begins by reading a poem by Mary Oliver describing newborn chicks calling who don't know anything yet about trees, wings, the sky, or even the miracle that is taking place. Why do you think she began her message with this poem?
 - Grace Imathiu describes Tyre and Sidon, two cities in southern Lebanon, as a place where Jesus only visited once. This was the place where the Canaanite woman lived. How do Imathiu and the Bible describe the Canaanites?
 - Who are the Canaanites (oppressed, despised, and persecuted minorities) in our world today? Our country? Our communities?
 - How do we reinforce our prejudice and marginalize others different from us? Do you have room in your life or church to include such persons? Why, or why not?
 - Imathiu describes the political encounter with Jesus. What is at stake for Jesus in this public encounter?
 - Are there some issues in the church where it is better to avoid the problem and play it safe?
 - Why does the Canaanite woman risk addressing Jesus with her request in public?
 - Are we all welcome at God's table? Why, or why not? Are there crumbs enough from God's table for even a Canaanite woman?
 - What do you think of Imathiu's assertions that baptism is about God, we only need to be baptized once, and all are welcome? How would our church be different if we lived these truths?
- Close with prayer for God's courage to love the least among us.