



underthefigtree

WILD PLACES DOTHAN

A Discussion Guide for Individuals and Groups

DOTHAN

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It's been said, "That which does not break us only serves to make us stronger." In this session George will be leading us in a study of a story where we learn of a huge "break" in relationship. Young Joseph is looking for his brothers and finds them at a place called, Dothan. Joseph is of course the son of Jacob, grandson of Isaac, the great grandson of the patriarch Abraham. To both Abraham and Isaac were born two sons and in each case God made clear as to which was His choice as to the one through whom the promise would pass. Not so with Jacob's 12 sons! That process would be "messy" to say the least. Common procedure of succession at that time was leadership would pass to the eldest son of the favored wife. Jacob's favorite: Rachel, her eldest son: Joseph. To Joseph then was given the mantle of leadership; the coat of many colors, an honor for Joseph, a root of bitterness and envy which would produce sour fruit indeed.

“SEE WITH YOUR EYES, HEAR WITH YOUR EARS, AND SET YOUR HEARTS ON EVERYTHING I AM GOING TO SHOW YOU, FOR THAT IS WHY YOU HAVE BEEN BROUGHT HERE. THEN TELL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL EVERYTHING YOU SEE.” EZEKIEL 40:4

THE TEXT

Before you watch this session take a moment and read the following passages:

Genesis 37:14-17; 23-25a
Matthew 25:34-46

THE TEACHING

Watch the video, “Dothan” and continue with the talking points.



THE TALKING POINTS



- 1 George makes the point in his teaching of the importance of eating and fellowship together in the biblical narrative. Scholars agree that its significance cannot be overstated. The decline of King Saul's rule can be traced by noting that at his anointing he was feasting with prophets and the night before his end he is eating with the witch of Endor. George observes that Adam & Eve's wretched meal experience at the Tree of Knowledge involved not only eating the forbidden fruit but doing so in the presence of the Snake! What principles are involved in these examples and how might they relate to our relationships? How important is the company we keep and what that say about us? Jesus, of course, was accused of keeping poor company – what's the difference between these examples.
- 2 Interestingly in Exodus 25:30, God commands that in the Tabernacle Holy Place there must be a table with 12 loaves of unleavened bread at all times literally before God's face. In fact, the bread is called: the bread of "faces/presence" which was to be eaten by Aaron and his sons. In other words, every week in the Holy place, man (via the priests) was to eat in the company/presence of God. How important is it for us to dine at God's table via communion/Lord's supper? How important is it for God's presence to be with us as we dine at our table in our home? Given the significance of "eating together" in the bible, how might we be more intentional in recognizing and involving God in our mealtime fellowship? Suggestions?
- 3 In thankfulness for such a blessing, we meet with other believers and followers of Christ to rejoice and share in this blessing. But, as George points out, it is possible that we fellowship and share with each other while quite possibly ignoring the cries of our brother or sister. Re-read Matthew 25:42-45. Jesus speaks of the imprisoned, sick, hungry, thirsty, stranger. How are you/your fellowship "hearing" the cries and addressing the needs?
- 4 It was Mother Teresa who said; "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." Consider and share your thoughts regarding Joseph and his brothers forgetting that they belonged to each other. Read Matthew 25:35- 45. How do Mother Teresa's words add insight to what Jesus speaks of in the Matthew 25 passage? In John 13:34–35 Jesus declares; "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." How does Jesus view our belonging together and our belonging with him?
- 5 Arguably the bitter root that bore the fruit of throwing Joseph into a cistern and then selling him was: envy. The fact is all of us have people who have "more" than we do – fairly or unfairly and we'll have to deal with it or it will deal with us. Consider the "Joseph's" in our path, that someone who appears more "highly favoured" than us; consider also that, to some, you may be their "Joseph". Whether it's his wealth, her job, their family, her appearance, or his relationships, there may be some in our path to whom we feel a twinge of jealousy, disdain, or even contempt. How are we to respond to people who may appear more favoured by God than us? Read John 3:26-30. How does John respond to Jesus' successful ministry and favour from God? How do we pray for and encourage those who seem more highly favoured by God?
- 6 George suggests that we, as the community of Christ, live in Dothan - between two pits. In the one are the cries of broken brothers and sisters; the other is the empty tomb. At his last supper before his death, Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me," and at his table, Jesus welcomed them ALL: Judas the betrayer, Peter the denier, Thomas the doubter, and all would be deserters. Jesus himself profoundly aware chose to dine with those who caused him pain, brokenness and alienation. How can you use his example of love and forgiveness to welcome those crying from the pit into joy at the empty tomb? How can we follow Christ's example of love and forgiveness in our fellowship with other believers?

THE TASK

- This session has dealt much with eating. In your own personal time of reflection, journal or meditate on the words from Isaiah 58:6-10. As you reflect, consider some of the words Isaiah uses to call out God's people into action, and how you can be a part of this. How can you "loose the chains of injustice"? "Set the oppressed free"? "Share your food with the hungry"? "Provide the poor with shelter"? And the rest of Isaiah's calls to action?
- With your group or on your own, draw a chart similar to this:



In each of these four sections, write down examples of people who might be considered "broken and alienated," and when doing so think outside of who you may normally place in categories. For example, for In our country, not only can you put "those in poverty" but think outside the norm, such as "foreigners among us." For In our world, not only can you write, "the hungry" but also "those bound in sex slavery". And for your own church community, take time to really think outside the norm: the single mom, the person who can't afford rehab, the lonely barren couple? When you are finished with this list, take time to pray over all the types of people in this charts and pray daily for how God can use you to reach out to these people, even if it just one person at a time.

- Before your group next meets together, or on your own in the coming weeks, type "Mother Teresa Quotes" in your favourite internet search engine, and read through some of the powerful words of wisdom she has to offer when it comes to reaching out to our alienated and broken brothers and sisters. Pick your favourite quote, write it down, and take it along to share with everyone at your next meeting, or place the quote in a place you would see it every day. (If you are feeling extra ambitious, pick up one of Mother Teresa's books and read it through. You will not regret this worthwhile task!)

- Take time to pray together or on your own against cynicism in our churches and in our own hearts. The evil one likes to make us think our kingdom work is in vain, or that our efforts for the broken and alienated are only abused and misused by them. So many of us, like Joseph's brothers, fall into the trap of thinking that these people "had it coming" or even deserve their brokenness. God doesn't say, "Feed the hungry as long as they..." or "Welcome the foreigner as long as they promise to...", or "If they stop..., clothe the naked." God asks us to take care of our brothers and sisters at his Word; we need to pray against cynicism and disillusionment, letting God be the judge and we his faithful servants.