

FINDING YOUR DREAM: From Famine to Feast

A Study Guide in 13 Weeks

Jane Rubietta

INTRODUCTION

Finding Your Dream: From Famine to Feast—the Life of Joseph contains several application tools at the end of each day's reading. Sometimes, though, it helps to have additional questions and journey-deepening suggestions, both to enrich personal study and application, and to make leading or facilitating a small group, book club, or study easier.

The daily readings have been combined to form a thirteen-week study guide. If your group is meeting for only six weeks, combine two weeks for each group session. There will be ample material to use during your meeting time. The questions below work well in combination with the application elements at the close of each reading. During your sessions, read aloud or review the passage of Scripture, and then discuss general impressions of the week's readings. You might close each session by asking how to apply the Note To Self, and then reading in unison the Traveling Mercy.

To get started, each group member should have a personal copy of *Finding Your Dream*. It is helpful if they read the current week's selections in advance of the meeting.

Note: at the beginning of each session, you might want to remind people that silence is uncomfortable but good, and allows people time to process. Also, to honor confidentiality and to create a safe environment, adapt the motto, “What we say here, stays here.”

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO ASK AT EACH SESSION

What stood out for you in these readings?
What Scriptures spoke to you? In what ways?
Where did you sense God tugging, or an *ah-ha* moment?
What emotional responses did you experience?
What will be different today? Tomorrow?

Close by reading the Traveling Mercy aloud, either as a group, or by twos to one another, so it is intimate for each person.



For more group ideas and resources, please visit www.JaneRubietta.com. If your group is interested in a video conference call with the author, during or toward the end of your study together, please contact her at info@JaneRubietta.com.

You might want to consider the Deeper Devotion book, *Finding Your Way: From Pain to Purpose—the Lives of Adam and Noah* for your next group study. Ninety-one readings leading you deeper into the lives of these founders of our faith, and their contemporaries, inviting the Scriptures to take root and instigate change in our lives.

Week One
 September 1 – September 7
 Genesis 34 – Genesis 37:3

Digging In

1. What's your favorite dream, when you woke up and said, "Ahh, that was sweet"? What recurring dreams do you have? Nightmares?
2. When have your dreams hinted at a deep longing or a neglected gift? What do you do when you awaken from those dreams? How do you listen to those dreams (or not)?
3. Where's your favorite dream-state? Ie. Place, time, situation? Where are you most open to daydreaming, dreaming about possibilities, new futures?
4. How did your family of origin handle dreams? I didn't come from dreaming stock, not really. Hardworking, entrepreneurial, yes. But fanciful dreams weren't expected; no one talked about them. How about you?
5. Jot down, perhaps just for your own eyes, what dreams you've had or considered, when it comes to life, work, family.
6. Acts 2:17 says God will pour the Holy Spirit on all. Not might, but will. And that people will prophesy and dream. Dreams are not age-biased or gender-biased. Where are you seeing that freedom (or lack of) to dream and its acceptance? How about in your own life?

Digging Deeper

1. One comforting and discomfiting element of Scripture is that God chose to work through people who hashed up their lives (and others' lives). What do you make of Joseph's childhood (Gen. 30:24, for instance) and Jacob's handling of Dinah's tragedy? And how do you put this into context with people who ultimately figured hugely into God's hopes for the world, for you and your neighbor? What hope do you find here, for your own life?
2. Jacob misdirected. He promised Esau he would head home, and instead decided to pitch his tents near Shechem. When have you deeply regretted a decision to change plans? How do you listen deeply to hear what's next?
3. The statistics are grim about sexual abuse and crime. How can you be prepared to help people who appear with a Dinah story of their own? More tragedy in her story involves silence (her father's) and revenge (her brothers'). Perhaps you have found yourself in one of these places, whether Dinah or her father or her brothers; whether we're talking about rape or some other offense, how do you handle it? And how do you deal with your own regret, or shame, over actions/non-action? How about Romans 12:15?
4. Where do you live in a "But Jacob" place (Gen. 37:1) vs. Esau (Gen 36)? Compare their lives. Then, how does *temporary* influence your view of eternity? In what ways do you battle the world's message of ownership, possession, permanence, and right?
5. How do you view the imperfect as the perfect setting for God to work? Where have you seen this? Jacob favored Joseph, which resulted in enormous animosity and a life trajectory no one would choose—at least, not for the first 30 or so years. In what ways has your past become the perfect impetus for your present and future, your gifts and dreams?

Week Two
 September 8 – September 14
 Genesis 37:1-8

Digging In

1. When I grew up, not many people were divorced or remarried. When Rich and I served in an inner-city type church, the teachers at the local public school hovered about, pens in hand, to take down all the various family names so they could keep our kids straight. We only have one name under our roof, and were/are a bit of an anomaly. What is your story, when it comes to role models for the “family tents”?
2. Joseph had a bit of a blended family, to say the least. After his own mother died, he had three stepmoms, all living together. Imagine 12 brothers with four different mothers in the same apartment (tents). It’s hard to imagine anyone with enough spiritual/ emotional maturity to navigate those dynamics. How have you navigated complex issues? Or avoided them?
3. No wonder there were issues and tension. When have you experienced favoritism, either on the “most favored” or the “not included” side? Maybe at home there was a favorite child, or in school, or now, in your adult life, this sense is real for you. What is your scenario, and what do you do with that?
4. The very human brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than them. Where do you see this ricochet effect, in your own life, reacting from a place of “less than” rather than equal? How about in society?
5. Talk about honoring people’s dreams: where have you been able to do that? Or not? And how about your own dreams: when have people honored yours? Not? How did this impact you?

Digging Deeper

1. Joseph shows up at breakfast ready to regale his family with a dream. The text actually gives no impression of him being a spoiled little boy trying to lord it over his siblings, though the Jews do regard him as such, and a kid who needs his comeuppance. Wanting to tell people your dream seems normal, especially your family. What is your take on this?
2. All three places where Joseph says, “I had a dream” begin with *hinneh*, Look! (v. 7, 9) Pay attention, you! How has God said, “*hinneh!*” to you? How have your dreams said, “*hinneh!*” to you? And when have you said to others, “*hinneh!*” as a result of your dreams? When have you been afraid to say that? And what has happened, either with your words or your silence? To you, the dreams, your relationships?
3. His brothers couldn’t speak a kind word to him (Gen. 34:7). This could have made him a really warped leader, like The Bird in *Unbroken*. Joseph’s circumstances could break him or shape him. He got to choose. Where do you see this principle in your life? What costs are involved with either choice?
4. God’s dream in and through Joseph is the same as God’s for you and through you...how do kindness and respect reflect Joseph’s journey to dream fulfillment? Yours? How is brokenness a prerequisite for learning kindness?
5. Joseph shared his dream immediately. What is wise about this? What does it do for accountability? Would you be one who launches into the story immediately or waits to talk about it? Why or why not? What are the risks involved with talking too soon? Or not at all?
6. Consider Jim and Linda’s bucket list on Sept. 13. What is remarkable about it? How does their approach challenge or convict you? Who are the Jim & Linda people in your life?
7. Think about a dreaming circle: people who will listen to your dreams, ask good questions, and consider with you how to fulfill them. Who might that be in your life? Past, or present? What do you think God is pressing onto you, regarding your dreams, talking about them, and acting on them?

Week Three
 September 15 – September 21
 Genesis 37:9 – Genesis 37:20

Digging In

1. Joseph was 17 when his dream showed up. What dreams do you remember from your childhood? Adolescence? How about dreams of your friends? I had one friend who talk-talk-talked about his dreams, but never acted on them. Another one kept them very close to his chest, but kept working toward them diligently. Dreaming hadn't occurred to me at that age, which is quite encouraging actually since God isn't age-biased about delivering dreams to people and people to dreaming.
2. Who honored your dreams? Mocked them? What happened and what was your response? Joseph's father and brothers had similar yet different reactions. What's hopeful about Israel's response? (37:11) Why should he have listened more intently than the sons?
3. Even if your parents or others didn't honor your dreams, how can you apply Gen. 37:11, Jacob's "keeping the matter in mind" to your life? Consider the references Gen. 18:14 ("Is anything too hard for the Lord?"), 1 John 3:11, Ps. 118:1-4. How do these encourage you to move forward?
4. Who asks for directions in your family of origin? Who keeps driving, sure that pretty soon the right road sign will appear? How did your family handle getting lost? How do you? It wasn't a popular sport in the car when I was a child. Getting lost was a mark of inadequacy. Asking for directions saves a good deal of headache. Joseph's courage in just heading out to find his brothers was immense, and also his willingness to ask for help from the man in the field. (Gen 37:12-17)
5. Who do you know who has quit dreaming? What has it cost them? If that's you, then, what can you do now? Far too many people dreamed silently, then mournfully, and then packed away their dreams forever. At 81, a woman said, "I will never know what my life might have been." What speaks to you about that?
6. What dynamics stop you from dreaming? For instance, safety vs. risk vs. adventure vs. letting someone down or failing.

Digging Deeper

1. When Jacob called to Joseph, his son's immediate response was much more significant than it is translated in English. "Here I am" carries the connotation of obedience, beck and call, of "whatever you say, I will do." How likely are you to respond to another like that? What dream principle do you draw from Joseph's response?
2. Joseph's long walk gave him a chance to think, to think back, to meditate on the dream he'd received twice. Where are those places for you? What happens when you talk a walk, one way or another? How does this help your dreaming? Your integrity? Your relationships? What stops you from taking a walk of some sort?
3. God calls you by name (Is. 41:3) and invites you into a dream. Today is a chance to respond, "Here I am." I've started saying before I roll out of bed, "Yes." Yes to God, to whatever God has for me that day.
4. Consider Joseph's chance (not) encounter in the field outside Shechem. What was significant about Shechem for Joseph? And how was it vital for him to meet this stranger? Jewish tradition holds that the stranger was an angel. Regardless, he acted divinely in Joseph's life in terms of direction. Who are those people in your life? When has God found you wandering in a field, and redirected you?
5. How do you answer the question, "What are you looking for?" And how about a follow-up, "Where are you looking?" or perhaps, "When did you stop looking, and why?"
6. Talk about Reuben living into his name at last, or attempting to, in 37:21-2. How about Judah in 37:26-27?
7. Re-read 37:25, "They sat down to eat their meal." We would never do that, right? When do you sit down to eat a meal while someone hurts nearby? If we don't feel like losing our lunch at this, we may well be in danger of losing our hearts.

Week Four
 September 22 – September 28
 Genesis 37:26 – Genesis 38:26

Digging In

1. What are some of your favorite places to visit? Why? Any time I can get to the mountains in Tennessee, I am beyond delighted. Warm relationships and memories draw me there (and sweet tea). How about difficult places to revisit, whether physically or emotionally? What do you do to avoid them? What benefits do you receive from either avoiding or revisiting them? Revisiting Shechem had to be hard for Joseph—it was a sight of family tragedy and tragic reaction to tragedy.
2. Who was your best friend in childhood? What secrets did you share? Were those secrets ever betrayed? How did you respond?
3. Joseph's family betrayed him, using his dream against him. "Here comes that dreamer," they shouted. What do you relate to in this part of his life story? In what ways can people use dreams against you, even though they aren't outright aggressive? (Passive aggressive counts, as does complete silence.) What are the various ways people get "sold out"?
4. Who are the Reubens and Judahs for you, redirecting people's hatred, even if they didn't actually stop it?
5. The church is particularly, unfortunately, prone to selling out dreamers. Either the church kills the dreamer, or sets the dreamer up as king. Either way, it's a real killer. What stories do you have about dream killers?

Digging Deeper

1. "They stripped him of his robe," Gen. 37:23 says. This word, stripped, can mean, "skinning" an animal. Joseph was pretty roughed up. What did Joseph's robe mean to him? To his brothers? How has someone tried to strip you of your robe?
2. Look back over your life. Other people's harmful ways with you no longer need to harm you. When do you continue to give those voices and wounds priority, and what does that do to your dream? To your heart? How can you move toward God with those wounds, those thrown-in-the-cistern times, those sold-to-the-Ishmaelites events or seasons?
3. An empty cistern is good if you're going to be thrown into a pit—in other words, pits are bad, but it sure could've been worse for Joseph! Where do you see this for yourself? A bad event could have been much worse, except the cistern was empty. Now, consider the reverse rule of the cistern: they're intended to water the land. Empty is not good for people who rely on water for their crops and animals—and family. In your own life, where was the cistern empty and thank God it was! Where is it empty, and you need to fill it? What does filling the cistern mean for you? How will you refill?
4. The slave traders put Joseph in shackles, but he resisted being enslaved in his soul. How? Where have you seen people shackled by their past? How about, remarkably, free from their past?
5. What do you make of Jacob's reaction to his son's supposed death? Grief can render us, rightfully so, myopic, so that our focus is on our own loss and pain and not on those who remain. Grief demands some focusing, in that way, in order to heal. On the other hand, helping those around us heal is vital too. What of the brothers' reaction to their father's grief? (37:31-35)
6. The story of Judah and Tamar is complicated, with people throwing about judgment words. How could Tamar....? What a schmuck, Judah! Both are very human human beings, and their responses to their world make sense given their context and culture. Tamar's intense desire to be part of Judah's family makes no sense given the family dynamics. How much do you really think God was behind the continuation of this family line? And what faith issues does it raise for you, that Tamar had illicit sex in order to become pregnant in order to be part of Judah's family? Do you come to this scene and say, "Well, she sinned. That

was wrong"? Or, "she sinned, and God's will still gone accomplished"? What makes the difference for you? What do you make of Judah's repentance in the end?

7. With Dinah's rape, Joseph's sale into slavery, and Tamar's (and Judah's) sin, the Bible makes both sin and sin's fallout clear. These serious social and spiritual issues today are a blight on our world and on Christian responsibility, wreaking destruction and death on women and men worldwide. Where do you see the church making a difference? How about your small group, or your family? Do you consider dreaming a privilege of only the privileged in society, or a gift to be given to all, regardless of their situation?

Week Five
 September 29 – October 5
 Genesis 37:36 and Genesis 39:1-39:7

Digging In

1. Who was Most Likely to Succeed when you were in high school? How'd they turn out? What kids were bullied on the playground, or outcasts in the school system? Do you remember why? What happened to them? Where were you on the Success v. Loser scale? How did you approach the outcasts?
2. Talk about “Honoring the Joseph” in others. How have you seen this done? Who has done this for you? How might that approach refocus relationships for you?
3. What about those slave traders, buying Joseph for 20 shekels and then, a few years later, needing to buy food from him? How have your attitudes or actions enslaved another?
4. Joseph could have given in, quitting out of discouragement, pain, hatred. Think back to a time when you were ready to throw in the towel, walk out of the ring. What was happening for you? Why did or didn't you stay? What did you do with your attitude?
5. The world (and church) has its own growth curve, and loves to tell us how ours should look. How do you measure up? How do you resist others' parameters for you? How have you heard God's voice for growth in the midst of all the other voices?

Digging Deeper

1. “God will work it out,” I say in *Finding Your Dream*. How do you hold on to that truth? Or do you believe it? Why? Or why not? How do you handle God not meeting your expectations? How tempting is it to walk away?
2. Make a list of the ingredients for prosperity, whether it's your recipe or a Fortune 500 company's. Now make a list of the attitudes you see in Joseph's story. How do they compare?
3. Look again at your guidelines for prosperity, above. Now compare to Romans 5:2-5. How would you define prosperity, given Joseph, given this passage in Romans? How do you handle others' prosperity vs. your own (or the lacks of one or the other party)?
4. Talk about Potiphar's trust of Joseph: he trusted Go-Go-Go-Joe with everything. (39:4) Who do you trust with even *some* of what you own or have responsibility for? Who do you trust with everything? What sorts of stuff—or people—do you reserve for your own overseeing? Where does God fit in on your trust-with-everything list? How does Psalm 37:4 fit Joseph? You?
5. In the movie *Unbroken*, Louis Zamperini went into the war fit. This certainly prepared the Olympic athlete for the physical battering he experienced in the POW camp. How do you see Joseph being prepared for what was ahead for him? How does Col 3:22-24 describe him? How about you?
6. Sexual harassment is hard to prove (witness Joseph's difficulty, since his coat was in the clutches of his boss's wife). Even the best guidelines in place to prevent any opportunity for problems don't always prevent problems. Plus, in any sort of crime or accusation, the underdog stands a good chance of losing to the popular or the powerful accuser. Where have you seen this in another's (or in your own) life? And when have you stood on solid truth and still been sold out? How did you feel about God then? How does Joseph's attitude after Mrs. P. tried to destroy him challenge or convict you?

Week Six
 October 6 – October 12
 Genesis 39:12 – Genesis 40:15

Digging In

1. What's your favorite Homemaker Reality Show? Why? Or why not? Years ago, when the series Dallas appeared on prime time, the older generation (i.e. my parents) was appalled by the overt sexuality and unfaithfulness. What's changed since then?
2. Even in the Christian community, we don't make a big deal about adultery. We hush-hush it, ignore it, deny it. But beyond the obvious, we have lots of bedmates we wouldn't consider affairs. What are some? I climb in bed with worry, anger, despair, resentment...what does this do to your relationships?
3. For some people, boredom is hard to imagine. For others, it's their ever-present companion. What do you do when you are bored? When has it led you into not-too-great pastimes? What connection might there be between crime and boredom? What do you think about Mrs. P., whom we love to judge, acting out of a deeper longing, the longing to be deeply and truly loved and valuable? Where is your "I do" conditional, whether it's marriage or some other relationship or commitment?
4. Imagine yourself in prison under a false rap. What do you do with your mind? Your heart and soul? Your relationship with God? How do you stay alive there?
5. The timing of the baker and the cupbearer's appearance in prison was encouraging in many ways to Joseph. Like what? And when have you experienced that kind of timing? How has this helped you hold on to your dreams?

Digging Deeper

1. Revisit some of the dreams you've had throughout your life. And your current ones. Talk about your progress there, where you are discouraged, what pits or dungeons you find yourself in.
2. Now review those places of favor en route, the Potiphars in your life surprising you or encouraging you. How about the steps you're taking, like Joseph, to keep honing skills and gifts (learning Egyptian while in a cell, for instance!).
3. Joseph begged the cupbearer and baker to remember him, to put in a good word for him. The baker of course would've had a hard time with that, since the fulfillment of his dream meant he was dead. But the cupbearer could've done this little thing for Joe. Where do you feel forgotten, and why? How do you handle those who have forgotten you? What about feeling forgotten by God? When have you forgotten someone who blessed you, and what could you do about that now?
4. Talk about timing: God's timing with the new prisoners, Joseph's gift to not only dream but to interpret dreams (which was a new manifestation), and the long delay after the baker was killed and the cupbearer reinstated to his position. Where do you see God's timing in that light? How do you trust that the timing will be right when it seems so wrong right now, in your prison of waiting?
5. How hard is it for you to tell others when you feel like you're in some sort of prison? Why? Who might you reach out to in your current spot? Or, to whom might you reach out? What bearing do Jesus' words have on this situation, in Matt. 25:31-48?
6. It's possible we have a skewed sense of our own guilt. Not to say Joseph deserved being in prison, but in the context of God's holiness, none of us gets a not-guilty. How do you offer compassion to others in their prisons (which you might feel are deserved)? Where do you find yourself on the spectrum—always feeling guilty, or rarely? How does this impact your relationship with others? And how does this impact your dream-state and the state of your dream, that God is giving you?

Week Seven
October 13 – October 19
Genesis 40:1 – Genesis 41:1

Digging In

1. When our kids were in middle school, we went to see the movie, *Mean Girls*. Actually, we went for a different show, got the time wrong, so ended up in the bargain theatre with buckets of popcorn and a little bit of fear. The movie was so cruel that I rousted everyone from their icky folding seats and out the door. I couldn't watch the cruelty. I assume there was redemption waiting toward the end of the movie, but couldn't bear the pain of getting to that point, nor of putting barbed wire into our children's souls (and on their tongues). We all have mean in our past, our own or others' against us. Where do you relate to the cruelty of Joseph's brothers? Mrs. Potiphar? In what ways?
2. How do you get free from mean? What tactics do you suggest? Where do you struggle with releasing the past so it no longer controls you or hinders you? And how do you think mean cancels dream? What about, dream cancels mean? Where have you seen these principles in your own life?
3. Pharaoh stood on the banks of the Nile River. Presumably, in a season of abundance, this is a place of beauty. Where are your banks of the Nile? How do you refill?
4. We are about halfway through *Finding Your Dream: From Famine To Feast*. What is God bringing up for you? Memories, hopes, hindrances? To dos?
5. Now for a dream check: Go back to your own dreams. Hit refresh: where are you in the process of dreaming? How are you listening in a deeper way to what God might be impressing on you? Who have you brought into your dreaming process? How much have you shared with the group in this study, and how are you holding one another to those dreams?
6. What scares you about waiting on the dreams, waiting on God's timing? On dreaming at all? What risks do you face if you dream, right about now? What might need to change in your life? Relationships? Priorities? Boundaries?

Digging Deeper

1. Talk about "dreams live when I forgive." Reread 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. What about reconciliation: between you and God, you and others, others and God? Where does this make you feel squeamish? Eager? Why? Put it in context with the dreams-live-when-I-forgive idea. How does reconciliation impact dreams?
2. Reread 2 Cor. 5:17. How does this affect your dreams, future, outlook? How do you experience this truth?
3. "Tell me your dreams," Joseph said to the new guests in Potiphar's dungeon for the esteemed (40:8). Given the context, this doesn't appear to be self-serving on Joseph's part, but rather out of concern for them. What did Joseph notice about these men that led him to inquire into their lives? How is this the mark of a leader? (See Nehemiah 2:2 for an example of this level of leadership.) How does Joseph's own experience with telling his dreams give him the ability to ask the question?
4. What risk did Joseph take, issuing the invitation to "Tell me your dreams"? When has someone told you their dreams, and you interpreted the dreams for them? What was that like for you? How about you, telling others? What makes you think you're right in the interpretation?
5. Joseph could not have known that his own dreams were about to be fulfilled. Well, in a few years. At age 27, three years seems an eternity. Talk about your faith level right now?
6. "Remember me," Joseph said to the prisoners. See 1 Samuel 25:30-35, where Abigail said as much to King David. How did he respond to her advice? (Uhm, silly to ask, but, how hard is it for you to heed another's wisdom? Mark of a leader, just saying.) Scripture says "Remember" and "don't forget" often. When has another remembered you, and blessed—surprised--helped you? How about your own remembering of another, when you were in a position to bless? In what ways is this generous? Challenging for you?

Week Eight
 October 20 – October 26
 Genesis 41:1-41:29

Digging In

1. People have wild dreams, some born of their own pain, as Walt Disney proved. Who are some dreamers you admire? What have you seen happen as a result? Think local, or global. How are you encouraged? Envious?
2. The cupbearer forgot to talk about Joseph's gifts of dream interpretation to Pharaoh. Whoops. I have forgotten legions of things: birthdays, meetings, appointments, items at the grocery, banking (this was nice; a little bit or a lot of overdraft fines that time), library books and DVDs. Once I forgot to remember where I was going, got in the car and started driving. I didn't have any idea of my destination. Good grief. *Recalibrating*, anyone? What's your most famous "I forgot" incident? How did you recover?
3. And where do you feel forgotten? How do you see God's timing when you are remembered?
4. Pharaoh asked all sorts of people for help with his dream interpretation. All of them were incompetent to speak. Didn't stop the king from asking, however. Where have you looked for help with your dream, even though you figured it would either be dishonored or not understood? What effect did this have on you? Why do you think you asked them in the first place, and how did you recover?
5. Forward momentum on dreams requires the occasional (or the often) *no*. When has saying *no* meant losing friends or respect? How has a timely *no* helped you move your dream –God's dream!—forward? Joseph refused to be a yes-man. He didn't give a favorable interpretation to the baker, even though the interpretation wouldn't be well received. How hard is it for you to tell the truth in situations like this?

Digging Deeper

1. Reread Gen. 41:8-13. How likely are you to own up to your failures? What stops you? What shortcomings dog you every day, your go-to self-flagellations?
2. Now back up a minute to Gen. 39:20-21. Where are you experiencing God's "kindness and favor" in your season? How does this help you hold on to your dream? How does this help combat your sense of failures? And how do you recalculate, so that failures don't get you off-track with your dreams?
3. Pharaoh's wise men and dream-whizzes were likely as intelligent as Joseph. He could have felt pretty stupid and afraid in that place. How are you inhibited by others' brightness? How do you overcome that fear?
4. Reread Genesis 41:16. "God will give Pharaoh the answers he desires." How often do you pray, with very specific answers in mind? How often is the answer you receive a non-answer, or a not-*this*-answer? How do you handle that? Take a minute to honor all those places of non-answers and disappointing answers, those hard places of faith. Invite others to share this space, as we all have unanswered prayers and you're-kidding-me results from heaven.
5. Abundance doesn't always lead to wisdom. It can lead to debauchery. Check out the history of America, and the Roaring Twenties, with the unethical business practices that led to Black Tuesday in 1929. (Interestingly, the laws put into effect after that collapse were rescinded in America...not long before our economy collapsed recently. Hmm. Profit can make mad-hatters of us all.) Good thing Joseph had wisdom about how to live in that place of plenty. What are some of the ways you do the same? Also, times of plenty are great for world leaders and their popularity. This, too, can create monsters. What examples do you have of this, either personally or on a wider level? How do you live well in a feast time?
6. Paul's letter to Titus has quite a theme to it. "Love what is good" (1:8), "Teach what is good" (2:3), "Do what is good" (3:14). Another element running through the letter is self-control. Put this into context with Titus 3:8 and dreams, leadership, and faith-forward momentum.

Week Nine

October 27 – November 2
 Genesis 41:38 – Genesis 41:51

Digging In

1. What's your favorite good-news/bad-news line? Make some up now. Here's one, to go along with our dreaming: "The good news is you're a making a living. The bad news is you don't have a life." (I made that one up this second, so send me yours!)
2. Joseph's brilliance in Pharaoh's war room demonstrates maturity beyond his prison-life. Clearly he grew beyond a 17-y.o. tattle-tale. In what ways do you notice this? How about in your own life? Where do you see growth over the past year? Five years? Since you were 17?
3. Joseph displayed emotional intelligence, "the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. It...generally include[s] 3 skills: 1. Emotional awareness, including the ability to identify your own emotions and those of others; 2. The ability to harness emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problems solving; 3. The ability to manage emotions, including the ability to regulate your own emotions, and the ability to cheer up or calm down another person."

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/emotional-intelligence> Where do you see this in Joseph? Who do you know with these gifts? And—how often do you see them displayed in, say, a finance meeting at church?

4. "Discerning and wise man..." (Gen. 41:33) Who qualifies with these descriptors? Where do you see that person get the position, and when does it go to someone unqualified? How easy would it have been for Joseph to trip up, in that high-pressure encounter? What could have messed him up? Look at your own journey. Where do you see some of the same situations or possibilities, and how have you handled them?
5. In Gen. 41:38, Pharaoh says, "Can we find anyone like this man, in whom is the Spirit of God?" Who do you know, about whom you would make such a statement? How do their lives influence you?

Digging Deeper

1. Egypt, because of the Nile River, can usually survive famine. But the severity during Joseph's tenure would wipe out the land without good planning. Talk about famine in your life: emotional, spiritual, relational, physical, intellectual—we don't pay attention to all these areas very often (New Year's Day being a possible exception). What are you starving for? Do you think you can store up for lean times? How?
2. Talk about loving people into heaven. Do you just need to live a kind life? A service-oriented one? How will people actually have a name for your loving and service? I posted on social media trying to source the quote (whose author is actually anonymous, evidently—it isn't Wesley nor is it St. Francis, two popular options), "Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words." Preachers railed over this! What do you think? What stops you from either option?
3. Memories offer sustenance. The double-doom for forgetting and not remembering for the people in the famine was dangerous. Why? What do you hold onto? What do you tend to forget? How does remembering forward your dream? How does forgetting?
4. Back to dreams: What dreams are taking shape within you? Where are you allocating time to dream? How are you honoring a dream this day, this week, this month? Dreams do not tend to grow in solitude. Reconsider your dream team. Who has come along beside you? Who are you inviting into this journey? Where are there teammates who haven't demonstrated much teamwork? See Hebrews 10:25 again, and pray through how that will look for you. It's not too soon to start your dream team. And to whose dreams are you privy? How are you helping others en route?
5. Consider Is. 61:10 in light of Joseph's various coats. What are some of your coats, and where are you being covered by God?

Week Ten

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November 3 – November 9
Genesis 41:50-42:21

Digging In

1. Who do you know who has emotional amnesia, can't remember happy times? One person spent years bemoaning other people's failings—and they were significant—and unable to remember and focus on anything good. Other people live their "happy happy happy all the time" lives and make me want to sleep for a long time, because they evidently have nothing bad ever in their lives. Where are you in that spectrum?
2. How likely are you to forget regrettable stuff from your past? Whether your own poor choices or others' toward you?
3. The marriage to the high priest's daughter was quite a political plume for Joseph. We don't tend to consider marriage as a political alliance these days, in spite of the history of world leaders (and others). What examples do you have from your own family history, or local story, or national? When have you been tempted into relationship because it was strategic?
4. After naming his son Manasseh, Joseph says, "God has made me forget all my troubles and all my father's house." (41:51) What does this mean, and what does it say about Joseph? About Manasseh? How is this a positive? How could it be construed as a negative?
5. Joseph's second son is named Ephraim, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." What is encouraging about this? Discouraging? Do you want to roll your eyes here and say, "Get real"? What's your response?

Digging Deeper

1. Read Romans 8:18. How does this relate to Joseph's naming of his sons? Now read the context, when takes us through the famous 8:28-39 passage. How is this hopeful? Challenging? Revisit Hebrews 11:34-38; 2 Cor. 12:9. Who do you know who has lived in this way?
2. The Egyptians weren't all that taken with Hebrews. They called them sand-dwellers, throat-slitters, and considered them uncivilized and flat-out wild. Joseph's acclimation in Egypt overcame quite a reputation. Where do you see him taking on the personality of Egypt? Retaining his own heritage?
3. How can we overcome stereotypes of others? How do you acclimatize with another culture without entirely throwing in your own lot, abandoning your own identity, etc.? (*Not Without My Daughter* was a stirring example of that challenge, and a challenging call to us.) How do you cling to your dream in a land (or relationship) where perhaps it will not be honored? How do you stay in relationship, even so?
4. Remember, release, walk forward: how have you done this? Where do you need to start the process?
5. What might your season of lean look like? How are you seeing God's provisions? What is God inviting you into, in terms of stewardship, tithing, trusting right now?
6. Israel's question to his other sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" (42:1) makes me laugh—and also challenges me. So many reasons to get off our rears, so many people hungry, so much may depend on our unique actions. How might this figure into your tithe of time and talent? How about your dream?

Week Eleven
 November 10 – November 16
 Genesis 42:21 – Genesis 43:30

Digging In

1. What's the dumbest way you've reacted to a hard spot in your life? My mom used to call it, "Cutting off your nose to spite your face," and my emotional pouts were legendary in my family of origin. (Ugh. Speaking of emotional intelligence—not.)
2. People react to desert/difficult places in many ways. How have you compounded a difficult place with your own hurtful response? How did you recover? (I realize this is tricky stuff to talk about in a group, but community is necessity for healing. Can you refer back to the "what we say here, stays here" commitment, and trust one another? What makes that hard? Or easy?)
3. A friend's mother, nearing 90, is surrounded by 90% of her family. She lives with her daughter and son-in-law, their children live nearby, and other immediate loved ones as well. But she said, over a holiday, "No one is close to me. I miss my family." Her kids looked at her in disbelief. Not too unlike Jacob, who overlooked his other nine boys (not counting Benjamin, sure to face certain death as far as his father was concerned) to moan about the two missing ones. (42:36-38) When are you Jacob, and the mother? When are you the other children, who must look at each other like, "What are we? Chopped liver?"
4. The sense of having everything against us is not uncommon. Life falls apart and how hard is it to count your blessings, name 'em one by one? What similar stories can you tell? How do you restore perspective?
5. On the other hand, grief is vital, and it is tricky to grieve wholly with family surrounding you, who have their own grief but also don't want to be discounted as important. How would you navigate a situation like that? How do you apply Rom. 8:35-39 without hating the necessity or feeling like it's trite?

Digging Deeper

1. Go back to the hardship Jacob faced—trace his journey to this day. What losses, what triumphs, where was he displaced? Now, consider his reaction in context: how might you react similarly? What part do your own abandonment wounds play in your reaction/response? How did Jacob's?
2. My husband is a wise man, not afraid to take some risks, and willing to look at any fallout and say, "Well, okay. I really learned something there." I always feel frantic with that approach, preferring not to risk. Some obvious problems with my tactics. Jacob erected some staunch barriers to any more risk. Are you a risk-taker, or a safety-maker? What does this look like for you?
3. What has fear and refusing risk cost you? Cost your relationships? Your life with God? Life, as I mention in *Finding Your Promise*, is "a faith-based adventure." How do you keep the adventure and live with the risk?
4. You have likely been wounded by favoritism in your journey. Why should Jacob have known better? How can you stand firm on verses like Is. 49:15-6? What about balancing your own tendency to partiality (which we all have) with James 2:1,8? How does favoritism show up as, for instance, racism, stereotyping, sexism, in your life?
5. Revisit Judah's trajectory. Start back in Gen. 37:26, then Gen 38. Fast forward to his intercession in 43:1-10, then 44:33-4. How does this encourage or challenge you? Where do you stand in the gap for another, in a way that puts your own life or reputation, etc., on the line?
6. Dream-time: where are you in your dream progression? What challenges do you face right now? From yourself, others? Are they financial, logistical, or...? How can you bring your team around you? Some of you may not have formulated a dream by this point, though you're following the principles in *Finding Your Dream*. How can you find some dreaming time? And how could restlessness be a sign of discontent and needing to stop and listen?

Week Twelve

November 17 – November 23
 Genesis 43:30 – 49:1

Digging In

1. Jacob sent the boys off to Egypt with the best products in the land as thank you gifts—balm, honey, spices, myrrh, pistachios, almonds. Food fit for a king. Nice hospitality gifts! What did you learn growing up about hospitality gifts? Why is or isn't it an important idea? What's your favorite hospitality gift ever?
2. A friend says, "I cry at commercials. I cry at basketball games." Other friends say, "I don't cry. I'm not like that." How about you? What messages did you receive growing up, about the role of weeping in your life? How was it masculine vs. feminine?
3. See Eccl. 3:4: where do you stand on this? How caught up are you on your tear quotient and timeline? How critical are tears, do you think, to your spiritual growth? In what ways?
4. Joseph looked for a good place to weep, according to the Bible. Where have you found to be a safe place for your tears? A person? Place or setting?
5. Talk about the silver cup of indictment. The brothers must have felt heartsick over this, though they knew their own innocence. What's one of your silver cups, a place where you sure looked guilty but knew you weren't?
6. This week's journey covers a lot of text. Start by summarizing what you see happening in plot and character development.

Digging Deeper

1. Read 2 Kings 8:11-15, Elisha's tears over another's impending fall. What does it take, to grieve for another in this way? Compare to other instances: 1 Sam. 1:1-8, Neh. 8:1-9, Lam. 2:11. What are they weeping over? What do you make of these various bouts and types of tears?
2. Compare, now, to Joseph, considered one of the greatest leaders of all time. Why is this important for leaders and dreamers to take note? What do you learn from Joseph here?
3. Wherever Joseph went, favor followed and extended to the people and households around him. What resolve do you have for this? How have you interpreted favor in the past? How about now? What difference does this make in your attitude? Your prayer life?
4. Joseph lived the circumstances mentioned in Luke 4:18-19. How do you see your own life preparing you to offer favor, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor? What's threatening about that for you? Hopeful? How would that look? How might that all be part of your finding and living your dream?
5. In Gen. 44:18-44, we see further evidence of Judah's growth. How does this foreshadow your own experience of faith, of intercession, in Christ? How about in your own life and witness before others?
6. How can Joseph's perspective in Gen. 45:5 be yours, when you review your trajectory? Where are you seeing God leading you, from famine to feasting? How can you put the blessing in 48:21 into effect in your life and in others'?

If you are ending this group at Week 12, jump to ending possibilities at Week 13.

Week Thirteen

November 24 – November 30
Genesis 49:1 – Genesis 50:26

Digging In

1. What sorts of stories do you have about wills? One woman was angry with her children for a full year, when they didn't thank her for the inheritance her father (their grandfather) left them. Ethically, should they have thanked her? Was that a manners' thing? How about your experiences?
2. Do you have a favorite inheritance story of your own, perhaps something that you treasure that belonged to someone special? What's that story? What about a particular character trait or mannerism that you saw in an ancestor and now see in yourself, and like? How about one you dislike?
3. Look at Gen. 50:20 where the brothers come to Joseph in terror, with a (possibly) cooked up story about their father's last wishes. "Am I in the place of God?" Joseph asked. Put this into context with your own story. What does this tell us about God dealing with sin? How does this fit in with the blessing God gave Abraham in Genesis 12:1-4? Whose responsibility is it to curse another?

Digging Deeper

1. Compare Matt. 13:14 and I Peter 1:1-5 with the firstborn and spiritual progenitor expectations in Joseph's time. What do you make of this? How is it relevant to you? To your hopes? Dreams?
2. Many do not grow up in a family that blessed their children overtly. Take time now to consider the implications of not being blessed. How about your gifts? Your talents? Your personality? Where have you felt encouraged by family or friends, and blessed? And when haven't you? Those have-not times can be sticking points when it comes to moving ahead with a calling or gifting. How do you see this in your life? What messages have you received about yourself and your giftings? How do any negative words hinder you now?
3. Reread 49:10; now I Cor. 15:24-26. What happens in your soul when you read this?
4. The road to leadership is pitted (pun intended), with seeming detours, failures, and other unexpecteds. This can be a fast route to shame, since none of us look much like Joseph in terms of gifts, wisdom, ultimate power, and also, his amazing forgiveness of his brothers. Consider your own feelings of inadequacy, failure, shame. Wait with those, for a few moments of silence in your group. Read Zech. 10:6 for a little rerouting. Now read aloud Isaiah 61:7 in unison. Process the words together and their impact on you.
5. Reread Israel's blessing over Joseph's two sons in 48:20. Now read it in unison as a group. Now read it to one another, making eye contact around the group. Next, I challenge you to do this physically: place your hand over your neighbor's head and say the words aloud over that person. Either pass this blessing around the circle or pair off into twos. Please don't skip this part. It is critical for us to hear blessings said over us and to know the touch that accompanies that blessing.
6. Read the epitaph at the end of the Nov. 30 reading, and then the benediction.
7. Close with prayers over one another, for God's blessing of them, their futures, their dreams. And determine how to continue to spur one another on to love and good deeds. You do, each of you, have a coat of "many colors", giftings very specific to your calling and your dreams. It's time to be concrete, and form that dream team. What are you waiting for?

Close with
"Be Thou My Vision"

A Note from Jane:

I would love to hear from you about your journey from pit to “palace”, from whispered dreams to working plans to the fulfillment process of those dreams. To celebrate with you both the difficulties and God’s faithfulness. Please feel free to contact me through Jane@JaneRubietta.com. Meanwhile, I’m praying for you and for the dreams God is birthing in you and through you in this dream-deprived world.

P.S. People who hope to dream, need their rest. Don’t forget that sleep is spiritual.

And...coming up next...

I’d love to share the journey with you as we come full-circle in the book of Genesis!

