Stand: Seeking the Way of God
A Discovery of Genesis 37–47
by Alex McFarland
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Discussion Guide

Introduction

Be a dreamer
Alex used to dream about becoming a rock star, but later God gave him a new dream. What’s one dream that you had when you were young that God has changed as you’ve grown older?

What did the author Napoleon Hill call visions and dreams? Do you think his description is accurate? Why or why not?

Joseph’s story is described as an example of spiritual “wait training.” What does this mean? Have you ever had to wait on the Lord? What happened when you did?

Chapter 1

Rivalry: Broken brotherhood
Genesis 37:1–11
What does the word patriarch mean? Give some examples from the Bible.

When Joseph told his brothers about the dreams he had, they were jealous. How would you have reacted if Joseph had been your brother?

Alex brings up the question of whether or not Joseph was bragging by telling his family about his dreams. Do you think Joseph should have kept his mouth shut, or was he right to talk about it?
Joseph means “increaser”
In what ways did Joseph’s name suit him well?

Do you know anyone whose character is like Joseph’s? In what ways would you want to be more like him? In what ways wouldn’t you?

Strive to be a peacemaker
Though no family is perfect, Alex bets that you have things you wouldn’t change about yours. What is your favorite thing about your family? What is your least favorite thing?

Chapter 2

Adversity: Sweet dreams, chilling nightmares
Genesis 37:12–36
True or False: Joseph’s brothers were nearby when Jacob told Joseph to go see if they were well. Why are we often led to believe differently?

Alex describes Jacob as “a shrewd businessman who sought power and wealth—perhaps too much at times.” How is this seen in Scripture? Do you know anyone like this in your own life?

The test
Miss Hollis Mayfield tested Jonathan Blanchard’s character. What would you have done if you had been Jonathan? Would you have passed Miss Mayfield’s test?
**Turn to God during times of trouble**

C. S. Lewis said, “God whispers to us in our pleasures . . . but shouts in our pains.” Do you agree with this? If so, give an example of when you’ve seen this to be true.

Which statement below best describes your attitude toward suffering? Why?

- I would rather live on the side of lies if it means not having to struggle as much.
- I try to be honest, but when my friends are all pressuring me, I usually give in to sin.
- The struggles I go through are only temporary, and the Christian life is worth it.
- I deserve to suffer. I’m sinful like everyone else!
- Giving in to despair is a worse feeling than suffering. I choose to be hopeful in God.

If a friend of yours asked you why you believe in a good God when there’s so much pain in the world, what would you say? What in Joseph’s story could you use to back up your answer?

**Chapter 3**

**Attitude: The favored slave**

**Genesis 39:1–6**

In light of the book of Judges, how does Alex define failure? When have you seen God’s faithfulness in spite of your failures?

“**God, will you please make the impossible possible?**”

What did you think of the story about the camp road? Have you ever seen God make something impossible possible in your own life?
**Make an attitude change**

Author A. W. Tozer wrote, “No man is worthy to succeed until he is willing to fail.” Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

Saint Augustine’s prayer for freedom asks God for “purity of heart” and “strength of purpose.” What does he mean by this? Are these things you would ask God for?

**God’s truth sets us free**

Alex writes that contemporary Christian culture is often a “result of following trends, not following Christ.” Where do you see this played out in our culture? How should we react to it?

**Chapter 4**

**Obedience: Fighting temptations**

*Genesis 39:7–19*

When it comes to sexual temptation, our society tends to ask, “How far is too far?” According to Joseph’s story, do you think this is the right question to be asking? If not, what would be a better question?

What is a eunuch? If Potiphar had been a eunuch, would that impact the way you view Potiphar’s wife?

**What does integrity look like?**

What comes to mind when you think of the word *integrity*? Describe someone you know who walks with integrity. In what ways would you want to be more like that person?
**Big-league obedience**
Alex tells the story of Kent Bottenfield. What does this baseball player have in common with Joseph? What can you learn from him?

**Take some gutsy obedient steps**
Which statement below best describes how you deal with temptation? Why?
- I can’t help but give in, especially if others are there pressuring me.
- I try to flee the situation as soon as possible because I take sin seriously.
- I pray to God for help but normally don’t take action myself.
- I can normally ignore the temptation, so I’m fine.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that living for Christ is expensive. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

**Chapter 5**

**Trust: Unjustly jailed**

**Genesis 39:20–23**

**It’s all about truth, not feelings**
Alex says, “Faith isn’t something we base on feelings.” What happens if we do base our faith on feelings? What should our faith be based on instead? What did Joseph base his faith and hope on?

**Survival tips when life doesn’t make sense**
Which of the three survival tips do you have the most trouble following? Why? What can you do to change this in the future?
A test of my faith, part 1
Alex writes, “Most of our greatest triumphs grow out of struggles we encounter.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Mr. Moradian wasn’t on board with Alex’s dream for the conference. Who can be compared to him in Joseph’s story? Who plays that role in your own life, and how should you react to him or her?

Trust God when life gets weird
What is one obstacle you’ve been facing lately? How should you deal with it?

Chapter 6

Service: A model inmate
Genesis 40
What does Alex give as the reason that Joseph remained free of bitterness even in prison? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

What does the term servant-leader mean to you? How was Joseph a servant-leader? How can you be one?

Spiritual “wait” training: God’s timing is perfect
Like Henry Blackaby says, “Character-building can be long and painful.” What comes to mind when you hear this? Do you think the pain and waiting is worth it?

Serve God right where you are
You may not be able to interpret dreams like Joseph, but you do have gifts. What gifts has God given you in order to impact others’ lives? How are you using them?
What does Matthew 25:34–36 have to do with the story of Henry III? How does this relate to Joseph’s story?

Alex writes, “In the Bible, love often refers to action—stuff we do rather than stuff we feel.” Does this differ from how our culture refers to love? If so, in what way?

Seek ways to serve God
Alex talks about simple acts of kindness. What are some specific acts that you can do in your own neighborhood?

Chapter 7
Wisdom: Called to Pharaoh’s court
Genesis 41:1–40
When asked if he could interpret Pharaoh’s dream, Joseph replied, “I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.” If you were Joseph, is this how you would have responded? If not, what would you have said instead?

The way of wisdom
How do you think God prepared Joseph throughout his life for his role in leadership? How is this seen in Scripture?

God’s Word is trustworthy and true
Do you agree with Alex that God’s Word is relevant? Why or why not? What does this mean to you living in today’s culture?
What is an *a fortiori* argument? How does Alex use one to show that believing in miracles is reasonable?

**Grow wise through prayer and Bible study**

Look up the lyrics to Keith Green’s song, “Make My Life a Prayer to You.” What does it say about prayer? What does this mean in regard to wisdom?

**Chapter 8**

**Blessing: Earthly rags to eternal riches**

*Genesis 41:41–57*

Why does Alex say that Joseph needed to go through betrayal and prison before he could become Pharaoh’s servant? Has God used hardships in your life in order to prepare you for the future?

**Your life can make a difference**

Do you know people like the ones Tricia Brock describes: “Some . . . stepped on whoever they could in order to climb the popularity ladder?” What is the difference between them and the teens Tricia knew who tried to make a difference in the lives of others? Which group of teens would you like to be categorized in?

**A test of my faith, part 2**

Has your faith ever been tested like Alex’s? How did you respond? Were you blessed when you made the right decision?

**Choose God’s definition of success**

Which statement below best describes your definition of success?

- Achieving my goals and following my heart.
- Getting what I want, when I want it.
- Having a lot of friends who love me.
- Being happy and having things in my life go well.
- Listening to Christ’s leading whether or not things are going my way.

What does God define as success? Does your definition align with His?

**Chapter 9**

**Forgiveness: Rivalry revisited**

*Genesis 43:1—45:15*

Imagine you were one of Joseph’s brothers and you found out this Egyptian leader was Joseph. How would you respond? What would you have learned from this situation? What if you were Joseph? Would you have treated your brothers the way he did?

Alex says that Joseph’s testing his brothers was “both wise and compassionate.” What reasons does he give for this? Do you agree, or should Joseph have done something differently?

**A believer’s five-point call to compassion**

Look at the believer’s five-point call to compassion. How do you see Joseph living these out? In what ways can you work on being more compassionate?

**God frees us from bondage**

What does Alex say is the key to free you from bondage? What bondage do you need to be freed from?

What is a stress point? What does this have to do with Alex’s story about tearing down walls? What does this mean in regard to Joseph?
Chapter 10

Providence: Joseph, Jesus, and you!
Genesis 46:28–47:31
Alex summarizes Joseph’s life by saying, “Amazing good came from unthinkable evil.”
If you were to summarize Joseph’s life in one sentence, what would you say?

Theologians call Joseph a “type” of Jesus. What does this mean, and in what ways is this true?

Alex says, “God doesn’t exist for our pleasure; we’re created for His pleasure.” Do you agree with this? If so, how should this affect your daily life?

The heart of salvation
How are God’s goodness and severity two sides of the same coin? What do C. S. Lewis and Sheldon Vanauken say about this? Do you agree with them?

Seek God’s blessing for the sake of others
How well do the following thoughts represent your own? I can’t risk everything for Christ! I’m still young. I don’t know enough and I’m not the right person to do this! Is this the way you want to feel?

Alex asks, “Are you willing to let your life count for God so that you can be a blessing to others?” What’s your answer? What have you learned from Joseph’s example?