

# OPTICS



## THE LIFE OF JOSEPH IN FOCUS

### Optics: The Life of Joseph in Focus

Myopia

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Discussion Notes

The Crossing Church

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### OPENING

Today we are completing a short, but powerful three-week series called "Optics". It deals with how you and I see the world and our lives, and discusses the lens through which we view God and our relationship with Him. We continue looking at Joseph and doing some foundational corrective work on the optics through which we see things: the two lenses of our perspective and God's promise. We are using the story of Joseph to help us put into perspective our own ever-changing lives.

### SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>

**Genesis 42:1-9** "When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, 'Why do you just keep looking at each other?' He continued, 'I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.' Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. 'Where do you come from?' he asked. 'From the land of Canaan,' they replied, 'to buy food.' Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, 'You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.'"

**Genesis 42:17, 21-24** "And he put them all in custody for three days. They said to one another, 'Surely we are being punished because of what we have done to our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us.' Reuben replied, 'Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen, and now we must give an accounting for his blood.' They did not understand that Joseph could understand them, as he was using an interpreter. He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes."

**Genesis 45:1-5, 14-15** "Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, 'Have everyone leave my presence!' So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still living?' But his brothers were unable to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.' And when they had done so, he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.' Then he put his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all of his brothers and wept over them. Afterward, his brothers talked with him."

**Genesis 50:17-20** "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?' So they sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Your father left these instructions before he died: This is what you are to say to Joseph, I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept."

**Question:** What do Joseph's actions tell you about his confusion and emotional state upon seeing his brothers?

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture listed is NIV unless otherwise indicated

# OPTICS



# THE LIFE OF JOSEPH IN FOCUS

## OBSERVATION

The life of Joseph, as presented in Genesis, is one of hopefulness even under the most dire circumstances. After twenty years, Joseph is reunited with his brothers when they come to him for help as the famine rages on in Canaan. During their encounter, we see that the brothers are still carrying the guilt of their sins against Joseph. When he reveals his identity to them, they struggle with the fear that he will punish them severely, but Joseph has a surprise for them.

**Question:** What part of Joseph's character do you admire the most? Why? Which trait do you see in yourself?

## APPLICATION

We can relate to Joseph's experiences, can't we? We've been abused, neglected, forgotten, betrayed, and hurt. We have dealt with disappointment and loss and have longed for our moments of justice or revenge. Yet when revenge is swirling around in our minds we feel agitated, restless, scheming, fuming, and consumed. It steals our joy and takes us prisoner. When we remain in the pit our vision is narrowed and clarity is lost - hope seems out of reach and tunnel vision sets in. Even though Joseph had buried all of the emotion and pain of his past, he would go on to weep seven times throughout this meeting. Joseph's experiences were colliding together and all that had once been unclear was now becoming abundantly clear. It was as though he had put on the perfect pair of glasses and all that was once blurry was now in full focus.

**Question:** Why do these emotions continue to plague us? When do you remember feeling this way and aching for revenge?

As we encounter Joseph in the final week of his story, we come to this point where he regains his full vision of what is happening in and through his life. Now his vision expands and opens up to the grander vision of what God was doing.

**Question:** Tell us about a time when your vision suddenly cleared and God's plan came into view.

**Question:** What is God's grander vision for your life?

Pain tells us to focus on up-close stuff - what we can control. Promises fix our eyes on the Author of the promise which gives us hope and reminds us of God's grander story and His invitation to use us to tell it. God's promises have the sustaining power to give us hope to hold on for the future.

**Question:** What story is God giving you to tell to others to give them hope for a brighter future?

**Question:** When will you be ready to step out and fulfill God's grander story in your life?

So, we can either remain in the pit or rely instead on the promises of God. How do we do that?

- Be in the Word;
- Daily recount all the ways you see God;
- Pray;

When we can rely on the promises of God we can say with confidence that God is using all things for the good of his people. That is God's grander story in **FULL FOCUS**. "For we know that all things work together for good to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

**Question:** What special promise from God is sustaining you every day?

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to focus our thoughts on Your promises: "You will fight for us; we need only to be still." "It is Yours to repay." "You are with us always, to the very end of the age." With these promises, and multitudes more sustaining us, our vision is clear and we are wrapped safely in the amazing future You have planned for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.