

- g) It also says something about what they think about their Father.
- h) In verse 35 we see the falseness of the comfort they give to Jacob. One sin leads to another. It gets deeper into us: **James 1:14-15**.

QUESTION 6

- a) Joseph is still alive.
- b) He is now in Egypt where God is going to use him. Remember that the brothers' original plan is to kill him (verse 20).
- c) We see God's purposes being carried out.
- d) Augustus Toplady wrote the hymn: "*A Sovereign Protector I have, unseen, yet forever at hand. Unchangeably faithful to save, Almighty to rule and command*".

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES – STUDY 3

QUESTION 1

- a) Roger Ellsworth observes: "*No thought was given to the fact that the pit into which they threw Joseph was not deep enough to hide him from God*".
- b) Notice that the Ishmaelite traders are on route to Egypt. That detail is not a coincidence. See the short sentence at the end of verse 28: "*They took Joseph to Egypt*".
- c) 'Ishmaelite' is a general term for nomadic traders. In verse 28 they are referred to as Midianites. This is the tribal grouping; rather than a second group of traders, as some think.
- d) Reuben evidently has left them for a while. He intended to release his brother. In verse 21 he seems to hold sway.
- e) It might seem unfortunate that the Ishmaelites come when he is missing. However, if this hadn't happened then Joseph would not have ultimately become their saviour.
- f) Judah seems to come up with the perfect solution. There will be no need to kill their brother and therefore his blood will not be on their hands.
- g) It is interesting to see that his justification for this is: "*for he is our brother, our own flesh*".
- h) It may have been Judah's plan to sell Joseph; thus preserving his life. But it is God who is behind that plan.
- i) Later Stephen will tell the Jewish Ruling Council in **Acts 7:9** that "*the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him...*"

QUESTION 2

- a) Twenty pieces of silver was the asking price for a slave in that area.
- b) Of course, the brothers' primary motivation was not to sell Joseph for personal gain. But it was a side benefit.
- c) Whatever their gain however, will be useless to them much later when there is no food to buy in Canaan and they have to go to Egypt.
- d) It is a reminder that Jesus was sold for just thirty pieces of silver. Judas also did not gain any benefit from it.
- e) The brothers will later realise the futility of their actions; as Judas does immediately after he has betrayed Jesus (**Matthew 27:3-5**).

QUESTION 3

- a) God didn't make the brothers hate Joseph. But by their actions they furthered God's work of salvation.
- b) It doesn't mean God approved of what they did. But that His sovereignty can be seen in even the worst circumstances.
- c) We see this in **Proverbs 16:9**.
- d) God has a purpose in all things and nothing can ultimately thwart that plan.
- e) We see this right at the end of our story in **Genesis 50:19-20**.

QUESTION 4

- a) Reuben's motives for delivering Joseph were good. However, his character was weak.
- b) He shows his distress and mourning by tearing his clothes; just as Jacob would do in verse 34.
- c) He is concerned for Joseph; but also concerned for himself: "*where shall I go?*".
- d) Would he be blamed for what had happened?
- e) Interestingly; having initially been devastated by what has happened he becomes part of the plot to cover up the disappearance of Joseph. (Evidently he goes along with the story when they return to Jacob. He certainly doesn't correct it).
- f) It is only much later when the brothers' own lives are in danger at the hand of their re-found brother, that Reuben recognises his mistake (**Genesis 42:22**).

QUESTION 5

- a) We have already seen in verse 25 that they sit down to eat; within earshot of their brother's cries for mercy. We know that from when they later recall that time in **Genesis 42:21**.
- b) Here we see the hardness of their hearts. Their consciences become desensitised.
- c) Now in verses 31 onwards we see the effect of that hardness of heart.
- d) They lie and that lie becomes self-perpetuating.
- e) It can be argued from verse 32 that the brothers did not actually lie to their father. It was Jacob who concluded that his missing son was dead from the evidence he saw.
- f) But the brothers fed the lie. It was their intent that Jacob should believe that his son had been killed by wild animals.