

Small Group Study Guide

Surviving When
Money is Tight
September 20-27



OPEN WITH PRAYER

BEGIN BY READING

Why is trusting God with everything—especially our money so important? Because the way we handle our money is perhaps the truest indicator of the spiritual condition of our heart... Do we TRUST God? The Bible teaches us that our money is first and foremost a spiritual matter. “When we acknowledge God’s ownership, every spending decision becomes a spiritual decision.” –H. Dayton, *Your Money Counts*

DISCUSS FOR A MOMENT

- How have you, your family, and friends been affected by the current economy?
- What changes have you seen in our local community because of the current economy?

This study is about surviving tough economic times and specifically surviving when money is tight. Let’s begin our study with looking at the story of Joseph and how he survived some tough economic times.

READ Genesis 47:13-26. This story teaches us three powerful Biblical lessons:

❶ FIRST LESSON: To survive the down times we must save during the up times

Reader’s Digest a few years ago wrote about difficult times financially, they said: “1989-1998 the average American family’s net worth jumped 20% but the bad news was that debt also increased. In 1990, the average household credit card balance was \$2985. By 2000, 10 years later, the average balance was more than doubled to over \$8000.” According to Don Blandon, President of the American Savings Education Council, “People didn’t save away a lot of cash during those times and savings plummeted from 10.9% of disposable income in 1982 to 1/10 of 1% in 2000. What were people doing with the extra money? “They consumed gadgets and services that were once the providence of kings,” Blandon said.

Pastor John suggested that there are four kinds of spending habits that prevent us from saving:

- 1) *impulsive spender*
- 2) *compulsive spender*
- 3) *special interest spender*
- 4) *status seeker spenders*

- Which one of these spending habits have you ever fallen into?
- Read Genesis 41:47-49. What lessons can we learn from Joseph here?
- Do you follow this kind of Biblical principle with your own finances?

Look at the 10/10/80 principle:

You give God the first 10%
You put the next 10% in savings
and you live on 80%

② SECOND LESSON: Don't be a hoarder when it's time to release the savings

READ Genesis 41:53-57

Proverbs 11:26 says, "People curse the man who hoards grain, but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell."

- What lessons on not hoarding do you learn from these passages?
- Who is someone you know that shows the gift of generosity?
- Why is generosity such an important Christian characteristic and virtue?
- What lessons from the Bible and the sermon do you need to apply to your own life and financial situation?

③ THIRD LESSON: Be perceptive to opportunity's that arise in down times

READ Genesis 47:13-17 again.

Henry Morris in the book, *The Genesis Record*, says that some people have felt this was a scheme of Joseph not only to get wealth but to enslave the people. However, it was their proposal not Joseph's, and whatever gain was involved was for Pharaoh not for Joseph. Its true that he writes that he created what would be a futile economy but the alternative of placing everyone on a dole (handout) system that would have destroyed personal and national moral and would have bankrupted the government and probably would have culminated in social anarchy. The stores and food would have been depleted and mass starvation would have followed.

Look at the people's response to Joseph's actions: "You have saved our lives!" (verse 25)

The word "crisis" means opportunity and tragedy. Any crisis always contains both opportunities and tragedy or trouble. How is this true for all of Joseph's life? How is it true for the famine in Egypt?

- How did Joseph take a negative situation and make it into a positive one?
- What opportunities do you have to share with others struggling in tough economic times?
- What opportunities do you have as a group to help others in these tough economic times?

CLOSE

Read Philippians 4:12-13. Let this passage guide your prayer time together. Spend some time in prayer for those struggling due to our current economy—pray for God's goodness and provision for them.