

Study Series: Detours

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Lesson Title: “Their Proof and Presence” (pp. 32-44)

Session 3

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The main point of this lesson is: God’s detours are not to be confused with normal consequences of life.

Focus on this goal: To help adults determine whether their struggles are God’s detours or normal consequences of life

Key Bible Passage: Genesis 39:6–40:23

To the Leader: Remember to retain and display from Session 1 the map and poster you began.

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Tell of a time when your own decisions led you off track for the day. (For example: “I neglected to set an alarm before I went to sleep, so I got up an hour late. Because I sped on the way to work, I also got a speeding ticket. And because I missed getting coffee, I was sluggish and distracted all day.”)

Invite a few volunteers to share similar experiences when their own decisions (or lack of them) led to an unexpected path.

Point out that sometimes we have detours ordained by God; sometimes we simply experience the normal consequence of life.

Say: Sometimes we want to attribute God’s detour to normal life or vice versa; today we’re going to look at how to see the difference.

Step 2. The Proof of Detours, Part 1

Read the last two sentences from the second paragraph of Day One (p. 32). Summarize the two paragraphs that follow.

As a group, briefly recall Joseph and his conflict with Mrs. Potiphar as discussed last session (Gen. 39:6-10). Ask: What did Joseph sacrifice in this situation? Why?

Read the last Day One paragraph (p. 34).

Say: We can be confident that a detour is from the hand of God when we suffer because of righteousness.

Invite a few volunteers to share their own experience with loss, hardship, or pain because they chose to obey God.

Step 3. The Proof of Detours, Part 2

Invite a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 3:12.

Ask for a show of hands for learners who have heard this verse or something similar.

Say: We may have heard it, and we may have even said we believe it. But how do we typically respond when we suffer because of our obedience to God?

Read Psalm 105:16-19 and ask: Who does “He” refer to in the first verses 16-17?(God) What was God doing to Joseph when he was in jail?(testing him)What prediction is this passage referring to?

Help learners see that Joseph’s initial visions weren’t prideful imaginations; they were real and God-sent. Joseph just wasn’t mature emotionally, relationally, or spiritually enough to be ready to live them out.

Add *Suffering for righteousness* to your running poster of key words in this study.

Step 4. The Presence of Detours, Part 1

Lead learners to read the first Day Three paragraph (pp. 36-37).

Write, *God’s favor and presence* on your key words poster.

Share a time in your life when you were terrified, lost, or completely overwhelmed, but still experienced God’s presence in the midst of that situation.

Read Genesis 39:21-23, pointing that the reason Joseph was successful was because God was with him.

Direct learners to scan the Day Three paragraph (pp, 37-38) beginning, “Joseph got a promotion in jail …” as well as the paragraph following it.

Ask: Who are other people in Scripture who found themselves in tough situations, but found the favor of God in the midst of the detour? Be prepared to jump-start the discussion by mentioning Moses, David, or Abraham.

Step 5. The Presence of Detours, Part 2

Add *Serving* to the key words poster as you read the opening Day Four sentence (p. 39).

Enlist a volunteer to read or summarize Genesis 40:1-8.

Ask: What excuses might Joseph have given to NOT help the cupbearer and baker when he saw their gloomy expressions?

Help learners see that Joseph’s own misery did not keep him from seeing a need, making a connection, and reaching out to help.

Stress that if we want God to show up in our detours, we need to look for others to serve.

Invite a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 1:4-5.

Say: Not only will God give us a way to serve during our detour, but each of our detours become another means to love and serve others for God’s glory.

Step 6. The Presence of Detours, Part 3

Write *Lingering* on the key words poster, saying: We usually don’t want to hear this one: we can know God has ordained our detour when we seem to linger there*.*

Ask why God might allow us to linger in detours.

Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 40:14-15. Point out Joseph’s simple request and urgent plea. Then ask the same volunteer to read v. 23.

Summarize the paragraph (p. 42) that begins with the question, “Do you feel stuck?” Read the last two paragraphs of Day Five (p. 42).

Say: Joseph’s faith had already been tested; this lingering of the detour was enough to push anyone’s faith to the breaking point*.* But stress that Joseph’s story is not finished yet.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Rhetorically ask learners if, during this session, they have seen themselves or a dear loved one in a God-ordained detour.

Stress that when we suffer for righteousness and when we feel like we’re stuck in a detour, we can be confident that He will be with us and will even give us a way to serve in the midst of our situation.

Pray that learners would be able to discern whether their struggles are natural consequences or a detour from God.

Leave them with the reminder that God is in control.

