**IDOP 2023 - Bible Talk Outline**

**When it is well with you, remember me**

**Genesis 39:20 – 40:23**

**SCRIPTURE: Genesis 40:14-15 (NIVUK)**

*‘But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.’*

This Bible talk outline is intended for use in IDOP 2023 services focusing on the theme of prisoners of faith. It gives some initial ideas, structure and suggested stories/illustrations for further development. Talks based on this outline could be 15-25 minutes long.

**Introduction**

***Illustration*** – What does the word ‘remember’ mean to you? It depends on the context of what we are asked to remember (information for an exam question, those who have lost their lives in war, something on our shopping list.) Does remembering also involve doing something?

***Issue*** – Many Christians today suffer for their faith and may face imprisonment as a result. As Christians in the UK who are currently unlikely to face the threat of imprisonment for our faith, we still have a responsibility to actively remember our brothers and sisters who do.

**Bible Passage – Genesis 39:20 – 40:23**

***Context*** - After being sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen 37) Joseph found himself working for Potiphar who was an officer of Pharaoh in Egypt. He did very well in Potiphar’s house but was then falsely accused of trying to assault Potiphar’s wife and was thrown into prison.

***The Lord’s presence with Joseph*** - This is Joseph’s lowest point. Rejected by his brothers, sold into slavery, separated from his father, displaced from his homeland, falsely accused and thrown into prison. Everything that could go wrong had gone wrong. Have you ever felt like this?

We might be tempted to think that the absence of good in Joseph’s life was a result of the absence of God in his life. But it is in the moment of Joseph’s greatest despair that God is closest to him. The word translated ‘kindness’ in 39:21 means steadfast love, loyalty, or promise-keeping love.

**Testimony – Twen Tedros, Eritrea**

*After being arrested because of her faith in 2005, Twen was sent to Mai Serwa prison near Asmara where she spent nearly three years locked in a metal shipping container. During the daytime the prison guards shut the door and window of the container making it very difficult for the prisoners to breathe. Twen called out to God for help and some verses from 1 Peter 4 came to her, ‘Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ...’*

*Twen said, ‘When I received this verse, I felt the Holy Spirit in my heart. I started to rejoice and to breathe – I don’t know how. It was like Daniel’s friends alive in the fire. God wanted to show His glory in my life.’ Twen spent a total of 16 years in prison and suffered terribly during that time. However, reflecting on her time in prison and all the suffering she endured she said, ‘The grace of God made everything possible. I feel so blessed to participate in Christ’s suffering.’ You can read Twen’s story in the Jan-Mar 2023 edition of the Voice Magazine pp6-10.* ([Here](https://releaseinternational.org/flip-books/Voice-of-the-Persecuted-Christians-Jan-Mar-2022-121/#p=6))

***Joseph’s prison ministry*** - The warden of the prison recognises that God is with Joseph and promotes him to a position of responsibility. Joseph looks after two new prisoners from Pharaoh’s palace with real care and attention. Not only does he help them practically and emotionally; he also helps them spiritually. He introduces them to God.

Joseph had a choice about how to respond to his circumstances. He could have let his disappointment crush him, dreamt about getting revenge, or complained and blamed God. But what we see in Joseph is a different reaction. He allows his experience of suffering to develop his empathy for other people and he grasps the opportunity to share his faith. How do we respond when things go wrong?

**Testimony – Pastor Wang Yi, China**

*Pastor Wang Yi is currently serving a 9-year prison sentence for ‘inciting subversion of state power.’ Following his public refusal to conform to the Chinese Communist Party’s strict new religious laws in 2018, which are an attempt to distort and control the Christian faith, he fully expected to be arrested and prepared a personal declaration. This is some of what it says:*

*‘I firmly believe that the Bible has not given any branch of any government the authority to run the church or to interfere with the faith of Christians. Therefore the Bible demands that I, through peaceable means, in meek resistance and active forbearance, filled with joy, resist all administrative policies and legal measures that oppress the church and interfere with the faith of Christians…I hope God uses me… to tell those who have deprived me of my personal freedom that there is an authority higher than their authority, and that there is a freedom that they cannot restrain, a freedom that fills the church of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.’ You can read Pastor Wang Yi’s prisoner profile* [*here*](https://releaseinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Profile-Pastor-Wang-Yi-May-2023.pdf)*.*

***Joseph’s heartfelt plea*** - Despite his positive reaction, Joseph still longs for his circumstances to change. He continues to feel the pain and injustice of his situation. But the cupbearer has given him a glimmer of hope. Might he be able to use his freedom and renewed position to speak up for Joseph? Joseph’s appeal to the cupbearer is the same appeal that our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world make to us today – ‘when it is well with you remember me.’

**Testimony – Deacon Jang, North Korea**

*Deacon Jang is an ethnically Korean Chinese citizen who lived in Changbai, China, near the border of North Korea. He was involved in a ministry hosting North Koreans who visited his town to seek help and to conduct business. He gave them warm clothes, food and supplies for their return journey. He also shared his faith with those who were willing to* *listen and a number of the visiting North Koreans became Christians. His goal was always to see North Koreans return home. However, in November 2014 Deacon Jang was kidnapped from China and sentenced to 15 years in a North Korean prison.*

*Release International urges Christians in the UK to write to the North Korean Ambassador to the UK to respectfully ask for Deacon Jang to be released. You can read Deacon Jang’s story in the Oct-Dec 2023 edition of the Voice Magazine p9.* ([Here](https://releaseinternational.org/flip-books/Voice-of-the-Persecuted-Christians-OctDec-2023-124/#p=9))

**Response**

Notice that Joseph’s appeal required action from the cupbearer. It was an appeal for him to do something. We should do the same:

***Stay informed*** – Encourage people to sign up for *Voice* magazine and other information. Point people towards our website, podcast and social media channels. ([Here](https://releaseinternational.org/))

***Pray*** – Encourage people to use the *Prayer Shield* prayer diary to pray consistently. This is available with the *Voice* magazine or on our website. ([Here](https://releaseinternational.org/pray/))

***Write*** – Challenge people to consider writing to a prisoner of faith using our *Reach Out* leaflet and Prisoner Profiles as a guide. ([Here](https://releaseinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/REACH-OUT.pdf))

***Give*** – Point people towards our website giving page. ([Here](https://releaseinternational.org/give/))