

Genesis 39-41 • Joseph: An Amazing Journey from Slave to Ruler

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Open your Bibles please, to Genesis chapter 39. We are making our way through the Book of Genesis here on Wednesday night, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. And we're coming to some important sections here about the life of Joseph. Let's pray as we get into this tonight.

Father, God, open our hearts to the ministry of your Holy Spirit. Speak to us, God, through your Word. Let your grace fill our hearts and may we be open tonight to be taught.

We thank you, Father for your goodness in Jesus name, amen. Amen. Amen.

Quick summary, we had in our last study, chapter 38, almost an interruption, if you will, in the story of Joseph. We started to hear about the life of Joseph; a young boy who was favored by his father above his other brothers, to the point where his brothers began to hate him and even wanted to get rid of him. Which they did. We saw that in those earlier chapters. And Joseph was sold essentially into servitude by some Ishmaelite merchants that just happened to be passing through the area.

And as we pick up chapter 39, it begins by saying in verse 1, *“Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.” (ESV)*

So this is basically the slave trade, if you will. And Potiphar sees that Joseph is a strapping young boy. He's 17, probably 18 years old by this time.

And it says in verse 2. *“The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.”*

⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵ From the time

that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field.

⁶ So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.”

And then I want you to take notice here of this last sentence in verse 6, because it sets up the rest of the story. “*⁶...Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.”*

Okay, well that's going to play into the story as we go on because in verse 7 we learned that, “*...after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.”*”

⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge.

⁹ He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (and it says)

¹⁰ And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.”

I want you to pause there with me for just a moment because this story, even up to this point, I think deserves a little bit of discussion as to what is going on here.

Joseph has no doubt been with Potiphar for a period of time. I have no doubt about the fact that he's probably in his early twenties by now. He's a strapping young man, good looking, handsome, and his master's wife takes notice of him, and tries to lure him into a physical relationship with her.

But I want you to notice in this passage how Joseph responds. And the reason that I'm encouraging you to look through this with me, is because it speaks not just to the situation that Joseph is dealing with, but it speaks to the universal issue of temptation.

And this is something we can all relate to, perhaps not tempted in this exact same way, but certainly we've all been tempted. And I think one thing that is

also important for us to note here is, how much of a temptation this, no doubt, was for Joseph.

A young man in those early twenties, late teens and early twenties, is in his peak as it relates to his sexual appetites. And this is a very difficult time for a young man to maintain any sort of purity in his life.

We see guys falling all the time to this. I mean, this is a common refrain. I have heard from more men in the last few years than I care to count, who are caught in the addiction of pornography. And every time they write to me, they are absolutely broken hearted, because they cannot seem to get a leg up on this thing. They can't seem to maintain any sort of control in their lives. Even if they begin to see a little bit of control for a short time, they quickly fall back into it. And it's heartbreaking.

But of course, the world we're living in, makes this a very easy thing to begin to indulge in. And the fact that a young man is going through that sexual peak of his life in those late teens, early twenties, it's just all too easy to fall into this sort of a thing. And I'm not telling you here tonight that there's no help for young men who are addicted to porn because there is, and there is freedom that can be gained from this sort of a thing, but it is a very challenging battle. It is a daily battle. It could be one of the most difficult challenges a young man definitely faces and it can certainly crop up in an older man as well.

But anyway, I say that as a little bit of a side point to help you understand the place where Joseph was at this time in his life, with this, hormones raging. And yet I want you to see how he responds to these temptations.

And you'll notice again in verse 8, it tells us that when Potiphar's wife came to him and solicited him to engage in an affair, if you will, it simply says in verse 8, "*But he refused.*" And those are 3 very important words. In other words, Joseph said no.

And even though it may seem like it's impossible for a young man who is at the height of his sexual drive, to say no, it is possible. A young man can say no. He can refuse to go there and that's one of the things that we learn here.

Because you see, especially for those of us, who are living in New Testament times, who have been given the Holy Spirit as a result of coming to faith in Jesus Christ, there are promises in God's Word that speak to us about times of temptation. Let me show you one on the screen from 1 Corinthians chapter 10. It says,

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. (in other words, there's nothing unique about any of the temptations that you've experienced, and it goes on to say,) *God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Now this is a wonderful promise in God's Word. But it's important for us to understand it. I get a lot of people asking me, who are dealing with temptation. I'll share this scripture and they'll often go back and say, well, it says here that He will provide a way out, what will He provide? What exactly does He provide? I don't know. That's going to depend on the temptation and it's going to depend on you. It's going to depend on your circumstances.

God is not limited in what He can provide as a way out. He doesn't specify what He's going to provide as a way out. He simply says, He's going to provide it. The question is, are we willing to take it? In other words, He throws us, if you will, a life raft. Are you willing to climb in? That's the point.

Because the fact of the matter is, there are times when we face temptations and we simply want to do it and nothing is going to stop us. God has given us the way out, but we're going to do it. And the reason..., and people ask me, they'll say, pastor Paul, why is it that I sin? Even after coming to Jesus Christ, why do I sin?

And what I tell them doesn't make them very happy. But I have to tell them the truth. And the truth is, you sin because you want to. Now there is such a thing as addiction and when you get to the point of addiction, the Bible refers to that as slavery to sin. All right. We call it addiction, but the Bible calls it slavery. Now in a situation of slavery, you can get to the point where you absolutely hate what you do and you do it anyway.

But in those initial steps of falling to temptation, you fall to temptation because you want to. You go there because you want to. Because here's the point. When we come to know Christ is our Savior, He sets us free from our bondage to sin.

And for the first time in our lives, we have the freedom to look sin in the face and say, no, and to refuse. We didn't have that. I didn't have that before I made

Jesus Christ my Savior and Lord. But once I got saved, I had the freedom now to say to sin, no. Now, did I always say it? Do I always say no? I wish I could say, I always say no. I wish I could say even after I got saved, I always said no to sin. But that's not true. I said yes to sin many, many, times. Why? Because I was accustomed to saying yes. We live the way we're accustomed to living.

When we give in to a particular area of sin, don't you know, brothers and sisters in Jesus, that it becomes that much easier to say yes to that area of sin? And the more you say yes, the more you continue, or the easier it is to continue to say yes to that.

And it doesn't have to be sexual sin, but it could be any sort of sin. It could be the sin of giving in to fear. People are incredibly fearful beings and we're afraid from day one, practically when we're born. And as we grow older, the more we learn about the world, the more fearful that world can become.

And our response can be very easily one of fear when we're faced with the unknown or whatever. Have you ever thought about the fact that fear is a temptation? Just like any other sin? How do you deal with sin? How do you...? Well, you realize that it starts as a temptation. Even fear is a temptation.

People say, well, how do I get rid of fear? Well, you start like any other sin, you repent. You confess it to God, and you turn away from it, and you come to the Lord, and you say, God, I need help. I need help overcoming this area of temptation in my life.

But I want you to see here, and this is important to see, that Joseph said no, and you can too. We can say no to sin. It's challenging, it's hard, but you can do it through the power of the Lord.

The second thing I want you to notice here. And this is in the last part of verse 8 and verse 9. I want you to notice how Joseph had thought through why he was not going to give in to this area of sin.

At the very end, the end of verse 8 and following, he says, "*Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house,*" He starts talking about all the privileges that his master had given him in the home. And he tells her, hey listen, "*...he has put everything that he has in my charge.*"

There's nothing that he concerns himself with and there's nothing he has withheld from me, "*except you, because you're his wife.*" And then I want you to notice the last thing he says in verse 9. "*How then can I do this great*

wickedness (you might underline or highlight that in your Bible) *and sin against God?*”

Now that's an interesting little speech that Joseph made to Potiphar's wife, isn't it? But what does it tell you? It tells you he thought it through. He went into this temptation prepared. He knew why he didn't want to go there and he was able to express it.

He didn't just simply go, no!, and run away. He explained the situation, which tells you He understood the situation. In other words, he was prepared going into the temptation. And this is the important thing to remember, guys. If you're not prepared going into a temptation, if you don't know what your areas of temptation are, and you're not prepared for what you're going to do when you meet that temptation, you've as good as fallen.

Because you haven't even thought it through. You haven't thought through the consequences. You haven't thought through all the fallout. You see, he talked about his mastery. He started saying to her, what's it going to do to him? This is going to have an impact. This is not just you and me having a little tryst. This is not us just having a little fun time that nobody ever finds out about. This is going to have ramifications beyond you and me. And what is it going to do to my master? He's entrusted me with his entire household.

And then he goes on to talk about this as wickedness. And that is so very important for us to see. Because one of the things that we have a tendency to do as believers, is we tend to whitewash our sins a little bit. We tend to think that, yeah, it's really not that bad.

And the thing that Joseph is very clear about here, is that it's that bad. And he calls it what it is, wickedness and a sin against God. I wonder how many of us would have given in to the temptations that we gave into in the last 24 hours if we knew that it was wickedness and a sin against God. If we were..., if that was uppermost in our hearts and minds. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, exhorting them, and let me show you this on the screen from Ephesians chapter 5. He said,

Ephesians 5:8-11 (ESV)

...at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

...at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. (so here's the deal) Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), (and then he goes on to say, and listen,) and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Do you understand that is what Joseph is doing here with Potiphar's wife? He's exposing this for what it is. He called it wickedness. He called it a sin against God. That's exposing it for what it is and that's what we're supposed to do when we see sin.

There's an interesting thing about sin, and whether it's the sin of our lives or whether it's the sin we see going on around us every day. It's very, very easy over a protracted period of time to become jaded and start to lose our sensitivity to what is in fact wickedness, what is in fact a sin against God.

And we start to just acquiesce to the world and we become acclimated to the environment of the world and the way the world does things. And the way the world speaks, to the point where somebody can speak and use all kinds of vile language and we don't even think anything about it anymore. It doesn't even, it doesn't even register that they, dropped the F bomb 5 times in a sentence and we're just ..., we're so used to it. It's gotten to be normal, just normal. That's a danger. That's a danger.

Have you ever walked into a room and smelled something that was horrible? Have you ever walked into somebody's house and smelled something that was horrible? I know that's a strange question, but my oldest son used to work for Cable One. And he went into a lot of homes to hook up cable, and he would sometimes tell me about the odors. Sometimes it was almost overwhelming, but you know what? The people who are living there are used to it. They don't smell it anymore.

And that's what can happen to you and me in the world. There is a stench of sin that we just don't even recognize. And that's a serious issue and I love the fact that Joseph calls sin what it is right here.

The third thing I want you to notice about Joseph is that, he stayed away from the temptation. You'll notice in verse 10, we're told that, *"he would not listen to her, ...lie beside her,"* of course, and he wouldn't even be around her. He chose not to even be around her. He knew that this was an area of temptation. He knew that this was a danger zone and he steered clear of the temptation. And this is one of the other things that I tell people who are dealing with issues of sin

in their life. And I always ask them the question, have you given yourself permission to play around the edge of that area of sin?

Because, the old saying goes, if you don't want to fall off the cliff, don't play around the edge. And yet you'd be shocked how many people think that it's okay to play around the edge of the cliff because I'm not going over and I'm not worried. And yet, a temptation blows through that is just too strong for them to keep their footing and over the cliff they go. Because they weren't diligent or vigilant to maintain a safe buffer zone, a safe distance.

And that's what we see Joseph doing here, keeping a safe distance from this woman. And this is what Peter reminds us of in 1 Peter, let me show you this one on the screen as well. 1 Peter chapter 5, it says,

1 Peter 5:8-9 (ESV)

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith...

Be sober-minded; (and that simply means think straight, keep thinking straight) *be watchful.* (why? Well, you have an enemy, he says) *Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* (and who do you suppose he's looking for? Probably people who are playing around the edge of an area of known danger, and he says) *Resist him, firm in your faith...*

How do you resist the devil? It's not about, cussing him out and rebuking him. You resist the devil by feeding your heart with the Word of God. That's how you put up a resistance against the devil. The Bible says, I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)

The more we embrace the Word of God, the more we fill our hearts with the Word of God, the more resistance we're going to create between us and the work of the enemy to bring a temptation into our lives that's going to be devastating.

But even when you try to stay away from temptation for a protracted period of time, there's probably a chance that you're going to miss. I don't know, I guess what I'm saying is, there's probably a chance that your vigilance might not be enough at some point. And that's what we see happening to Joseph in verse 11.

If you look with me in your Bible, it says, “*But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and (I’m assuming, unbeknownst to him) none of the men of the house was there in the house,*” And so this was a lapse on Joseph's part.

He didn't investigate to see if there anybody in the house? Is she in the house alone? Is this a situation that I shouldn't do?

Anyway, it says, *“she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.”*

Now, I want you to notice that Joseph did the right thing. We are told to run from temptation. We're to flee from temptation, all right? He did the right thing. The problem was, in his case, there wasn't anybody around to see that he did the right thing.

And that was part of the problem, because we're told in 13 and on that, *“And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, ¹⁴ she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. ¹⁵ And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.””* Isn't she a keeper? Yeah.

“¹⁶ Then she laid up his garment (in other words, she held on to it) by her until his master came home, ¹⁷ and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.”

And so Joseph is being falsely accused. No question about it. Nothing fun about being falsely accused. Verse 19, and one of the reasons, by the way, it's no fun being falsely accused is because people 9.999 times out of 10 people will believe the accusation even though they know zero of the facts. They will believe the accusation.

That's why those kinds of accusations are beneficial to people who want to sling mud and have it make a difference. Slinging mud works. You know why? Because we believe the mud. We accept it at face value. We go, yeah, I'm sure that's true.

“¹⁹ As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, “This is the way your servant treated me,” his anger was kindled. ²⁰ And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.” And so with what appears to have been no investigation, Potiphar throws Joseph into prison, puts him in jail.

Here's what's really hard to take about this story, is that this imprisonment follows his faithfulness. When somebody goes to prison because they deserve to go to prison, we go, okay, justice was served.

But there's nothing that Joseph did that warranted this sort of an action. He wanted to be faithful to God. He was faithful to God and look what it got him. Imprisonment. And there's a lot of people, I'll tell you right now, who read this passage and they struggle with it. They struggle with it.

They struggle reading in the Bible that God would allow something like this to happen when Joseph was nothing but faithful. And I got to tell you, this is a very common thing for me to hear about people going through some a situation in their life where the circumstances became negative. And they accuse, quickly, God of being unfair.

I don't know why God's allowing this to happen in my life. I don't know what I've done to deserve this. And they get angry at God, they stop reading their Bible, they stop going to church, whatever, the situation might be. Yeah it's a pretty easy reaction for people to have.

You notice that Joseph doesn't have that reaction. Verse 21 is an interesting statement because the first 6 words of verse 21 says, *“But the Lord was with Joseph...”*

Now, I want you to think about that for just a minute. Because the first thing that comes into our minds when something bad goes on in our lives, some negative circumstances happen in our lives.

I lose my job, get in a wreck, whatever. The first thing that people say is, God has abandoned me. God's abandoned me. Well, obviously God doesn't care anything about me. I've been praying, I haven't gotten any answers. Look what happened. Look what happened in my life.

And look what happened in Joseph's life. Like I said, nothing but faithfulness. And he goes to prison. And yet the very next thing we read is, *“But (God) the Lord was with Joseph...”* Isn't that interesting?

God didn't abandon Joseph, and can I just tell you right now, for whatever you've gone through, God didn't abandon you either. And you need to know that as well. I understand why those sorts of thoughts crop up, but we give voice to them way too often.

Anyway, so “...*the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love (we see the result of this, it says) and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*

22 And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.”

Chapter 40. Now, you'll notice the words that this chapter begins with. It begins with 4 words: “*Some time after this, ...*” Now, those 4 words have caused Bible scholars and commentators to ask the question, well, how much time is there, “*Some time after this,?*” Well, how much? In other words, how long did Joseph have to cool his heels in prison for doing nothing wrong?

Well, here's what we know about the time frame. Just let me do this quickly before we get into this chapter. According to, back in chapter 37, we know that right about the time that his father gave him that coat of many colors and his brother started hating him and he started bringing a bad report about his brothers that we know that he was 17 years old, all right.

So it probably wasn't long after that, maybe a year or so after that, that he was sold into slavery by his brothers. So let's say he's maybe 18 or so about the time that he goes to Egypt and entered the service of Potiphar. Now, we don't know how long he served Potiphar before this issue with Potiphar's wife happened. Presumably he had been there for a while because he had spent some time impressing Potiphar with his ability and for Potiphar to come to the conclusion, wow, I can trust this kid with my whole household. And he gave him everything to be in charge of so we assume that there's some time that's passed here.

Let's even go as far as to say that Joseph by this time is in his early twenties when this situation with Potiphar's wife takes place. So the question then is asked, well, then how long was he actually in prison? Well, if you do... Skip ahead to chapter 41 for just a moment, we'll actually get to this hopefully yet tonight.

But if you skip ahead to chapter 41 and look at verse 46, it says, “*Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*” So sometime between when he went to prison, let's say in his early twenties. And then he entered the service of Pharaoh when he got out of prison, and that was right when he got out of prison, it says he was 30 years old.

So 7, 8 years in prison, that's a long time. And these are guesses, I know, I know. Don't quote me on any of this as far as an absolute rock fact, but I think these are fairly educated guesses as it relates to these things, so we don't know precisely how long he spent there. But, we do know that he had been in Egypt for probably around 12 years and a good portion of that was spent in prison.

Okay, back to chapter 40, it says, *“Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt (in your New King James (NJV) Bible, uses the word butler there, which I think is funny) and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. ² And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.*

⁵ And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. ⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” ⁸ They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”

⁹ So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, “In my dream there was a vine before me, ¹⁰ and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹ Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.” ¹² Then Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. ¹³ In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer.

¹⁴ Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. ¹⁵ For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.”

In verse 16, it says, *“When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, “I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, ¹⁷ and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of*

baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.”

¹⁸ And Joseph answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. ¹⁹ In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—(yikes!) and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.”

²⁰ On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. ²² But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.”

For how long? Look at the first section of chapter 41. *“After two whole years, (so it's another two years on top of however long Joseph has been in prison) Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, ² and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass.*

³ And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴ And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. (don't you love dreams? They're so weird) And Pharaoh awoke. ⁵ And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk.

⁶ And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. ⁷ And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

⁸ So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

⁹ Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “I remember my offenses today. ¹⁰ When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, ¹¹ we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation.

¹² A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to

each man according to his dream. ¹³ And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.”

¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. ¹⁵ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.””

Would you please listen carefully to Joseph's response? *“¹⁶ Joseph answered Pharaoh, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.””*

Okay, I want you to pause here for just a moment. The reason I want you to pause is because we talked in an earlier chapter when Joseph was given dreams. You'll remember that I told you that I felt like he lacked some tact as it relates to how he shared those dreams with his brothers in such a way that his brothers ended up despising him, hating him, wanting to kill him because of these dreams.

And we talked about dreams. We talked about how, when God gives a dream, He gives it to instruct and to inform. And you see that happening here in both of these chapters. The cup bearer, the baker, they had a dream. Yes, they were confused about it, but God gave them an answer through Joseph. Pharaoh has a dream, he's confused, he's troubled. God gives an answer through Joseph once again.

If God gives a dream, it's because He wants you to learn from it. I've had people say to me, pastor Paul, I've had this dream, I had this dream like 10 years ago and I have still never been able to figure out what it's about. It's like, I think it was the pizza, because 10 years, that's an awful long time for God to leave you on a string and not tell you what the dream was about. If I were you, I'd just move along, you prayed or whatever. I don't think God gives dreams to confuse us or just to hold us back from the information that He wants to give. We see here that He gave the instruction.

Verse 17, it goes on, *“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph,”* And then he goes through and he tells him the whole thing. And I'm not really sure why they felt like they had to repeat it all, but they do.

“Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. ¹⁸ Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. ¹⁹ Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had

never seen in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰ And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, ²¹ but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke.” I call that a nightmare.

“²² I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. ²³ Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them, ²⁴ and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.” I’m surprised they didn’t try to at least guess. I mean, who’s to say if they’re right or wrong.

Anyway. “²⁵ Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶ The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. ²⁷ The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine.

²⁸ It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹ There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, ³⁰ but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, ³¹ and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe.

³² And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.”

So there’s the interpretation right there, that’s it. And really, that’s all Joseph had to say. He could have stopped and said, there you go, have a good day. But he didn’t. He went on to give him advice that he didn’t ask for.

He says, “³³ Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. ³⁵ And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it.

³⁶ That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through

the famine.” ³⁷ *This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants.* ³⁸ *And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?”*” Which is probably not as accurate as the Spirit of the gods, because remember, Pharaoh was a pagan, he believed in a lot of gods.

“³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.”

Now, have you ever stopped to think about the fact that Pharaoh jumped out ahead of this thing and made Joseph second in command in the whole country without any proof. It's going to be seven years. It's going to be seven years before this thing is proved out. Because seven years of good, crops, oh, that could be coincidence. I mean, think about it, when the famine hits in seven years, obviously, they're going to know for sure that this guy wasn't blowing smoke.

He really knew what he was talking about and this was from the Lord. But isn't it interesting that you would put a man into that sort of a position without really any proof. He just sees the wisdom of God on Joseph, and that's enough so there you go.

It says, *“⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. ⁴³ And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.*

⁴⁴ Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” ⁴⁵ And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah.”

And we're not exactly sure what that means. Your Bible may have a footnote there. A good guess is that it is Egyptian and means, God speaks and He lives. But there's a little bit of guesswork going into that.

“...And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.” So he's given this daughter of a pagan priest as his wife. Would you have objected? Yeah, I mean, you're thinking, wow, he's putting up with a lot here and yet he's going to remain true to the Lord.

All right. “Joseph (we're told, verse 46, and this is that verse we went ahead and looked at was) *was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.*

⁴⁷ *During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, ⁴⁸ and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. ⁴⁹ And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.*

⁵⁰ *Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore them to him. ⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.” ⁵² The name of the second he called Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”*

⁵³ *The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵ When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.”*

⁵⁶ *So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷ Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.””*

And that last sentence, that last verse, is what will set the stage for the coming chapters when Jacob and his sons make their way to Egypt to buy food.

Isn't it interesting how we've seen the Lord just bring about this powerful work of grace in Joseph's life? Such difficulties, such trials, such problems, such injustice. To be sold by your brothers into slavery, to be falsely accused, to be imprisoned for years, but you know what? We have the benefit of knowing how the story goes.

You don't have the benefit of knowing how your story ends. We get all upset, but we start learning more about Joseph and we're settled down, aren't we? A little bit. We're oh, well, things turned out. I guess it's really true, maybe God really does work all things together for the good of those who love Him and are calling to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Oh yeah, that's right. There's that promise, forgot about that. God works all things together for good. Yeah. Nice. Isn't that great? That's wonderful. Good for Joseph.

What about you? Do you think that promise is true in your life too? Do you think even though you might be, even right now, going through a really, really difficult season in your life, that if you commit your heart to the Lord, you commit your ways to the Lord, you just determine in your heart, I'm going to be faithful to God.

I don't know. I'm just going to be faithful. I don't know how He's going to work this out. I just..., from here on, I'm just going to be faithful. You think maybe He's going to be true to His promise? Yeah, I think so.

You don't know the end, but then again, that's what takes faith. That's where faith begins to rise up. Because faith says, I don't know the end of my story, but this I know. God has promised to work together for good in my life according to His purpose, all that is happening in my life, amen. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you, I praise you, and I worship you. King of kings, Lord of lords, giver of all good things.

Lord, the fact of the matter is, we don't know exactly how you're working in our lives. Sometimes all we can see is right in front of our face, and sometimes it looks really bad. Sometimes it's scary. Sometimes it's hurtful. Sometimes it's depressing.

But Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus, your Son, that you would help us, your servants, to lift our eyes above our circumstances, and to look to the promises of God by faith, and to trust you.

Even though we can't see the road ahead, we simply put out our hand. And we say, Lord, you take me by the hand and you lead me through this thing that's unknown. I don't know what's coming, but you do. And I choose this day to trust you as I walk out the unknown.

We thank you, Father God, for loving us and promising never to leave us nor forsake us. We praise you and worship you in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your evening.