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Dreaming in the Dark

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Series: Joseph  
Genesis 40-41

**BIG IDEA – THERE ARE TWO PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR  
LIFE**

One of my favorite movies is *The Shawshank Redemption*. I'm not going to ruin it for you, but it did come out in 1994, so if you haven't seen it by now, come on. It's interesting. It's a story of two men who are friends in prison. It's really the story of a guy who's innocent in prison, and he's trying to find his way out.

For some reason, we're obsessed with prison movies and shows. Remember *Orange Is the New Black*? It came out on Netflix. It was a big deal. There was *Oz* back in the day, the scary show on HBO. There was *Prison Break*. Anyone ever see *Prison Break*? Season 1 was awesome. Season 2 and 3 not so much. You can't break out of prison three seasons in a row. It loses something.

We love the reality shows...*Behind Bars, Maximum Security*. We don't ever want to go to prison, but we're fascinated by how things work in prison. Today, we meet Joseph in prison. He's also an innocent man trying to find his way out. If you'll turn with me to Genesis, chapter 40, we're going to get there in just a minute.

If you're new, welcome. Let me tell you where we've been. We're looking at one of the greatest guys in the Old Testament and one of the clearest pointers to Jesus. His name is Joseph. You can think of his life like this. It's in terms of *Ps* actually. He was a *pampered son*, the favorite son. At 17 years old, his brothers throw him in a *pit* (that's the second *P*).

He ends up with *Potiphar* (that's the third *P*). That doesn't go well because of Potiphar's wife, so he ends up back in *prison* (fourth *P*). Then he ends up in the *palace* (fifth *P*) in front of *Pharaoh* (sixth *P*). Actually, what we're going to see today... This is

interesting. This is sometimes how life works, strangely enough. We're going to see him at his lowest moment (chapter 40) and at his highest moment. Sometimes they're right next to each other.

Now, for you, most of your life is going to be lived on the plains. Sorry. I hate to break it to us. We're average. We're normal. We're going to live on the plains. Every once in a while, you get up on the mountaintop, and that's fun. Every once in a while, you find yourself in the valley, and that's not fun, but most of your life is going to be on the plains.

What Joseph helps us to do... How do we deal with adversity and prosperity? They both are hard. How do we deal with suffering and success? How do we deal with pain and pleasure? The answer is you have to be humble in success and hopeful in suffering. What happens in suffering? You lose hope. What happens in success? You stop being humble and are prideful.

The way you do this... And this is really helpful. This is kind of the intro before we get into chapter 40. Joseph understood something that I want you to understand. People don't like it when you say this, but this is true. There are only two people responsible for your life, ultimately: God and you. That's actually the way you should think about your life, and that's the only way to really take responsibility for your life.

There's God, and he's ultimately responsible for your life. You have to believe everything in your life is Father-filtered. Think about it. You don't even have to be a Christian. I know we're not all Christians here. You go, "Okay. Wait a second. I didn't choose when I'd be born." So, welcome. Most of us were born in the twentieth or twenty-first century. Okay.

"I didn't choose where I'd be born." Okay. It's nice that I was born in America. When I say *where*, I mean who your parents are. "I didn't choose who I'd be born to." The wealthy family or the middle-class family or the lower-class family. "I didn't choose how smart I'd be. I didn't choose how healthy I'd be."

This is actually what makes you compassionate on certain people. You realize sometimes their geography is their destiny. You start realizing in your own life, you woke up on third base, and you thought you'd hit a triple. So, the first thing you have to understand is "Everything in my life is Father-filtered." Then you have to believe that God is with you in your whole life. Remember? The last chapter ended with "God was with Joseph."

What would you do if you believed God was with you? Like, really. What would you pray? How would you risk? What would you give? Who would you share with? So, that's maybe the big scary, like, "Hey, listen. God has made a lot of decisions for your

life before you were born that have deeply shaped who you are," and you know that if you think about it for two minutes.

The second thing is what people don't like. You are responsible for how you respond. This is the opposite of what most people will tell you today. They don't want to take any responsibility. Here's how we know this. They've studied this. Say something very tragic happens in a family. Maybe there's divorce.

If they study families that particularly have twins... That's as close to two of the same people as you can get. Okay, there are twins. The family falls apart or financial crisis hits the family. A lot of times, one of the twins gets better and the other twin gets bitter. Well, what's the difference? How they respond.

You have to make this commitment to yourself. You have to say, "I'm not going to play the victim card. I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to make excuses. I'm not going to blame my parents. I'm not going to blame my genetics. I'm not going to blame my circumstances. The only thing I can do is play the hand I've been dealt, and that's actually the only forward plan that doesn't make me bitter."

So, today, we're going to look at Joseph do that. He has had a great deck of cards at the first in his life...son of a patriarch, favorite son, pampered life. Then we've seen he has had these painful providences. We'll pick it up in chapter 40, verse 1.

***"Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt [Pharaoh] and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined."***

We read *cupbearer* and *baker* and think blue-collar workers or something. No, no. These guys were super high-level. The cupbearer's job was "Taste the drink before Pharaoh does to make sure it's not poisoned." The baker was "Check all the food to make sure it's not poisoned." So, here's what we think happened. By the way, it was very hard for the baker and the cupbearer to get life insurance. They had a hard job.

What we think happened... Now, we don't know this for sure, but it makes sense. We think there was some type of plot to poison Pharaoh with bread and drink, or something, and he couldn't figure out which one of them was responsible for it, so he throws them both in prison. Later, the cupbearer is exalted and restored and the baker is hanged and executed, so we think that, later, Pharaoh gets some news of who really did it, and that's why that happens.

Okay. We need to see this. Verse 4: ***"The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them..."*** So, we see providential people and providential circumstances. ***"...and he attended..."*** That's not a great translation. The literal Hebrew word is not *attended*; it's he *served* them. ***"...and he [served] them. They continued for some time in custody."***

The first thing we see Joseph doing when he's suffering is serving others. We're going to try to talk about principles when you're suffering. Obviously, there are moments where it's intense suffering and you just have to take care of yourself and you don't know what side is up and all of that.

After a seasoning of suffering (he has been in jail for a while), he begins to serve other people. The temptation when you suffer is to get out of community, to get away from people. It's the very community and the very serving relationships that are going to be part of your healing.

## **01 MORE DREAMS: INTERPRETATION**

So, he starts to serve them, and that opens up an opportunity. Look at verse 5. ***"And one night they both dreamed..."*** I told you in Joseph's story dreams come in two. ***"...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."***

Just a moment on dreams. Dreams are a big deal early in the New Testament and early in the Old Testament. I don't know exactly what that means. In Genesis we get 10 dreams, and Genesis is only 50 chapters...10 dreams in 50 chapters. In the beginning of the New Testament we get a lot of dreams.

Do you remember Mary? She gets pregnant. Of course we know this. It's the Christmas story. Joseph, her husband-to-be, gets a dream. Remember the wise men? They get a dream. Why dreams at the beginning of new seasons? I don't fully know. Maybe we need the dream before we have the Scripture, and once we have the Scripture, we don't need the dream as much. We're not sure.

People today, modern people, people like you and me, don't think much of dreams. We have a dream, and we're like, "It was strange. I'm sure it was nothing." It's like, "It was nothing? Nothing? *Nothing?*" It's an extreme form of thought, for sure...at least that. You have at least four to five dreams a night, even if you don't remember them. It's interesting. Sigmund Freud thought that in your dreams you tell yourself things you've been avoiding while you've been awake. I don't know. Maybe.

Why do we all have similar nightmares? There are universal, symbolic nightmares. I won't make you raise your hand. We've all had the "I'm falling" dream. We've all had the "I'm flying" dream. We've all had the "I'm back in school, and I'm not prepared" dream. We've all had the "I'm standing in my underwear speaking to people" dream. Don't tell me I'm the only one.

I've had a reoccurring nightmare. It's not super scary, but it's the same nightmare. I still have it probably once a month. It's some version of "I'm not ready to preach." I had a busy week; I didn't prepare. I'm trying to print my notes; the printer is jammed. I'm trying to get to the church; I'm in too much traffic. I'm in the church building; I can't find the stage. It doesn't make any sense. This is not a big building, and I obviously know where the stage is.

So, our dreams are more important... We don't always know how God is speaking, but our dreams are important. Back then (they didn't have the written-down Word of God), dreams were a major way God would speak.

So, here's what happens. Verse 6: ***"When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, 'Why are your faces downcast today?'"*** They'd probably just say, "Because we're in prison. That might be a reason." No, he noticed something unique.

Maybe this is another principle. In suffering, try not to be at the place where you're so obsessed with your own suffering you can't see the suffering of other people around you. There are actually a couple of principles. What we're trying to do here, genuinely... This is really hard to do, but we're trying to create a genuine church community that cares for one another.

Here's a principle of suffering. There are two principles from this verse. The first principle is you're not the only one suffering and, usually, you're not the one suffering the most. Here's another interesting principle: most people won't tell you they're suffering. Did you notice that? Joseph has to go to them and go, "Hey, guys. I'm noticing you. I'm looking at your life."

Now, there are certain people (you know these people) who are always telling you all of the problems in their life all the time. That's a very small group of people. That's a very unique personality. The average person doesn't want to tell you their problems. They feel guilty. They feel embarrassed. They don't want to look needy. They wrestle with "Is this even really suffering?" They don't want to be that person who keeps bothering other people to help them.

So, we're trying to create a church community where we can notice what's going on in people's lives and say, "Can I help you?" That's what Joseph does. Verse 8: **"They said to him, 'We have had dreams...'"** Now, when you hear *dreams*, you need to think God's revelation. This is an important principle. Today we have the written-down Word of God. They had dreams.

This is so key: **"...and there is no one to interpret them."** God's revelation needs interpretation. It does. **"And Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God?'"** Look at how polite he is. **"Please tell them to me."** This is the first moment that we see Joseph still has faith in prison. Now, we know that because maybe we know the end of the story, but if you're just reading the first few verses, you're like, "Well, maybe he's just a really good guy in prison now. Maybe he deconstructed his faith."

This is what people do. This is what you'll be tempted to do. When extreme suffering comes to you or just when long suffering comes to you, you get to the place sometimes where you say, "What I'm experiencing is so different than what I think I believe that I'm going to change what I believe to fit my experiences."

Here's a question you'll have to ask in suffering: "Do I want to walk away from God and have all of the answers or do I want to walk with God with my questions?" Let me explain. Here's what I mean by that. Some people get very angry at God in suffering, and they say something like, "You know what? I don't believe in God anymore. This is all just a random accident. Everything that happens is random. None of this has any purpose, so now I have an answer to everything. It's all random. That's my answer."

It's like, "Well, okay. Good. You have the answers. Now you're not walking with God. You've simplified it down to 'It's all random.' Okay." It's much harder to go, "I'm embracing the mystery of this. I'm walking with God even though I have my questions, and I may have to walk with God with my questions the rest of my life."

This is what's really helpful. We're not good at this. I'll share this more in the next series we're getting into. We're going to get into a series in a little bit, after *this* series, to help our church be more evangelistic. One of the things Joseph does that we need to get better at doing is he listens for people's problems. This dream was their problem. This is so powerful. He listens to their problems.

By the way, we need to be the last people... Maybe we're the only people left, the Christian, who can hear someone's sad story. It's like, "All right. I've got you. What's your problem?" Then they tell you their problem, and here's what you do. This is exactly what he does. This is so simple. We need to get better at this. He listens for problems, and then he shows that God's Word has the answers. That's all you do. I'm not saying it's super easy.

This is why most people come to faith in Christ when they have problems in their life. You know, their marriage is falling apart, and you can say, "Listen. I've had my own marriage problems. Can we talk just a little bit about the power of forgiveness in marriage? I don't know how I would be able to forgive my spouse if I didn't first understand how God forgave me in Christ." You don't talk about it in weird ways; you talk about it in normal, natural ways. The Word of God needs to be interpreted. That's exactly what he does for them.

## 02 TELLING PEOPLE WHAT GOD HAS SAID

***"So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, 'In my dream there was a vine before me, and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. 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.'***

***Then Joseph said to him, 'This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. 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.'"*** We're going to see Joseph has a different word for the baker.

The Christian needs to have two words for people. Often, we just want to have the first word. This is the word of encouragement. Let me just say: everybody needs encouragement. Mark Twain said, "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Why? Because you don't get many.

You have to understand this, and you probably do understand this. There are people who almost never get encouragement. Their parents never say anything. Their spouse never says anything good. Their boss never says anything good. Their friends never... People are dying for it. Basically, kids are dying for it. "Will you pay attention to me? And if I do something good, would you please tell me so I know who I am?" That's all a kid wants.

We have to encourage people. We have to catch them doing the right thing and say, "Yes!" We have to find out what's going on in their life and give them a promise from God and a place to look. Everybody needs encouragement...*everybody*. There's nobody you know who doesn't need encouragement, for sure, but then the hurting need hope. They need a special type of encouragement.

If you've been around for a while, you know how much of a fan I am of Billy Graham who went to be with the Lord in 2018. Jim Bakker (some of you will know that

name...Google him later) was a famous television evangelist who ended up getting himself in a lot of trouble, did a lot of things wrong, and ended up in prison.

Billy Graham calls him when he's in prison and says, "I want to come visit you." Jim Bakker says, "Don't. Don't. No, no, you're Billy Graham. You can't come to prison. It won't look good for you." He says, "Well, I'm coming to prison." What happened is Jim Bakker showed up at Billy Graham's funeral. The mainstream media saw him, and you know how the mainstream media is.

So they interviewed him. "What are you doing, Jim Bakker? We know what you did. We know who you are. What are you doing at Billy's funeral?" Through tears, though it was decades later, he said, "The reason I'm here is I was in prison, and Billy Graham visited me. He gave me a hug in my prison cell and told me there was hope in my darkest hour." This guy was crying about it decades later.

If you can go to people and go, "Look, man. Marriage is hard..." I've had to say this to people before. It's like, "Dude, I know your marriage is in a dark place. I have seen marriages come back from places way darker than this, I promise you." Someone is in addiction, and you go, "Look, dude. I know people who have been in far worse situations or situations just like you, and Jesus loves to save addicts. I actually have a friend. He's walking in a measure of holiness, and he used to struggle with this. You know what? He'd love to meet with you."

Part of the reason people are still suffering is they never ask for help. The cupbearer says, "Help me," finally. This is a word for some of you. Some of you are suffering way more than you need to be because you haven't asked anybody for help. This happens with finances. People are struggling with their finances, and they're so embarrassed, because it's embarrassing.

It's like, "Oh, God, I don't know how to save money. I don't understand compounding interest. I don't know how to do a budget. I spend more than I make. I don't know how to negotiate for my salary. I don't know how to put a CV together." This is all humiliating.

I want you to hear me say this, because this is the truth. In this church...I know this...there's no person you would go to to say, "I'm in trouble, and I'm potentially suffering more than I need to be, but the reason I might still be suffering is I've been too prideful to ask for help in this area of suffering..." It's like, "Dude, we are going to help you."

The thing about life is you are always a novice in this new area. Nobody knows what they're doing. You're getting married. You don't know what you're doing. You're buying your first home. You don't know what you're doing. You're having your first



kid. You have no idea what you're doing. It's fine. That's how we all start out. Then you find other people and go, "Dude, I am going to suffer a lot more than I need to if you don't help me. Could you please help me in this?" And everyone is like, "Yes. I would love to do that."

So, he gives a word of encouragement, and people need encouragement. Then look at what he does. Verse 14: **"Only remember me..."** "You're going to get out. You're going to be with Pharaoh." **"...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."** I guess he's under some kind of house arrest prison.

**"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."** There are two other things you need to understand in suffering that are right in this verse. First, it is okay to want to get out of your suffering. Do not believe some religious person or some overly spiritual person. I know all of the lines on suffering.

The classic line is "Don't ask to get out of suffering; ask what you *can* get out of suffering." That's a great line, but Joseph is like, "I'm ready to get out." Look, guys. There's no virtue in just suffering. Zero virtue in suffering. Christians are not masochists. We suffer willingly and voluntarily and, hopefully, joyfully for God's greater purposes and plans. We are willing to suffer, and we are going to trust God in suffering, but if you can get out of suffering, get out of it.

That's a lesson of Joseph. Joseph is not like, "This is great. I love the Lord. I'm happy to be in prison." He's like, "Get me out of this." That's completely fine. I think the principle is you can get out of suffering as long as you don't have to sin to get out of suffering. It's like, "Okay. How can I get out of this? Is there a person who could help me?"

By the way, often, there's not a *how* to get out of suffering; there's a *who* to get out of suffering. The *who* is the cupbearer. It's going to work. Some of you are thinking how. Stop thinking how. The *how* is a *who*. There's somebody who can help you. That's why we have the church.

The second thing I want you to see there... This is a word for just a small group of you who have a certain type of personality, but it's definitely in this room. It's okay to stand up for yourself. Do you see what Joseph does? He says, "Look, guys. I've done nothing wrong, and some people stole me. I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews." Some of you are unwilling to do that.

This is the first time he opens up about his story. Here's the principle in this: you can stand up for yourself as long as you're not putting others down while you do it.

Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say, "My idiot brothers whose names are Judah and Reuben..." He doesn't do that. He just says, "I got stolen out of this land." He doesn't even talk about the Ishmaelites. He doesn't blame the Ishmaelites. He's not blaming anyone else.

Then he says, "And I'm innocent." He didn't say, "Okay. There's this lady. She's Potiphar's wife. Watch out." You have to understand it takes the whole Bible to make the whole Christian. You have some verse that makes you think that being a Christian is being a doormat. It's not. Some of you need to stand up for yourself at work. I'm serious. Stand up for yourself.

You know you need to say something if you're resentful. Are you resentful toward your boss or your coworker or something? You need to say something. You say it humbly, but you say something. Are you having fantasies in your mind of what you would say when you're driving home? "This is what I would say." You need to say something.

This is a really serious thing. This happens a lot in marriages. It actually happens a lot with guys with their wives. There's something you need to say that you haven't said. You don't blame her. You just say, "This is it. This is how I feel. I've not done anything wrong in this area of my life. My conscience is clean." Well, then he has to go and talk to the baker. Look here. Verse 16:

***"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, 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.' And Joseph answered and said, 'This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.'"***

We all like the cupbearer sermon. We don't like the baker sermon. I will tell you... I love all churches, and I believe in all types of churches, and all that kind of stuff, but a lot of churches today are cupbearer churches. They want to talk about grace without talking about sin. They want to talk about heaven without ever talking about hell. They want to talk about a relationship with God without ever talking about repentance, and you can't do that.

We believe deeply here that hard words make soft people and soft words make hard people. You know this, right? There are some people, usually especially men, who design their entire life so no one will ever get close enough to them to actually confront them about something in their life.

They have either willfully, or maybe being willfully blind about it... They have set their whole life up so no one will ever say anything hard to them. That's why their marriage is miserable, why their kids are resentful, why they're having the exact same struggles, and why they're so self-unaware: because there's nobody in their life who can give them a hard word.

See, in the old covenants in churches... We have a covenant in our church that you sign if you become a member. The old covenants would say things like, "Let's keep the peace and unity of the church." Another thing all of the old covenants would say is "We will watch over one another in love."

No one thinks this way anymore, because everybody is modern and individualistic, but if you are a part of our church, you represent our church and are responsible for our church. Everywhere you go, you represent our church as soon as someone finds out you go there and who you are, and everywhere you go, you're responsible... I would say you're at least responsible for the people in the church who you know.

If some guy is doing something... If a guy is not treating his wife right, not treating his kids right, his wife and kids need you to say something. Here's what you need to do. When you confront somebody, you have to have three examples that you've seen them do it. The reason for that is everybody has their little defense lawyer up. When you want to confront someone, you have to go, "Hey, listen. I saw you do this three months ago."

You're looking for patterns. You're not looking to catch somebody in a one-off. It's like, "Hey, look. I saw you do this three months ago, and I made a mental note of it. Then I saw you do it last week, and I just saw you do it again today." Just so you know, here's what people do when you confront them: they get defensive, they get angry, they cry, and then you talk to the real person. That's how it works every time.

Most people aren't willing to get through that. "I've got to overcome their defenses. She's going to get angry. Oh, she's crying. Oh, there's the real her." You'll actually see it. The persona drops. It's like, "Oh, there. Now I'm having a conversation with the real person." "You're right. I knew I wasn't this." It's like, "I know, I know. We had to get here. I needed to have this conversation with you."

The second thing when you confront somebody is you have to scour your own conscience and make sure you've dealt with this area in your own life. You're like, "All right. I'm going to talk to someone about how terribly I've seen them parent." There's no talking to people about their kids, so you're like, "This is not going to be easy." Then you go, "Okay. Well, you know what? I'm not perfect either, but, Lord, I'm going to repent. I'm going to grow. I'm going to actually lead with that."

Here's the other principle: if you can't wait to talk to them, if you're like, "I can't wait to tell them," then you need to wait to tell them. That's the rule. I think then your tone has to match the text. If you're talking about the wrath of God, if you're talking about hell, there needs to be tears in your eyes and fear and trembling in your voice, and there needs to be a genuine concern. "Hey, even if you don't believe these things, I believe these things as I talk to you."

So, there's the word to the cupbearer, and there's the word to the baker. We need to be committed to giving both. We're trying to do that as a church. Let me say one more thing. I wonder if these dreams Joseph begins to interpret make him think of his dream again. What they say happens when tragedy strikes your family, when suffering enters, is you have what's called *dream death*. It's hard to dream.

The number one thing you tell somebody in suffering (this works) is "Shorten the time frame." It's like, "Okay. I can't think about six years..." "You should think about a decade from now." No, no, no. You can't even think about a year. Some people are like, "I need to get through this week." Yes, that's exactly what you need to do. When you suffer, you shorten the time frame, but eventually, the hope is that you can dream again.

I wonder if there were times where Joseph stopped dreaming. It's like, "No, man. You need to still dream in the dark." You may need to begin to have a different dream or you may need to have a... Joseph is having the same dream, but he's realizing there's a whole different version of how he's going to get there. Look at what happens.

### **03 HOW DO WE DEAL WITH DISAPPOINTMENT AND BEING FORGOTTEN?**

Verse 20: ***"On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday..."*** People do strange things on their birthday, don't they? ***"...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. He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them."***

Then you read verse 23, and you go, "No!" Here it is. ***"Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him."*** It told us twice. "He didn't remember, but he forgot." This has to be the lowest point in his life. He already experienced injustice. Then he's in prison. Then what he thought would work didn't work.

I don't know how long it took. It's like, "Okay. I'm sure the cupbearer is busy. He had to tell Pharaoh. He had to get his job back. I'm sure he'll be here in a week or two."

We always have that moment where it's like, "Oh, no. This isn't going to happen how I thought it was going to happen."

How do you deal with disappointment? When you're in the lowest part of your life, what do you try to do? You try to own what you can own in the situation. I wonder if Joseph... I don't know this for sure. I wonder if Joseph is sitting there, and all of these terrible things have happened to him, and he thinks, "What have I contributed to this?"

Maybe he thinks, "I was a pampered, spoiled 17-year-old kid who liked to go out with a clipboard and spy on my brothers. I liked to put it in their faces how I was the favored son. I was a horrible younger brother, and I made it very difficult for people to love me." It's like, "Okay. That was 10 years ago, but, yeah, that's actually what I did, and I need to own that."

I think when you're in a low spot, you try to forgive who you can forgive. I don't know when he forgave the cupbearer. I think he forgives Potiphar's wife because when he's exalted later, he never goes after her. I don't know if this was the beginning of forgiving his brothers. If you've ever had to forgive somebody of anything really hard, you know you don't just do it overnight. You do it over time. You continually decide to forgive this person.

Then he's forgotten. Do you see that? I don't know how many of you feel forgotten. The most common people who feel forgotten are people whose dad left them. You know, moved across the country, married a woman half his age, and started a new family, or never married their mom. It's like, "Dude, what happened? Did Dad not care about me? Did he forget me?"

What's probably the most common... This is mostly with women. What happens is women feel forgotten when they were suffering with another woman, but that woman's life has gotten better. I'll give you an example. Two women are single, and they would say, "I feel like I'm suffering. I've been single way longer than I thought I'd ever be single." So, they get together. They watch *Mean Girls*. They watch *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*. I don't know what they watch. They hang out.

Then one of the ladies gets a boyfriend, and the other one is really excited. Then she gets engaged, and she gets married. The other lady comes, and she's the bridesmaid, but now that lady is a wife, and she has a home. Couples start hanging out together. The girl who's still single is like, "Does anyone forget that we were single together? Don't forget me."

This happens with infertility. "We were both infertile. I celebrated when you got pregnant. It was a little hard, but I went to the baby shower. I'm really excited about

your family. I'm still single." People feel forgotten when they tell you something and then you never ask about it. Just know (this took me awhile to understand) that people want you to ask about the suffering in their life.

Most of us don't know that. We're like, "I don't want to bring it up." Here's what people think: "I'm thinking about this all the time. I would like to know that somebody is thinking about this some of the time. I would like to know that somebody is thinking about this at least when they're with me."

#### **04 PHARAOH'S DREAM & JOSEPH'S OPPORTUNITY**

So, he's forgotten, and then look at what happens. ***"After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile..."*** Two years is a long time. That's enough time to get pregnant and have two kids. That's enough time to be halfway done with your college education.

We talk about "Jesus is Lord," and in that phrase is the idea of submission. "I submit my life to Christ." There are two levels to submission. I really believe this. Level one of submission is "I do what God's Word says. I submit to what the Word of God says." That takes faith and trust and hope and all that.

The second is "I submit to God's timing." That's the hard one. What do they say? "God is never late, but he's rarely early." Let me try to comfort you from Joseph's life. You're always trying to figure out "Why now? Why me? Why am I waiting so long?" or whatever it is. God doesn't owe us an explanation, but maybe he'll give us one in heaven for why we're waiting on certain things.

But we know with Joseph. Why does he have to wait two more years? Because if the cupbearer brings him out and says, "Dude, this guy is innocent. He was stolen. He hasn't done anything wrong," Pharaoh goes, "All right. Back to your family you go." So, he would have gone back to Jacob and his brothers, and guess what would have never happened: he wouldn't have been ready when Pharaoh had the dream to interpret it. That's what happens. Let's see. Verse 2:

***"...and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. 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. And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke."***

So, he's having a nightmare. Dreams come in twos, so he's about to have a second dream. ***"And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of***

*grain, plump and good...*" By the way, grain and cows were the two main forms of the economy.

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

*Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, 'I remember my offenses today. 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, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation.*

*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. And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."*

All of the Joseph stories always hinge on a certain moment where everything changes. Remember? He's looking for his brothers in the fields in chapter 37. A guy meets him and says, "Oh, I saw your brothers. They went *that* way." That transforms everything. This whole story hinges on somebody remembering somebody they forgot.

Who do you need to remember who you've forgotten? I know what you're thinking. "I don't know. I forgot." I just wonder if there's somebody... This maybe isn't a word for everybody, but I wonder if there's somebody you've forgotten. Is there somebody who's still suffering who you used to think about and you need to think about again? You just don't know. I mean, this guy remembering one person makes a huge difference in his life and everyone else's life.

So, finally, Joseph gets brought up. Verse 14: *"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself..."* The Egyptians didn't like hair on men's heads, and they didn't like facial hair. So he got completely shaved. *"...and changed his clothes..."* I told you clothing is big for Joseph. *"...he came in before Pharaoh."*

It's hard to overstate this. Here is Joseph standing in front of the most powerful man in the known world who many thought was a god. I think the principle... We're done with suffering. We're now talking about success. How do you deal with success? A lot of people don't deal well with success because they are so impressed by other people.

Christians are terrible at this, unfortunately. We're way too impressed with politicians. We're way too impressed with celebrities. We're way too impressed with business leaders. We're way too impressed with people who make a lot of money...way too impressed with them.

What do you do? You have to keep a view that God is big and people are small. There's a great book written years ago called *When People Are Big and God Is Small*. The book was on anxiety and the fear of man. He said that's it at the end of the day. I don't want to oversimplify anxiety. I don't want to oversimplify the fear of man, but that is the problem in a lot of our lives.

It's like, "God is way too small, and my boss is way too big." "God is way too small; my neighbor is way too big." "God is way too small; my kids are way too big." I'm going to start acting weird and strange around people when I have an inflated view of them and a small view of God.

The second thing is he seems to be the same person in every place, which is very hard to do. It's the definition of *integrity*. Most of us have a work life, a family life, a private life, a vacation life, a travel life, and a hobby life. Actually, they say that's one of the reasons people get burned out. People are like, "Why am I so tired?" Certain people can handle a lot, and other people can't.

There are a lot of reasons for that. One of the reasons is it's very exhausting to be a bunch of different people in a bunch of different places. Like, "I have *this* persona at work and have *this* persona at home and *this* persona..." It's too much. So, he comes and stands before Pharaoh. Look here. I want to show you what he says.

***"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.' Joseph answered Pharaoh, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.'"***

So, how do you deal with success? God must be big; people must be small. Secondly, you have to give God credit early and often for the good things in your life. Joseph is great at this. We're not great at this. You have to learn how to talk about God in normal, natural ways.

You have to see your life not as a biography. "The story of my expressive individualism and how I pulled myself up by my bootstraps and the college I got into and the job I got." No. Your life is not a biography; your life is a testimony. "Man, I cannot believe the things God did in my life. As I look back, I see the hand of God." We have to learn how to talk to people about how God is working in our lives and it not be weird.



Someone can't comment on you and you go, "Yep, the glory goes up." It's like, "Uh, I don't even know what that means." You need to take the right amount of credit, because you're not a robot, and you interacted. You *are* responsible for your life. So, if someone says to me, "Kyle, that was a great sermon," I try to train myself to say something... First, normally I ask, "Tell me why. Let me understand more. Give me more specific feedback."

Then I normally say something like, "Hey, thank you so much. I feel like I don't actually have a ton of gifts, but I think one of the gifts God has given me is the ability to see what's in the Bible and explain that to people. I'm really grateful for that gift, and I'm really glad it was helpful for you." I didn't act like I didn't play any part in it and that I'm like a robot or something. I didn't get all Christianese about it. We have to learn how to talk about our lives and see God in them.

Well, that's what he does. I have to skim some of these things, but in verses 17-24, Pharaoh tells Joseph his dream. We've already seen it. He explains it to Joseph. In verses 25-32, Joseph comes back and goes... You guys know this. He says, "Here's what it means. You're going to have seven good years, and you're going to have seven bad years."

This is what I want you to see. What happens in verse 33 is what we need to help people with. Look here. Remember, he heard the dream, and he interpreted the dream. He says, ***"Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt."*** So, here's what he does. This is so important.

People need the Word of God interpreted, and then they need help applying it. Up to this point, he interpreted it, but that's not helpful enough. This is where a lot of churches and a lot of Christians fall short. It's like, "Okay. Here's what it means. Here's the Greek word. Here's the Hebrew word. Here's what this image means," and everyone is standing there going, "Who cares?"

He's like, "Okay. There are going to be seven great years and then seven years of famine." Pharaoh is like, "Uh, that's kind of scary. What do you want me to do about it?" He goes, "I'm glad you asked. I'm going to help you apply God's word to your life. Here's what we need to do. First, we need a leader." We don't know if Joseph thought he was going to be the one chosen.

He applies the word of God to Pharaoh's life. That's what people need help with. Then he applies the word of God to other circumstances. He says, ***"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."***

I love it. Joseph has a plan to apply God's word. Normally, they would save one-tenth. Now they're going to save one-fifth. So, instead of saving 10 percent, they're saving 20 percent. Dave Ramsey would say, "Amen." This is a third principle when things are going well in your life. When things are going well in your life, prepare for when they won't.

I'm telling you. I don't know all of your stories, but if when Christmas comes everybody is there in your family, everybody is getting along, everybody is healthy, and the kids are playing by the fire, be very grateful and realize that 100 percent will not be the story every Christmas. You thank God for the good times, you make hay while the sun is shining, and then you realize the sun will not always shine.

So, when times are good, you save. Money is the easiest way to give that. We say here, "Give first to honor God. Save second to be wise. Live off the rest to teach yourself contentment." So, he... It's amazing. "Here's the word of God. Here it's interpreted. Here it's applied." No wonder Pharaoh comes to him and wants him to be in charge. Look at verse 37.

***"This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?'"*** Joseph is the first person in the Bible we're told has the Spirit of God. ***"Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.'"***

Notice now Pharaoh is talking to Joseph about God. If you will learn (I think this is true) to talk normally and naturally to your non-Christian friends, family, and neighbors about God, you'll find them talking back to you about God. In fact, I think most of us are more afraid to talk to our non-Christian neighbors about Christ than they are to talk to us about him.

So, here's Pharaoh now talking about God. Then look at what happens in one verse, verse 40. It looks like it happens quickly. I'm imagining a small boy in the court seeing this happen. He steps in. Somehow he hears Pharaoh say these words to this young man with all of the servants.

***"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."*** If a little kid sees this, he goes, "Oh, this is amazing. I've heard about this. I've never seen someone become an overnight success in real life." Well, you know (I just want to say this out loud) there is no such thing in God's economy as an overnight success.

I don't know how God thinks. I don't know if he thinks in terms of months or years...certainly not days. I think he thinks more in terms of generations. God is

moving all of these different pieces. Here we have Joseph. He is exalted. It appears to happen overnight, but we know behind the scenes there were 13 years of pain.

Well, if you look (I won't read the next verses), he gives him all of the signs and symbols. He gives him the ring. He gives him the robe. He gives him the chariot. He does all that. Then look at verse 46. ***"Joseph 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."***

Just a note. There are not that many ages of people given in the Bible, but 30 is a common age. Most famously, Jesus enters ministry at 30. When did King David become king? Age 30. When were the Levites able to serve in the tabernacle? Age 30. When does Joseph get to be head with Pharaoh? Age 30.

Do you know the word *senator* is the Latin word that means old man? We decided that you can be a senator when you turn 30. I will say (and this is just an observation, I think from Scripture as well as from my experience knowing other people) that 30 tends to be a bigger year in people's lives than they may realize. It was at 30 years old that I decided to plant this church. I can remember that.

I will often talk to people around 30 years old... It just seems to be one of those ages (I'm not speaking this into your life and saying for sure) where transitions often come. Here's Joseph. He's 30 years old. Something significant happens. Then look here. Verses 47-49 basically tell how the first seven years went, and he stores up so much grain. Then look at verse 50.

***"Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph."*** He also had gotten married. I forgot to mention that. I skipped those verses. ***"Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore them to him."*** Part of what I want you to understand is I think getting exalted and having success was good for Joseph, and it's going to be good for others, but it wasn't part of his healing. Maybe a little bit. I think more of his healing came with his family.

What has been Joseph's greatest problem? "I have a broken, dysfunctional family." How does God heal people with broken, dysfunctional families? There are many ways, but I'm just telling you, practically, one of the ways God heals somebody who came from a broken and dysfunctional family is they start their own. If you have a father wound, how are you healed from your father wound? By becoming a father.

What we see here is he becomes a father, and he names his sons. I want you to see this. ***"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.' The name of the***

***second he called Ephraim, 'For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.'"***

So, a couple of observations as we close and we think about those names. First, he calls his son Jewish names. He never forgot where he came from. That's another part of success. You cannot forget "This is who I used to be. This is where I came from." "I'm in an Egyptian culture, but I still remember my spiritual roots. I still remember my family roots. I'm giving my boys Jewish names in an Egyptian world."

Secondly, he names his sons in order. He literally calls his first son, "I Forget," which is really strange, because if you call someone "I Forget," then every time you name them, you remember. You have to continually remember that you forget. That's exactly how you get over things. In some weird way, you remember "I forget."

You say, "This horrible thing... It did for a season, but it will not dominate the front of my mind. It will not make me bitter. It will not be resentful. I need to forget, and I need to remember that I forget." C.S. Lewis in his book *The Great Divorce* thought hell is a place where people never forget. They never forget anything they ever did. They don't forget any bad thing that ever happened.

Then I think this: you can't be fruitful until you forget. That's the order. I forget. I remember that I forget. Then God makes me fruitful where so many horrible things happened. One of the truest realities I've seen in 15 years of ministry is people's greatest sin struggle, their greatest suffering, their greatest weakness, long term, becomes their greatest ministry to other people.

So, when you look at this story, who are we? Well, we're Pharaoh. We're the guy or girl who thinks we know what we're doing, and a guy shows up in our lives, the greater Joseph (his name is Jesus), and he warns us of a horrible future we didn't know was coming: the wrath of God. He tells us what we need to do. It's not store up grain; it's repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the greater Joseph. How did Israel get a savior through Joseph? An enormous amount of suffering. How did the church get a Savior? An enormous amount of suffering by Jesus Christ. Not only that. Sadly, guys, even though we're Pharaoh, we're also the cupbearer, and not in a good way. We're the cupbearer because Jesus saves us, and we forget about him. Every day, we become functional atheists, and we forget about all the great work he did in our lives.

Even more than that, we're the baker. Here's the difference between Jesus and Joseph. There's some contrast there. Joseph only had good news for the innocent. "All right, cupbearer. You're innocent. I've got some good news. Baker, I don't have good

news for you." Jesus has good news for the guilty because of what he did in his life, death, and resurrection. Let's pray.

Lord, we give you this moment right now. I know there are people in our church who are in a valley. Lord, I pray we would see them. Lord, would you give us eyes to see the suffering in our church? Would you let Community Groups come around people? Would we have the kind of church environment where we see something and ask something?

Lord, I pray if somebody is suffering and needs help they'd ask. Lord, I pray people would stay hopeful in suffering. Lord, for others... This is the interesting thing about a church. At any moment, someone is suffering, and then someone is very successful and very fruitful and is experiencing a lot of prosperity.

Lord, I pray for humility for those who are experiencing a lot of prosperity. I pray they would honor you in it. I pray they would realize that the times are not always good and they would be thankful for them while they are. We thank you that our hope is not in whether our lives go well or we're in a mountain or a valley. Our hope is in Jesus Christ. It's in his name we pray, amen.