

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

MARCH 14 - 18, 2022

SERMON SERIES

March 6 - April 3

What God Intends for Good

LIFE
OF
JOSEPH

MONDAY

Read **Genesis 39:20-23; 40:1-5, 23; 41:1**

Genesis 41 begins with a simple statement marking the passing of time: “*When two full years had passed ...*” To put this statement in perspective, the story of Joseph begins in chapter 37 when he was 17 years old (v. 2). In the present chapter we are also told that “*Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt*” (41:46). This means that the entire time in Potiphar’s service and in prison would have been 13 years. So, the specific mention of “two full years” at the beginning of this chapter—the length of time Joseph waited after interpreting the cupbearer’s dream and the cupbearer remembering to put in a good word for him to Pharaoh—needs to be viewed in the context of his already having been 11 years in servitude and prison.

One of Joseph’s strengths that stands out in his narrative is his tremendous planning skill. He managed Potiphar’s estate so well that Potiphar put him in charge of his whole household (39:4). In prison, the warden similarly put Joseph in charge of everyone and the administration of the prison (vv. 22-23). After interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams and placed in charge of the whole land of Egypt, Joseph embarks on a process of executing a 14-year plan. Joseph knew how to make a plan and execute it. What could be more frustrating for such a person than waiting two full years for God to deliver him of his unjust imprisonment? Sold by his brothers,

unjustly imprisoned by Potiphar, forgotten by Pharaoh's cupbearer, Joseph had every reason to engage in a pity part. But instead, it appears he simply continued to use the gifts God had given him in service of others.

How often we find ourselves in similar situations as Joseph, living through unwelcome experiences with an uncertain future. Joseph's example encourages us not to worry or withdraw into ourselves, but rather to continue using the gifts God has given us for His glory in service to others. Even though it may seem like it at times, God does not forget us or abandon us. As He was with Joseph even in prison (39:20-21), so He is with us even when our future is unclear. Let us pray for the courage and strength to remain faithful.

QUESTIONS

How would God have us be faithful amid personal, social, and/or national uncertainties?

PRAYERS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD HOMEWORK HOUSE (NHH)

Pray for the health and safety of our community. We ask for continued protection against COVID-19 and wisdom as we evaluate mitigation strategies. There is an increased number of people experiencing homelessness around our facility. We want to be compassionate yet not put our students, families, and staff at risk.

TUESDAY

Read **Genesis 41:1-8**

Pharaoh had a problem. His sleep had been twice disturbed, and it was not last night's lentils speaking back to him. He had been awakened by two perplexing dreams. His intuition told him that the dreams had meaning, but his intellect could not find that meaning. So, Pharaoh did what any other person in authority would do: he called in his trusted counselors. The text tells us that he did not simply call in a few trusted counselors, but "*all the magicians and wise men of Egypt*" (v. 8). He assembled the most educated, wise, and insightful people he knew and told them his dreams. Unfortunately, all of Pharaoh's counselors were just as stumped by the dreams as he was.

Tomorrow we will look at the interpretation of the dreams that God provided through Joseph. But let's pause today to consider what this text tells us about Pharaoh. By his title we know that he was the supreme Ruler of Egypt. At this time in Egypt's history, Egyptians saw pharaohs as mediators between the Egyptian deities and humankind. Not only did he possess political authority, but also divine authority. As such, he was likely used to getting his way.

But Pharaoh was also reasonable. Although he wanted to know the meaning of the dreams, he did not insist that his counselors first tell him his dreams and then interpret them or otherwise they would be cut into pieces and their houses turned into piles of rubble,

as Nebuchadnezzar did many centuries later when he had a dream in Babylon (Daniel 2:5). No, this Pharaoh seems to have been a seeker of the truth, eager to learn what he did not already know.

Note that God chose to speak to Pharaoh through dreams. There is no indication that Pharaoh knew the true God prior to his encounter with Joseph, yet God still chose to reveal some mysteries to him. We should not be surprised when God similarly finds ways to reveal Himself to unbelievers around us. Certainly, we all know truth-seekers who do not yet know “*the Way, and the Truth and the Life*” (John 14:6). One of our roles as Christians is to look for opportunities to be God’s truth-tellers to those seeking the truth.

QUESTIONS

What non-Christian truth-seekers can you identify in your life?
How might God want to use you to help them find the truth?

PRAYERS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD HOMEWORK HOUSE (NHH)

NHH is hiring a Family Engagement Coordinator. Pray for the perfect person to be led to apply for this job. This position has been open since June 2021 with no luck on filling it.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Genesis 41:9-32**

Pharaoh's inability to learn the meaning of his dreams prompts his cupbearer to remember Joseph. He told Pharaoh how Joseph had correctly interpreted his and the baker's dreams two years earlier and Pharaoh promptly sent for Joseph. Once presentable, Joseph was brought before Pharaoh who clearly stated his expectations: you are to interpret my dreams! In this high-pressure situation, notice Joseph's response: *"I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer He desires"* (41:16). Joseph did not offer any disclaimers ("Well, I may be a bit rusty since it was two years ago that I last interpreted dreams"), did not resort to a statement of mere intent ("I will do my best"), and did not make excuses for God ("Perhaps God will answer your request, but who am I to say what God will do?"). Rather, in a bold statement of faith he acknowledged his own inability and God's ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

When Joseph interpreted the dreams, he gave credit to God: *"God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do"* (vv. 25, 28). In fact, he explained the similarity of the two dreams as evidence for certainty of God's decision (v. 32). God was about to send seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. By giving Pharaoh these two dreams and the interpretation of them through Joseph, God had revealed his plans to Pharaoh. This shows God's mercy, not only

toward Pharaoh and all of Egypt, but ultimately toward Joseph's family as well.

Joseph's handling of Pharaoh's request warrants several observations. Firstly, Joseph was convinced that God sometimes spoke through dreams, even though his own dreams (chapter 37) had not yet been fulfilled. The unfulfillment of His own dreams did not negate his faith in God's ability to reveal His will. Secondly, although we refer to this section of Genesis as "Joseph's Story," it is really God's story with Joseph playing a supporting role. Joseph gives all credit to God for the dreams and their interpretation. Thirdly, Joseph recognizes that God is free to accomplish His purposes through whomever He chooses. Pharaoh's lack of knowledge of God does not prevent him from being an instrument of God's purpose.

QUESTIONS

To what extent do we, like Joseph, expect God to reveal His purpose for our lives? How can we ensure that God gets all credit for what He accomplishes through us?

PRAYERS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD HOMEWORK HOUSE (NHH)

We will be enrolling new families in the coming days. Pray that the enrollment process goes smoothly, and that we are able to serve these new families well as their children begin to participate in our programs.

THURSDAY

Read **Genesis 41: 33-45**

Joseph's suggested response to Pharaoh's dreams (41:33-36) showed the wisdom and organizational gifts God had given Joseph. There is no evidence that Joseph had known Pharaoh's dreams or their meaning prior to his exchange with Pharaoh. Joseph's response is not a pre-developed plan but rather an in-the-moment response. Even Pharaoh recognized that Joseph's ability to interpret dreams and formulate an appropriate response to the dreams was given him by God's Spirit (vv. 38-39). Who better, Pharaoh reasoned, to implement such a plan than the one whom God had specially anointed to interpret the dreams and suggest an appropriate response?

Joseph's rise to prominence in Egypt illustrates a common biblical theme: the reversal of fortunes. Joseph, the unjustly imprisoned one, became Pharaoh's second-in-command. Joseph, wrongly accused of sexual misconduct with Potiphar's wife, was blessed with a wife and children of his own. Joseph, forgotten in prison, was now recognized and acclaimed by all the people. Joseph, the humble servant confined to a jail, was now able to travel throughout the whole land of Egypt. Joseph is one of several biblical examples of God's reversal of fortunes. Hannah, David, Mary, and Jesus, among others, experienced similar reversals.

Since God is at the center of Joseph's story, we should not be surprised to see Joseph undergo such a radical change from prison to prominence. While we might admire Joseph's patient endurance of his ordeal and the use of his administration gifts to the benefit of others, the biblical text makes it clear that his change in status is completely God's doing. God exalts Joseph to a position of power according to His own plan, in His own timing. Joseph's obligation is simply to continue to use his God-given gifts in service of others to the glory of God.

We may be tempted to desire the same prominence Joseph experienced, but most of us would probably not want to be as humbled (falsely accused and unjustly imprisoned). In fact, many of us would not want our fortunes reversed because we currently experience very favorable circumstances. But given God's commitment to reversing people's fortunes, perhaps we need to consider how He might want to use us to help reverse the fortune of others.

QUESTIONS

Do we recognize what God is doing in our lives and the lives of those around us? How can we support and help reverse the fortunes of those around us who have been the victims of injustice?

PRAYERS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD HOMEWORK HOUSE (NHH)

February was a very slow season for donations to NHH. Pray for people who would be motivated to invest in Azusa families.

FRIDAY

Read **Genesis 41:46-57**

This chapter closes with Joseph implementing the plan that he had proposed to Pharaoh. For seven years he taxed the people and stored such large quantities of grain that “*it was beyond measure*” (41:49). When the seven years of famine arrived, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the people (v. 56). In many respects, Joseph simply continued to do what he had done for Potiphar and for the prison warden, but on a grander scale. The planning and administrative skills Joseph had demonstrated in a household (Potiphar’s) and institution (prison) would now be applied on a national and international level. God had orchestrated the opportunity for him to use his gifts at a much higher level of influence and impact.

The final verse of the chapter is a harbinger of the events to come when Joseph’s family travels to Egypt to buy grain: “*All the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere*” (v. 57). This premonition stands in stark contrast to this chapter’s opening verse: “*When two full years [in prison] had passed...*” (v. 1). As the chapter opened there was no indication that the two years of Joseph’s imprisonment had any importance whatsoever to the story. As the chapter closes, we see that God is orchestrating something even more important than the physical well-being of Egypt in elevating Joseph to such a position of authority and responsibility.

When we step back and look at this chapter within the context of the entire Joseph story, one clear truth emerges: God is on the move to save His people. God works by giving Pharaoh dreams he cannot understand, by making the dreams so opaque that nobody but Joseph—filled with God’s Spirit—is able to interpret them, by reminding Pharaoh’s cupbearer of Joseph’s interpretation of his dream, by enabling Pharaoh to recognize Joseph’s wisdom and entrust him with saving Egypt, and by helping Joseph to use his planning and administrative gifts for God’s good purposes. As much as we celebrate Joseph as a person of faith and wisdom, it is ultimately God’s plan and wisdom that are praiseworthy. God is still moving to save His people.

QUESTIONS

How do you see God moving to save people within your sphere of influence? How are you using your gifts in the family, church, community, and vocational opportunities God has given you?

PRAYERS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD HOMEWORK HOUSE (NHH)

Pray for the right candidates to be motivated to serve on our board. We anticipate having two openings in the next quarter, and we would love to have godly, qualified applicants join our board.



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