

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

FROM THE PRISON TO THE PALACE

GENESIS 41:14-57

Preparation Precedes Promotion

Genesis 41:14-16 *Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."*

- When the butler overheard Pharaoh saying that no one in his kingdom could interpret his dream, he “remembered” Joseph
- This was more than the butler remembered; this was divine providence
- God used the delay as a time of preparation for Joseph
- For the past 13 years, God was getting Joseph’s character ready before he came before Pharaoh
- That's Joseph's story in Genesis 41.
- We celebrate the promotion, but we have to respect the preparation
- Joseph was ready because God had been preparing him long *before* Pharaoh knew his name.

Godly Success Gives God the Credit

Genesis 41:16, 25, 28, 32

- Pharaoh says to Joseph, I have this dream, but no one can interpret it for me, but I heard you can interpret dreams
- But instead focusing on “his gift”, Joseph says in vs. 16, It’s *not* in me, Joseph gives credit to God, the *giver* of the gift
- Joseph is not denying he has the ability to interpret dreams, he’s acknowledging that the source of the ability is God
- Throughout Genesis 41, Joseph gives God credit
 - Vs. 25 “... The dreams of Pharaoh are one. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do
 - Vs. 28 “This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do.
 - Vs. 32 And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.
- Throughout the interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream, Joseph never pointed to himself always to God
- Joseph demonstrated his confidence in God and not his gift
- Success can reveal our character as much as suffering
- What Joseph shows us is that promotion doesn’t change who his *source* is and who gets the *credit*
- Our blessings should not make us forget the Blessor **Deuteronomy 8:18** “**But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth...**”

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Wisdom Does More than Identify the Problem

Genesis 41:25-36

- After Pharaoh shared his dreams, Joseph gave the interpretation
- God was telling Pharaoh in advance what He was about to do
- The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain represent seven years of prosperity, and the seven thin ugly cows and the seven thin heads of grain represent seven years of famine
- The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity, but the seven years after that will be a period of great famine
- Joseph told Pharaoh God's word was true and that it will happen soon
- But Joseph doesn't stop with the interpretation, he gives Pharaoh a strategy
- Up to this point, Joseph gave Pharaoh knowledge, telling him what would happen
- Now, Joseph begins to apply *wisdom* to the knowledge
- Knowledge is the diagnosis; wisdom directs you to the *cure*
- Joseph tells Pharaoh he needs to a discerning and wise man over all the land in Egypt, collect a 20% tax of all of the grain produced in the seven prosperous years, and bring the grain collected to the Pharaoh's storehouses
- Through Joseph's wisdom
 - A plan was formulated
 - The right people needed to be in place
 - The grain needed to be stored and guarded so that there would be grain during the famine
 - Someone had to be in charge to make sure everything was operating according to plan
- The goal of Joseph's plan was to ensure that the famine didn't destroy the land
- Joseph's plan demonstrates that wisdom sees tomorrow while managing today
- Joseph told Pharaoh's, here's what you *need to do* about it
- Joseph displayed leadership
- God wants us to do more than complain about what's wrong, but He wants us to ask Him, what solution have you placed inside me?

The Blessing is a Stewardship Assignment

Genesis 41:37-57

- Joseph's advice pleased both Pharaoh and all his servants
- Pharaoh noticed something about Joseph that made him stand out, he had the Spirit of God on him
- This is the first mention of the Spirit of God coming upon a person
- The Spirit of God came upon Joseph not to preach, teach, or pray, but to do something *practical*, and Pharaoh recognized it
- Pharaoh could see the Spirit of God in Joseph's character, his knowledge, his wisdom and his humility

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GENESIS 41:14-57

- The world should be able to see the presence of God in our lives by how we carry ourselves, do our jobs, and interact and care for others
- The world may not know what to call a Spirit-filled believer, but they know there's a difference in you
- We often think we can only be gifted preaching, teaching, singing, praying, evangelizing, etc.
- Paul says, ***"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord..."***
Colossians 3:23
- The text says *whatever you do*, not whatever you do in church
- Pharaoh then said to Joseph, since God revealed to you the meaning of my dreams, *clearly* there's no one as discerning and wise as you
- Pharaoh promoted Joseph to second in command of all of Egypt
- Pharaoh gave Joseph symbols of his new status
- ***Signet ring*** – A symbol of authority and administrative power
 - Joseph was authorized to act on Pharaoh's behalf
- ***Clothed in fine linen*** – a symbol of status, honor and Joseph's official position
- Joseph is no longer dressed as a prisoner. His clothing now communicates his new position
- ***Gold chain on his neck*** – symbolized honor and recognition
 - Pharaoh was publicly identifying Joseph as a person of importance
- The man whose brothers stripped him of his coat of many colors (Genesis 37:23) is now publicly clothed and honored by Pharaoh
- ***The chariot*** – symbolized public authority and visibility
- It was a public display of rank and delegated authority.
- Pharaoh gave Joseph symbols of authority *before* Joseph actually exercised the authority because he saw character of Joseph
- Pharaoh gives Joseph a new name Zaphnath-Paaneah, a wife Asenath
- Joseph was 30 years old when he was promoted to the palace, he became an overnight sensation
- One day he's suffering in prison, and the next day he's 2nd in command of all of Egypt
- Joseph has everything, he has power and authority, status, fine clothes, wealth, and a wife; it would be easy for Joseph to rest and enjoy the good life
- All the blessings Joseph has received must be stewarded, managed
- The real test is what will Joseph do with what God has placed in his hands?
- Joseph wastes no time, he immediately goes to work
- Joseph goes all over Egypt gathering grain
- He's storing it away for the future
- Joseph realizes that blessings are not only something to enjoy, it's something to be managed

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- God gave Joseph an abundant harvest in the seven good years to prepare for the famine
- When famine comes people would *need* Joseph
- Joseph's blessing became someone else's survival
- Joseph was not concerned about his blessings, but who could be blessed through him
- Joseph and Asenath had two sons Manasseh and Ephraim
- Manasseh means *forgetfulness* because God made Joseph to forget all the previous trials and pain in his life
- This doesn't mean Joseph literally forgot his family.
- Joseph is saying that God has enabled him to move beyond the pain of his past
- But his past no longer controls his future
- Ephraim means *fruitfulness* because God made Joseph fruitful in the *land of his affliction*
- Joseph can acknowledge the pain without allowing the pain to define him
- The seven years of abundance end and the seven years of famine begin
- People are coming to Pharaoh asking for food
- Pharaoh tells them, "Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do."
- Joseph now becomes *the means* through which food is distributed throughout Egypt
- And eventually, ***"All countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn..."*** (v. 57)
- The brothers who once mocked him as "that dreamer" didn't know what they were seeing
- God has a way of turning things around