

FIRST BAPTIST **ROGERS**

valiantwarrior



# introduction

## TO VALIANT WARRIORS

In the Old Testament, certain groups of men were noted as “valiant warriors” or “men of valor.” These men displayed courage and determination in battle. King David had his “mighty men.” These men proved themselves to be trustworthy in battlefield situations. These brave warriors were not limited to one tribe or people group. They were only limited by their courage and determination.

Valiant means possessing or showing courage or determination. Obviously, a warrior is one who is engaged in a war. A war has been underway since the Garden of Eden. The kingdom of God has been under assault by the kingdom of darkness. Satan’s temptation to Adam and Eve that led to their sin resulting in the Fall of all mankind was the declaration of war against God’s kingdom.

Biblical manhood and masculinity was also attacked in the garden on that day. Adam had been created first, given dominion over the earth and even named his wife. Satan did not initially go to Adam but to his wife, Eve with the temptation. It is understood that Adam was most certainly right there while his wife was being tempted. Adam abdicated his leadership responsibility in protecting his wife. He then followed her into the same sin that she had committed. Since then, God’s people have battled against the kingdom of sin and darkness. But also, men have battled for biblical manhood and masculinity.



Men are at their best when they are valiant warriors, battling for the kingdom of God and rescuing the disadvantaged in the name of the King. Robert Lewis subtitled “Men’s Fraternity,” A Quest for Authentic Manhood. Valiant Warriors hopes to be another leg in the race or step in the journey in this quest. David challenged his son, Solomon in 2 Kings 2:2-4, “I am going the way of all the earth. Be

strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

We hope to show men how to be men, valiant warriors through this study. We believe that the key to men being transformed is first by the Word of God. Another key is men in small groups for discussion, prayer, accountability and encouragement. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. It is out of that desire and vision that we have embraced the following guidestones.

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## **Valiant Warrior Mission**

To disciple men to follow Christ and to live and lead in their homes, churches, and communities for God's glory.

## **Valiant Warrior Vision**

To see an army of men devoted to Christ leading their families and this church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

## **Valiant Warrior Strategy**

To disciple men in small groups to lead their families and their church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

## **Valiant Warrior Promise**

Judges 6:12 "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."

## **Valiant Warrior Code of Honor**

To grow in Christlikeness personally. To be committed to my family and Christ's church. To intentionally encourage other men in Christlikeness and commitment to the church.

## **Valiant Warrior Scripture References**

2 Chronicles 14:8 "Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, bearing shields and wielding bows; all of them were valiant warriors."

Deuteronomy 3:18 "Then I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The Lord your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel.'"

Joshua 1:14 "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them."

Joshua 8:3 "So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night."

Joshua 10:7 "So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors."

Judges 6:12 "The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.'"

Judges 11:1 *"Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior..."*

Judges 18:2 *"So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it;"*

1 Samuel 10:26 *"Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him."*

1 Samuel 14:52 *"Now the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff."*

1 Samuel 18:17 *"Then Saul said to David, 'Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the Lord's battles.'"*

1 Samuel 31:12 *"All the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there."*

2 Samuel 2:7 *"Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."*

2 Samuel 17:10 *"And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men."*

1 Chronicles 28:1 *"Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the commanders of the divisions that served the king, and the commanders of thousands, and the commanders of hundreds, and the overseers of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, with the officials and the mighty men, even all the valiant men."*

2 Chronicles 13:3 *"Abijah began the battle with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men who were valiant warriors."*

# week one

**PROVIDENCE AND THE HIGHER PURPOSE:**  
A STUDY OF JOSEPH

The biblical story of Joseph is one of the most loved among all biblical stories. Biblical commentators have noted Joseph and Daniel are two Old Testament characters in which no sin is mentioned in the lengthy portions of Scripture that reference them. We certainly know Joseph and Daniel both sinned, but for some reason God omitted any specific references to their personal sin.

Our Valiant Warrior study promises to delve into our family life growing up and getting along today. We will consider how to resist temptation and not lose hope despite the roller coaster ride of life. We will see how the message of the gospel and God's redemptive plan is always front and center in the life of a Valiant Warrior.

The story of Joseph bridges from Jacob, later renamed Israel, and his 12 sons who are the tribes of Israel to Moses. Moses was the most important and dominant human character in the Old Testament. Joseph played a key role in preserving a remnant of the tribes of Israel.

For many, Joseph is a story of overcoming difficulties and eventually being recognized or elevated for your faithfulness. There are some important life lessons we can glean from the story of Joseph, but we must be careful in reading this section of Genesis in a prescriptive manner rather than a descriptive manner.

Let us begin by placing Joseph's story in the macro-story of Scripture. We begin the biblical journey in this first book of the Bible, Genesis. Joseph's story closes out the book of Genesis. Many scholars would break the Bible down with the major events of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. An organized look at Genesis would include Creation, Fall, Flood, and Promise. Voddie Baucham insists the story of Joseph must be understood through the Genesis themes of land, seed, and covenant (Voddie Baucham, *Joseph and The Gospel of Many Colors*, pp. 29-44).

Another way to organize the book of Genesis is by way of toledot or generations. Giving the first generation to the Creation listed in Genesis 1, there would be 11 generations listed in Genesis (Creation, Fall/Adam, Noah/De-creation, Noah's Sons/Re-creation, Shem, Terah, Ishmael, Isaac, then Jacob). The last of these generations is that of Jacob. The story of Joseph is inseparably a part of Jacob's story. It is of interest that Jacob/Joseph's story begins with the twelve tribes in the Promised Land. But this story of Joseph as a Valiant Warrior concluded with everyone in Egypt, the place that represents wondering and sinfulness. This is the place where Moses will be used to rescue the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage.

So, from this perspective, the spotless hero leads his people from the Promised Land into the slave land. It is always important to place the story in the context of the entire Bible. A close-up look sees a young man going from the pit to the palace. But it is important to understand where that palace is located. The real estate folks say, "Location, location, location!" Even today, you can have a great house in a crummy neighborhood, city, or town. Neighborhood matters.

The message we see running throughout the biblical text is the sovereignty of God. God is omniscient and omnipotent. God is sovereignly working on behalf of His glory. The story is still not yet over. God is sovereign in the pit, Potiphar's house, the prison, and the palace. God did not wring His hands worrying about how He would rescue His people from a famine and from their sin. God could get Joseph to Egypt through multiple modes of transportation. He would be responsible for saving his brothers, but he would also save multitudes of others from starvation by his grain collection and disbursement program.

The word providence comes from the word "provide." "Pro" is Latin for forward, in front of, or on behalf or in favor of. For instance, we are "pro-life." The "vide" is from "videre" in Latin which means "to see." Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* defines "providence" as such:

God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes. (*Systematic Theology*, 315)

It is the providence of God that directed the ultimate pathway of Joseph. The providence of God allows the *things* He created to act with the *properties* He created, ultimately accomplishing His purposes and will. It is not His will and His purpose that people sin. God's providence does not originate or ordain sin. His providence allows sinful men to act out their sinful way, but He does not allow those sinful ways to thwart His divine purposes and plan. Joseph's brothers' jealousy and hatred was not ordained by God, but He allowed them to act out their own sinful nature against Joseph. But God did not allow their sinful actions to thwart His plan of preserving a remnant and maintaining His covenant with Abraham. Romans 8:28-39 is a foundational text for the providence of God.

God was working His redemptive history plan by taking His people to Egypt so He would rescue them from their future slavery. Joseph's role was a small role in the context of time and the big picture of what God is doing. The time elapsed from the pit to the palace was only 13 years. In light of 400 plus years in Egypt, the time was short. Joseph's story is certainly a part of the story and would be considered a major part by preserving the remnant in a similar way the ark protected God's people from the flood. God is always working to protect, preserve, and propel His people into His purposes for His glory.

We must also be careful to not moralize the story of Joseph in lieu of seeing the grace and favor of God towards Joseph and his people in this story. Without a doubt, we have heard lessons, sermons, and comments referencing "how-to" messages based upon what happened in Joseph's life. We must resist devolving this message into a therapeutic moralism.

Therapeutic moralism is solving the world's problems and your problems by way of being moral or good. This goodness in turn earns you favor with God. It is somewhat subtle, but it is the opposite of grace. Biblical Christianity is rooted in the grace of God and not the goodness of men. Grace is what God does specifically through His Son Jesus Christ, to save lost sinners who cannot save themselves, change themselves, or live a good life. This does not mean some people live better lives than others. Therapeutic moralism must depend on the goodness of people at their core to bring about change. Biblical Christianity believes men are dead in sin and trespasses (Ephesians 2:1) incapable of making themselves alive spiritually.

For example, we do not need to believe if you just hang in there, and not commit adultery with your boss' wife even when she lies about you, that one day you will be vindicated, promoted, and have more responsibility even over those who threw you into the pit. Also, we do not need to make the mistake of thinking that by hard work and faithfulness we will automatically arrive spiritually. Joseph is not the example that gets us to heaven or gets us the promotion. We reject that living a good life, resisting temptation, and not being a vengeful person will deliver peace and quiet now in your life and give you eternal life for living such a self-disciplined life.

Joseph, like his ancestor Abraham, had to believe God and trust in Him in order to obtain the righteousness of God, right standing before God. His resistance to temptation and faithful interpretation of dreams was a result of his faith in the Lord. Joseph's good deeds and faithfulness came from the grace of God in His life and his relationship with God.

Hebrews 11:21-22

*"By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones."*

We will see repeatedly the Lord was with Joseph. Even others noticed the Lord was with Joseph. Joseph was careful to always say only God can interpret dreams. So, as we read the story and draw insights and principles from Joseph's life, we must always lead with the big picture of God's redemption plan and the grace and favor of God upon Joseph's life. Those factors are more significant and more important than the specific acts of goodness and perseverance Joseph demonstrates.

Let's discuss some of the details of the life of Joseph.

Genesis 37-50 deal with the life of Joseph. Joseph was the favored son of Jacob out of twelve sons who would be the tribes of Israel. Jacob's name would be changed by God from Jacob to Israel. Jacob was one of twin sons who Isaac and Rebekah had. His brother was Esau. Jacob and Esau were rivals in every way. Isaac was the only son of Abraham and Sarah. He had a half-brother named Ishmael who was also Abraham's son with Sarah's handmaid Hagar. Our next lesson will be on Joseph's messed up family. There was a lot of opportunity for family rivalry, dysfunction, and problems.

Joseph and his brother, Benjamin, were the sons of Jacob's favorite wife Rachel. Jacob worked for seven years for the right to marry Rachel only to have his father-in-law give his older daughter Leah to Jacob deceptively. Jacob then worked another seven years to have Rachel as his wife. So, Jacob had two wives who were sisters and who were rivals. Leah quickly gave birth to children, while Rachel was unable to do so. Rachel resorted to offering her handmaids, as did Leah, to keep the children competition flowing. Rachel finally became pregnant and gave birth to Joseph. She later gave birth to Benjamin and died in childbirth. So, Jacob had 12 sons. Joseph was his favorite. Benjamin was also a favorite coming from Rachel and especially after Joseph went missing.

Joseph's brothers hated him and were jealous of him. Joseph is known as a dreamer because he had dreams and could interpret other people's dreams. He dreamed one day he would rule over his family, and they would bow down to him. This made his brothers and even his father angry. With this built-up resentment, his brothers threw him in a pit and sold him into slavery one day while he was out checking on his brothers for his father.

Joseph was sold into slavery and ended up in the house of Potiphar. Potiphar was an official of the King and was chief of the bodyguards. The Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered wherever he was. Kenneth Matthews captures the big picture importance of God being with Joseph:

"The LORD was with Joseph" and its variation (vv. 2, 3, 21, 23) encapsulate the message of the Joseph story as a whole, but the narrator makes this explicit observation in this chapter alone. We can go further by noticing that the distinctively Israelite name of God, Yahweh, occurs in the Joseph narrative only in this



chapter, excepting 49:18. What the dreams (chaps. 37; 40–41) and their subsequent fulfillings imply (chaps. 42–45), Joseph's successes in Potiphar's household make plain. That is, the Lord God of Israel's fathers was enabling Joseph's ascent. The Lord ensured that Joseph's trials would redound to the good of others: "The LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph" (v. 5). What was true in the microcosm of Potiphar's house would be true on the wide stage of Pharaoh's kingdom and the world (41:57). This major development in the family of Jacob reflected the universal blessing: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (12:1–3; cf. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). It is in accord with the blessing's universal aspect that the narrative exploits Joseph's role as the vehicle of divine grace that is bestowed on all nations. Joseph's achievements are not his own; they have divine reason. Joseph himself came to recognize that his suffering was for the ultimate good of saving family and nations (45:5–7).<sup>1</sup>

This was true even in Potiphar's house. That is, until Potiphar's wife repeatedly attempted to seduce him. Joseph's consistent resistance to her temptation led her to falsely accuse him of sexual assault. This resulted in Joseph being thrown into the King's prison.

The Lord was with Joseph while he was in prison and he prospered in prison. While he was in the King's prison, he interpreted the dreams of a cupbearer and a baker who had been imprisoned. His interpretation of both dreams came true in three days. The baker was killed, and the cupbearer was restored to his position with the King. Unfortunately, the cupbearer did not remember to tell the King about Joseph. So Joseph spent two more years in prison.

After two years in prison, the King had a dream that troubled him. The cupbearer then remembered Joseph, advising the King of Joseph's ability to interpret dreams. Joseph was summoned to the palace where he listened to the dream and gave a clear interpretation. The dream's interpretation was that seven prosperous years would be followed by seven years of devastating famine. Joseph encouraged the Pharaoh to store grain during the prosperous years so they would have grain during the famine. Pharaoh appointed Joseph to oversee this project and ultimately be second in command in all Egypt.

When the famine reached Canaan, Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt for sale. So, he sent his sons, all except Benjamin, to Egypt to buy grain. They would stand before Joseph to buy the grain. He would recognize his brothers, but they did not recognize him. Through a series of accusations and exchanges, Joseph discovered his father was alive along with his younger brother Benjamin. He sent for Benjamin and eventually shared who he was with his brothers. He sent for his father to come. The Pharaoh was favorable to Joseph bringing his entire family and letting them live in the land of Goshen. His brothers were concerned about Joseph seeking revenge initially, then again after their father died. Joseph framed his response as what God was doing to save his family.

He made the classic statement in Genesis 50:20.

*"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."*

The author of *Joseph Principles* (Steven K. Scott) refers to treasure seeking/searching when we get on the other side of difficult situations. He warns against treasure seeking while in the midst of the difficult situation, especially if it is not your situation. Looking back, Joseph's life had many treasures that were not so obvious while he was in the middle of the pit, the temptation, and the prison.

Joseph's story is a biblical illustration of Romans 8:28.

*"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who*

<sup>1</sup> Mathews, K. A. (2005). Genesis 11:27–50:26 (Vol. 1B, p. 726). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

*are called according to His purpose."*

For Joseph, the purpose of God being fulfilled is the major theme of his life. His betrayal, his suffering, false accusations, and being forgotten were secondary to the purpose of God being fulfilled. Those committed to the pleasures and comforts of man above the purposes of God will have a difficult time embracing the story of Joseph as it is intended to be understood. That is why we say God has a drafted army and not a volunteer army. Valiant Warriors are drafted, called, chosen, elected by God to join God and His purpose and His mission. Along the way, Valiant Warriors have great blessing and privilege accompanying their hardship and suffering. Their greater pleasure and calling is knowing they are fulfilling the purpose of God. There is sustaining power and pleasure in knowing the Lord is with the Valiant Warrior as He was with Joseph.

Genesis 39:2 *"The LORD was with Joseph..."*

Judges 6:12 *"The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."*

**Discuss what the big takeaways are from Joseph's story for you. You may take note of those things for future discussions if you do not have time in this first session.**

**Discuss the difference between Therapeutic Moralism and the Gospel. What problems do a moralist approach to reading the Bible bring? Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and discuss grace, faith, and good deeds. You may want to back up all the way to Ephesians 2:1 if you have time.**

**Discuss the importance of "The Lord was with Joseph." Consider the personal side of Joseph and bigger picture of God's plan in your discussion. How do you know the Lord is with you? What does it mean the Lord is with you, especially in light of His omnipresence?**

**Discuss the providence of God. What is the providence of God? How do you see the providence of God working in Joseph's life? How do you see the providence of God working in your life?**

**Discuss Romans 8:28. Consider the providence of God in your discussion. Consider the qualifications of this statement: "Those who love God and are..." How did God cause all things to work together for good in Joseph's life? In light of God's providence and Romans 8:28, discuss the age old question, "How does a loving God allow bad things to happen (to good people)?"**

**Look for treasure in Joseph's life. What are the pieces of gold in Joseph's life that surfaced through the pressure of suffering and trials?**

**Look for treasure in your life. Think of some bad, painful, hurtful suffering in your past that has produced some positive things in your life today. Share any painful suffering of the past you have not been able to see or find any treasures for today. Ask for prayer and godly counsel from your Valiant Warrior brothers.**

**Consider the importance of family and work in light of the lessons learned from Joseph's life.**



# week two

THE MESSED UP FAMILY

This second lesson will give us a close look into Joseph's family. Let us not lose sight of the big picture of the story of Joseph. Remember God's plan of redemption and rescue for His people. Remember His promise to have a people, a land, and the covenant with Abraham. In our day-to-day detailed life, we need to be reminded on occasion God has a bigger plan than the minute details of our everyday mundane, boring, and frustrating lives. But on the other hand, we need to be reminded the Lord is always with us and never leaves and always loves us. While how we deal with our brother, children, or wife may not alter the larger kingdom of God, He does care for us and invites us to cast our cares upon Him.

Let us not confuse the gospel with a therapeutic moralism even as it applies to our home life. We need the gospel in our marriages and in our parenting and in our sibling rivalry. It is the gospel that works forgiveness and grace in our lives and empowers us to extend forgiveness and grace to others. We do not have to win the little skirmishes because Jesus has won the battle on the cross. You must believe Joseph, like Abraham, was looking ahead to something better, for Someone better. It was this sense of purpose and calling and the presence of God in his life that gave him the perseverance he demonstrated throughout his life.

As we look at Joseph's family, we must conclude it is one messed up family with lots of drama, turns, and twists. Jacob, Joseph's father, contributed to the messed up family greatly. As we look back in biblical history, we see all families have had their own dysfunction. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, hid from God, and their son Cain killed their other son, Abel. Noah's son Ham exposed Noah's naked, drunkenness to his brothers resulting in Noah cursing him. Abraham lied about Sara being his wife to protect himself and had a child with Hagar, Sara's Egyptian maid, soon after God had promised him a son. Lot had a wife turn to a pillar of salt and daughters who committed incest with him in his old age.

Jacob was tricked by Laban into marrying Leah when he thought he was marrying Rachel. He worked seven years for Rachel only to be given Leah on the wedding night. He loved and wanted Rachel, so he worked another seven years for her. Jacob ended up being married to two sisters, Rachel and Leah. He had children with each of them and with their maids. Rachel initially could not have children, even though she was Jacob's favorite. Rachel's inability to have children frustrated her and caused her rivalry with Leah to intensify. Rachel eventually gave Jacob two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. The family dynamics were not good.

God's plan from the very beginning was for one man and one woman for life. Even though biblical patriarchs like Jacob had more than one wife, it was never God's plan for men to have multiple wives. As a matter of fact, it is against the law in our society for a man to have more than one wife. Even secular society recognizes the problems and pains that such an arrangement brings about. Many Christian sociologists would affirm that divorce and single parent homes without a father are great problems in our society today.

Most inmates in prison did not have a father in the home. Crime, poverty, and a plethora of personal and societal problems are symptoms of fatherless homes. As we look at the dysfunctional family of Joseph, we see the pain of families who do not do family God's way. Even in this dysfunctional situation, I believe we also see the importance of the father in the home.

Jacob was not a great father, but his presence is prominent throughout this story. Even though his sons hated Joseph, they maintained some degree of love and respect for Jacob even though Jacob played favorites. The presence of Jacob's prominence in his family cannot be missed in keeping the 12 brothers (tribes) together and ultimately leading to their preservation by way of their younger brother and son, Joseph.

An imperfect father in the home is better than no father in the home. Valiant Warriors must embrace the great responsibility of the home. The home is made up of a husband, a wife, children, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. We see all these components in the story of Joseph. Joseph would rescue his brothers, his nieces, his nephews, and his father. The family is a key unit in God's family and in His church for discipleship and passing the baton of the faith to the next generations.

Jacob's favorite wife was Rachel, so his favorite son was Joseph and his younger brother Benjamin. Rachel died in childbirth with Benjamin, so this even intensified his love and protective posture towards Joseph and Benjamin. I am sure he saw their mother in them.

The story of Joseph picks up when he was 17 years old. We can only imagine what it was like the previous 17 years in that household. The rivalry between the sisters was lived out in having children with Jacob. We can only speculate how Leah may have sought to seize the prominent role now that her sister is gone. Tradition has Rachel dying before Leah. After Rachel's death, Leah is not mentioned except for her burial in Genesis 49. The Real Housewives of Jacob would be a match for any modern day reality show.

Let's read the story in Genesis 37.

*"Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. These are the records of the generations of Jacob. **Joseph**, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem. Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go." Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?" He said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock." Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan."*



### **The Plot against Joseph**

*"When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, 'Here comes this dreamer! 'Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!' But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, 'Let us not take his life.' Reuben further said to them, 'Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him'—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father. So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it. Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing baromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? 'Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.' And his brothers listened to him. Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt. Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. He returned to his brothers and said, 'The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?' So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood; and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, 'We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not.' Then he examined it and said, 'It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!' So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, 'Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.' So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard."*

The first words about Joseph (Genesis 37:2) were he brought back a bad report about them (his half-brothers) to their father (Jacob). While the Bible does not mention any particular sin committed by Joseph, it does appear he was spoiled by Jacob and evidently was somewhat of a tattletale.

*"These are the records of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. **And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.**"*

**What are some sources of sibling rivalry especially among half-brothers or step-brothers?**

**Is there any guidance to be given on when to give the "bad report" or is there ever a time not to give the "bad report" to the father or the person in authority? Discuss giving a bad report for personal gain versus giving a bad report for other reasons.**

Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his brothers. He made Joseph a special coat of many colors. He was the son of his old age. Because of the way Jacob treated Joseph, his brothers hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms (Genesis 37:4). Jacob evidently had a blind spot when it came to his parenting. The Scripture connects Jacob's favoritism to the hatred his sons had for Joseph. It was not Joseph's fault his father showed favoritism toward him.

***"His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms."***

**How do you as the parent prevent favoritism among your children? Can you really treat your children all the same in light of different genders, different interests, different personalities, etc.? How do you navigate raising children who are remarkably different in their ages, needs, capacity, obedience, rebellion? Oftentimes, parents have more time and money when their youngest child is still at home and the older children have left. Discuss how you navigate with parental obligations for the younger versus the older children being on their own.**

Joseph was a dreamer. He had dreams as a child, and he would interpret dreams as he got older. His early dreams did not endear him to his brothers (Genesis 37:5). His father even rebuked him for sharing his dreams that revealed his father and brothers would one day bow down to him (Genesis 37:6-10).

*"He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"*

**Can you think of instances when you know certain things, but it would be better to keep them to yourself? Discuss how timing, audience, and context can impact what you share.**

**Discuss how thinking through potential outcomes of things you say or do would benefit what and how you say and do things. (i.e. Jacob considering what his other sons would think when provided a coat for Joseph when he did not for the others). What are some reasons Jacob may have treated Joseph as a favorite?**

You would guess Joseph nor Jacob had self-awareness of the jealousy and hatred Joseph's brothers had toward him. Jacob sent Joseph to check on the welfare of his brothers and the flock. Joseph readily agreed to go to Shechem then to Dothan to check on his brothers and the flock (Genesis 37:12-17).

*"Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem. Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go." Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?" He said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock." Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.' " So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan."*

As they saw Joseph approaching, most of the brothers plotted to kill him (Genesis 37:18-20).

*"When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, 'Here comes this dreamer! 'Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!'"*

**Read Jeremiah 17:9 and discuss the problem of a man's heart in general. Discuss the problem of Joseph's brothers' hearts. What could have been a better, more biblical response to Joseph?**

The oldest brother Reuben talked them into throwing Joseph into a pit while not shedding his blood. Reuben intended on rescuing Joseph later. So, they removed Joseph's multi-colored coat and threw him in a pit (Genesis 37:21-24).

*"But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, 'Let us not take his life.' Reuben further said to them, 'Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him'—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father. So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it."*

Upon seeing a caravan of Ishmaelites heading to Egypt, Judah suggested selling Joseph as a slave and they did it (Genesis 37:25-28).

*"Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing baromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? 'Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.'" And his brothers listened to him. Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt."*

Reuben evidently was not present and when he returned, he discovered Joseph had been sold into slavery (Genesis 37:29-30).

*"Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. He returned to his brothers and said, 'The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?'"*

They decided to take Joseph's coat, cover it with blood, and let Jacob believe he had been killed by wild beasts. Notice the treachery of the plan. They allowed Jacob to believe Joseph had been attacked by wild beasts by simply asking, "Is this your son's tunic?" They allowed Jacob to come to a false conclusion they had conspired to bring about (Genesis 37:31-35).



*"So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood; and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!" So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him."*

Jacob was inconsolable.

Joseph was then sold to Potiphar who was one of Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.  
(Genesis 37:36)

*"Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard."*

Chapter 38 continues the family soap opera as Judah takes a Canaanite wife who will ultimately result in him mistakenly (intentionally, deceptively on Tamar's part) taking his widowed daughter-in-law Tamar as a prostitute. She became pregnant and gave birth to twins.

As the story unfolds of the brothers' decision to throw Joseph in the pit and sell him into slavery, it becomes apparent of the wickedness of his brothers' hearts. They were all willing to kill him. The hatred they had for Joseph was committing murder in their hearts. God's providence did not cause Joseph's brothers to do this to him. God's providence allowed them to do what was already in their hearts. The actions of these brothers toward their brother were nothing short of hate. As we look at the crimes of hate committed by one image bearer against another image bearer, we shutter in our tracks and think how anyone could do such a thing?

We all not only have the capacity for such wickedness, but we are all guilty of such wickedness.

**Consider the relationship between the providence of God and the sinful heart of man and sinful actions of men.**

**Discuss how complicated family dynamics contribute to apparent hopeless situations.**

**Discuss how the gospel is better than self-righteous works in families and all relationships.**

# week three

THE PROVIDENTIAL ROLLER COASTER

Chapter 39 is a roller coaster ride of success, resisting temptation, false imprisonment, and being forgotten. It is important to remind us that Joseph's life and situational circumstance are not primarily prescriptive or imperatives. This section of the Joseph story is often seen as "from the pit to the prison to the palace." Some mistakenly see this as a prescription of how to get out of the pit and into the palace.

Remember Joseph is not the hero of this story. God is.

Remember Joseph is just part of God's story of redemption, not the entire story.

Remember even Joseph's ultimate rescue of his family is not the end of the story.

As we personally consider application, do not always assume you are Joseph in the story. Often times, we are his older brothers and even Potiphar's wife or Potiphar.

Joseph ends up in Egypt as a slave, or servant, sold to Potiphar. Potiphar was an officer for Pharaoh. He had a lot of power, but Pharaoh had the overall power in Egypt. Of course, God has the ultimate power and authority.

Let us look at the story.

*"Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. "There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her. Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. "When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside." So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside." Joseph Imprisoned Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned. So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.*



*The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper."*

One of the most significant statements in this section of Scripture is, "The LORD was with Joseph."

*"Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. **The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man.** And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian."*

"The LORD was with Joseph" and its variation (vv. 2, 3, 21, 23) encapsulate the message of the Joseph story as a whole, but the narrator makes this explicit observation in this chapter alone. We can go further by noticing that the distinctively Israelite name of God, Yahweh, occurs in the Joseph narrative only in this chapter, excepting 49:18. What the dreams (chaps. 37; 40–41) and their subsequent fulfillings imply (chaps. 42–45), Joseph's successes in Potiphar's household make plain. That is, the Lord God of Israel's fathers was enabling Joseph's ascent. The Lord ensured that Joseph's trials would redound to the good of others: "The LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph" (v. 5). What was true in the microcosm of Potiphar's house would be true on the wide stage of Pharaoh's kingdom and the world (41:57). This major development in the family of Jacob reflected the universal blessing: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (12:1–3; cf. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). It is in accord with the blessing's universal aspect that the narrative exploits Joseph's role as the vehicle of divine grace that is bestowed on all nations. Joseph's achievements are not his own; they have divine reason. Joseph himself came to recognize that his suffering was for the ultimate good of saving family and nations (45:5–7).

Joseph's success is because the LORD was with him. His success was observable by his master. The Lord's presence in Joseph's life resulted in him having favor with his master (Genesis 39:4) and receiving responsibility. This new responsibility further resulted in more blessing upon Potiphar's house. This is a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12:1–5 where God promises to bless Abraham, Abraham would be a blessing to all the peoples, and God would bless those who bless Abraham's seed. Joseph had the hand of God on his life. Those who connected to Joseph would experience the blessing of God through Joseph.

*"Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate."*

Joseph was given charge of everything in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:5–6a). We do not know how long Joseph was in Potiphar's house, but he certainly had to make a lot of adjustments and changes. He went from the rural setting of Canaan to a deep, dirty pit. From the pit, he went a long journey to Egypt where he ended up as an enslaved house servant.

Remember, the story opens when he was 17. We often underestimate the resilience and strength of young men. It is the young men who have fought in wars in different parts of the world with people of different languages and cultures. God raises up strong young men who can stand in the midst of a culture that

opposes biblical morality and conduct. Egypt was such a place. Just like Daniel, Joseph often found himself having success in a foreign culture. This string of success began in Potiphar's house.

**Discuss the circumstances of Joseph's life (sibling rivalry, betrayal, the pit, the enslavement, the foreign culture). Consider his age in your discussion. Remember some young men who did some great things (signers of the Constitution, soldiers in wars, etc.) in dire circumstances.**

**What does it mean the "Lord was with Joseph?"  
The Prayer of Jabez. 1 Chronicles 4:9-10.**

*"Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother named him Jabez saying, "Because I bore him with pain." Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!" And God granted him what he requested."*

1 Chronicles 17:2 "Then Nathan said to David, "Do all that is in your heart, **for God is with you.**"

Judges 6:12 **"The Lord is with you,** O valiant warrior."

Psalms 16:11 "You will make known to me the path of life; **In Your presence is fullness of joy;** In Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

**Discuss the importance of the "presence" of God in your life.**

**How was it obvious to Potiphar the Lord was with Joseph, especially considering Potiphar did not know the Lord himself? How do you know the Lord is with someone or the Lord's hand is upon your life or someone else's life?**

The success of Joseph was about to turn downward. But Joseph's integrity and the presence of God in his life would remain. Potiphar's wife desired Joseph and attempted to seduce him. Joseph resisted and refused (Genesis 39:6b-9). Verse nine expresses the integrity of Joseph's heart.

**"Now** Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. "There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

Joseph demonstrated appreciation to his master for the trust that he had in him. He also embraced the responsibility given to him. He respected the fact this woman was another man's wife. He saw this act of adultery as "this great evil." Ultimately, he saw it as "sin against God."

Consider the integrity of Joseph and his loyalty to God, his own sexual purity, and to his master.

**Discuss how men fall into sexual immorality and adultery. Why do good men fall into sexual immorality? What are some things you can learn from Joseph in responding to**

## **How prevalent is the sin of pornography among Christian men? How do we gain victory over the sin of pornography?**

Potiphar's wife's immoral desire turned into a scornful vengeance. She falsely accused Joseph of attempting to sexually assault her (Genesis 39:10-18).

*"As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her. Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. She caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me!' And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, she called to the men of her household and said to them, 'See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. 'When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside.' So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with these words, 'The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside.'"*

Upon hearing the accusation, Potiphar "burned with anger" and "put him into the jail." Some have speculated Potiphar burned with anger against his wife. I certainly do not think it is unreasonable to think Potiphar knew what his wife was like. Potiphar had demonstrated some human ability to discern the Lord's hand on Joseph. Plus, Potiphar did not have Joseph killed which would have been expected of one accused of raping his master's wife. It is hard to know whether the "place where the king's prisoners were confined" was better than a regular kind of prison.

Regardless, imagine the emotions of Joseph. He had experienced great betrayal in his life. He had experienced the worst side of people. His brothers hated him and sold him into slavery. This woman falsely accused him while he was doing his job and doing right. He was faithfully serving his master and had done the right thing before God but also for his master. The gratitude for honoring his master was to be thrown in prison. The natural inclination is to ask, "Where is God in all this?" At this low point in his life, I am sure he could not see the rescue of his brothers ahead. He has been in a pit, in slavery, and now in jail. Things are getting worse and not better. He is going down and not up.

While the text does not speak to Joseph's thoughts and feelings during this time, you know he was devastated. But we also know he did not give up and this was not the end of his story. Joseph obviously had hope. He had the dreams of his youth. He had the presence of God with him. In these isolated and devastating situations, Joseph continues to keep on going, never gives up, and actually thrives regardless of where he is. He thrived in his father's house. He thrived in Potiphar's house. We will see he thrives in prison. And then he will thrive in Pharaoh's house. How is it that no matter where he is, he seems to thrive?

**Discuss the feelings of betrayal. Have you ever experienced betrayal? What are some of the consequences of betrayal? (lack of trust, paranoia, etc.)**

**Consider the betrayal of Jesus Christ. How can His betrayal help when facing personal betrayal?**

Immediately, we notice a contrasting conjunction *"and he was there in the jail. **But** the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness (chesed) to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer."* The roller coaster is headed back up now after dipping to an extraordinary low in the bedroom accusation of Potiphar's wife.

The Hebrew word *"chesed"* translated "kindness" in the NASB and translated "loving kindness" in other places means "covenant loyalty." Contained within the meaning of this word is the idea of promise and covenant. It is similar to the New Testament word *"charis"* or "grace." God's unmerited love and favor upon someone. This is an Old Testament example of eternal security.

In familiar language, we see Joseph has the Lord with him and the favor of his master, in this case it is the chief jailer. This favor results in Joseph receiving full responsibility over all who are in jail. It is also noted, *"The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper."*

Joseph's life is about to take a turn upward, but he is not off the roller coaster ride of emotions and the providential hand of God. Joseph was experiencing a lot of change at a young age. Most of the change up to this point was not a good kind of change. We are speaking in terms of the Lord being with Joseph, but Joseph is in prison. He has the favor of God, but it is in prison. He does not immediately get out of prison.

We are reminded that some of our favorite Pauline epistles were written from prison. As a matter of fact, the prison epistle known as the joy book of the Bible, Philippians, was written from prison. We learn our circumstances and situation are not the major contributing factors to our joy. What is? The Lord being with us is what is most important.

Many people go through horrendous things in life. Children who grow up in foster homes have experienced devastating separation from their parents for various reasons. The common experience is to be bounced around from foster home to orphanage to receiving home. Some of these children appear quite well-adjusted. Other children seem like an emotional wreck with many underlying issues. Our temptation is psychoanalyzing these kids and providing a secular psychology-driven solution to their situation. I certainly support foster care and adoption for hurting and needy children. But the greatest need these kids and every kid and every adult has is for the Lord to be with them. I am certainly speaking of knowing Christ through salvation. Jesus is the greatest healer, calmer of fears, and provider.



**Discuss the roller coaster ride of the providential hand of God.**

**How do you handle the change of circumstances and emotions in your life?**

**Share some verses that have been a great strength through the highs and lows of life.**

**Share some verses that provide strength when you feel all alone.**

**Discuss how you become engaged in helping people who are in circumstances like Joseph was in. Where do you find people who are displaced, in need, and hurting? How can you help people like this?**

**Discuss the gospel-centered approach to living above your roller coaster circumstances. Discuss how to lead with the gospel in helping others experience the presence of God in their less-than-great circumstances.**

**Consider what kind of ministries can men start or be involved in to help those whose circumstances lead to discouragement and hopelessness.**

**Discuss Romans 8:28 in light of Joseph's life, your life, and the lives of those in great need.**

**Consider the grace of God expressed in chesed. Discuss how God demonstrated His abundant grace to us through His Son (Romans 5:8). Discuss how men can have peace with God (Romans 5:1-2). Offer an invitation for any man to pray to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior. The prayer could be something like this:**

**Dear God,**

**I know that I am a sinner. I know that I need Jesus to forgive me from my sins and to save me. I believe that Jesus lived sinlessly and died on a cross as a substitute for my sin. I believe that He rose from the dead on the third day. I turn away from my sin and myself and I trust in Jesus as my Savior and my Lord. I receive this salvation as a free gift that I do not deserve and cannot earn. Thank you for saving me. Help me to let You live Your life through me. Amen.**

# week four

PROSPERING,  
FORGOTTEN,  
REMEMBERED,  
PROMOTED

"Chapter 40 is a chapter of transition. The prison is merely a way station between the home of Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, and the court of Pharaoh himself."<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 40 opens with an angry King of Egypt who put his cupbearer and baker in the prison Joseph was running as player-coach or inmate-warden. Joseph specifically had responsibility for these two men. (40:1-4)

*"Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the same place where Joseph was imprisoned. The captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time."*

After some time had passed, each of these two imprisoned officials from the King's court had dreams on the same night. Joseph was involved and in touch with those he had responsibility over enough to notice a change in their countenance. Joseph not only noticed they were sad but followed through with an inquiry seeking to understand why they were sad. Joseph inquired about their change in countenance. It is really an amazing consideration that Joseph would notice a sadness in two inmates. Joseph cared. Joseph did something about his concern. Joseph's genuine concern about his fellow inmates would contribute toward Joseph's exaltation in Pharaoh's house. You would think their answer could be, "Because I'm in jail. That's why I am sad." (40:4b-7)

*"Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his own dream and each dream with its own interpretation. When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"*

**Discuss the importance of paying attention to the people God brings into your life. Consider the providential hand of God in your networking and who you have come in contact with.**

**Discuss how to see everyday encounters as ministry opportunities. Give some examples of how you have been the recipient of ministry through what would appear to others as random encounters. Also, give some examples of how you approach ministry opportunities throughout the day at your work.**

**Discuss how you can approach each day and each encounter as divine appointments.**

After inquiring, they said they were sad because they did not have anyone to interpret their dreams. It could be that being in Pharaoh's court, they had an informal access to the magicians and such types where they could receive an interpretation. It could also be discouraging having an overwhelming kind of dream you know means something more than just an irrelevant dream.

As we know, Joseph was a dreamer himself, but God had also given him an ability to interpret dreams—these dreams. God gave Joseph an ability that would serve God, help others, and eventually contribute to Joseph being where God intended him to be.

Joseph replied to their explanation (Genesis 40:8), *"Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please."*

Certainly, God is doing much providentially in His redemption story. But what a great line or question to direct the attention of these pagan Egyptian King's court people to God! He is a fellow inmate. He is also their boss and has responsibility for them. He expresses genuine concern, then points them to the One who can impact their lives. Joseph gives glory and any ability to understand dreams to God alone. Even in this most unusual circumstance, Joseph has God on his lips and mind. Joseph is not a distant observer or just a reporter of the news. He personally connects himself to the work of God. When he asks for them to tell him what they had dreamed after saying only God gives interpretation, he expressed a degree of self-awareness and God-awareness. He understood his responsibility in what was going on around him.

**Discuss how important it is to see God at work around us and how we can join Him in His work.**

**What gifts or talents do you see in other people and yourself that God has given to minister to other people? Discuss the importance of recognizing gifts/talents come from God and how that understanding impacts the exercise of those gifts.**

**Discuss the purpose behind gifts of being ministry to others versus personal fulfillment and opportunity.**

*"So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, 'In my dream, behold, there was a vine in front of me; and on the vine were three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, and its clusters produced ripe grapes. 'Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand.' Then Joseph said to him, 'This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer. 'Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. 'For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon.' When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, 'I also saw in my dream, and behold, there were three baskets of white bread on my head; and in the top basket there were some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.'"*

The cupbearer shares his dream with Joseph (Genesis 40:9-11). Then Joseph interprets the dream (Genesis 40:12-13). After interpreting the dream, Joseph requests the cupbearer remember Joseph and mention him to Pharaoh to get him out of that place (Genesis 40:14-15).

The baker saw Joseph had interpreted the cupbearer's dream favorably, so he requested an interpretation of his dream. He told Joseph his dream and Joseph interpreted it (Genesis 40:16-19).

**Discuss the challenge of telling people what they do not want to hear.**

*"Thus it came about on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he 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 office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them."*

After three days, the dreams came to fruition as Joseph had interpreted. The cupbearer was restored to his position before the king. The baker was hanged. Unfortunately, the chief cupbearer forgot to remember Joseph (Genesis 40:23).

Joseph met the requirements of a true prophet in that what he said came to fruition. This is further evidence of God's presence in Joseph's life. Joseph continued to walk through the doors God opened up for him. The dream was something God had empowered him to interpret, so he did what God enabled him to do. How important is it for you to serve God with the opportunities that He presents before you?

*"Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph but forgot him."*

**Discuss this section keeping in mind all the commendable things Joseph had done from even noticing the sadness of the cupbearer and the baker to interpreting their dreams. Consider the feelings of Joseph after being forgotten. Have you ever been forgotten or overlooked as if you did not exist? How can that experience compel you to not let that happen to others?**

Chapter 41 is the chapter some have labeled exaltation. It is in this chapter Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and ascends to the right hand of Pharaoh. He is given charge over Pharaoh's affairs, especially in light of years of plenty followed by years of famine.

*"Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh."*

The chapter opens with Joseph being forgotten by the cupbearer for two years until Pharaoh has a troubling dream (Genesis 41:1-8). The chief cupbearer then remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh of Joseph's interpretation of his dream and the baker's dream (Genesis 41:9-13).

*"Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, 'I would make mention today of my own offenses. 'Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker. 'We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. 'Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. 'And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him.'"*

Finally, the cup bearer remembered Joseph. At this moment in time, Joseph was not aware the cupbearer remembered him and spoke of him to Pharaoh. We cannot know everything going on around us that has an impact on us. You provide for your children and take care of important matters for them, but they have no idea what you are doing. The same is true for all of us. God in particular is always at work. The



Bible says He never sleeps or slumbers. God is always at work on your behalf. Joseph was not aware of Pharaoh's dream yet. He was not aware of what was about to happen. But he was ready when it did happen. You must be ready in season and out of season to give an answer for the hope within you.

It is like the backup quarterback who never gets to play, then suddenly, he is thrust into duty due to an injury to the starting quarterback. That was the story of the greatest NFL quarterback of all-time, Tom Brady. The sixth-round draft pick was Drew Bledsoe's backup quarterback. Many people do not remember Brady was a backup to Brian Griese his first two years at Michigan. He was a starter his junior year, then alternated quarters with Drew Henson his senior year although he played more than Henning.

Pharaoh sent for Joseph to give him the interpretation (Genesis 41:14-15). Joseph replies as he did with his previous dream interpretations. "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer" (41:16). After telling Joseph his two dreams (Genesis 41:17-24), Joseph gave the interpretation (Genesis 41:25-37).

**Consider how God is at work in invisible and unknown ways on our behalf. Discuss some things in your life that were going on without your knowledge or your input and outside of your influence.**

**Again, Joseph could not give himself an audience with Pharaoh, but when he got it, he seized his moment. Discuss the importance of being ready when an opportunity presents itself. How can you prepare yourself spiritually for the spiritual opportunity or test or trial unknown to you right now?**

*"Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.' So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, 'In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile; and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the marsh grass. 'Lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt; and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows. 'Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them, for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke. 'I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk; and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them; and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.'"*

There would be seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. The famine will be so bad it will consume the previous years of abundance. Joseph advised Pharaoh to store up from the years of abundance as a reserve to be used during the years of famine. This interpretation and plan of action was embraced by Pharaoh and his servants.

Joseph did not stop by just answering Pharaoh's question about what the dream meant. He went on to give him advice on what to do about the famine that was coming. Joseph was a wise man. He was a thinking man. All that had happened to him over these past 13 years had made him into the man he was. He listened and learned. He was ready when his opportunity came. He could not force his opportunity. The timing was totally out of his hands and totally in the hand of God.

This was not the first time Joseph had seized his moment. He had done so in Potiphar's house. He had done so in the prison. Now he is doing it again in Pharaoh's house. The scale had changed. He had been wise, loyal, and alert in smaller settings that prepared him for this one crucial day.

You have heard it said of athletes that the game is not too big for them. Joseph was not overwhelmed on this gigantic stage. He had learned in the hidden places not so large, but he applied the same principles and was the same person in the pit, Potiphar's house, and the prison as he was before Pharaoh. His consistency and perseverance helped him be ready for this crucial moment.

*"Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 'The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same. 'The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine. 'It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 'Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land. 'So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe. 'Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about. 'Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 'Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. 'Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it. 'Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine.'" Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants."*

**Discuss how small decisions and lesser responsibilities prepare you for more opportunities ahead.**

**Discuss how to be content waiting on your opportunity. Philippians 4:10-13**

Pharaoh decided to exalt Joseph to be over this project and to rise to second in command in Egypt. He recognized him with a signet ring, royal clothes, and a royal chariot. He gave him a new name and a wife. He was 30 years old when this happened. He was thrown into the pit at 17 years of age. Joseph executed the plan of storing up grain during the abundance (Genesis 41:37-49).

*"Then Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?' So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. 'You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.' Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.'" Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt. Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. During the seven years of plenty the land*

*brought forth abundantly. So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure."*

Joseph had two sons before the famine began. He named his sons Manasseh and Ephraim, both Hebrew names. Although he had been given an Egyptian name by Pharaoh, he gave his sons Hebrew names (Genesis 41:50-57).

*"Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore to him. Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." He named the second Ephraim, "For," he said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do." When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth."*

**What is your biggest takeaway from Joseph's story up to this point?**



# week five

WHEN IT COMES FULL CIRCLE

Genesis 42 tells the story of how Jacob's sons, Joseph's brothers, end up in Egypt standing before their brother.

Jacob was aware there was grain in Egypt, so he sent ten of his sons down to Egypt to purchase grain.

Genesis 42:1-5

*"Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, 'Why are you staring at one another?' He said, 'Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.' Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, 'I am afraid that harm may befall him.' So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also."*

These verses paint a picture of grown sons with wives and children still under the shadow of their father. Providentially, God kept the family together for His purposes. Their togetherness makes the saving of all 12 tribes/sons somewhat less complicated. But humanly speaking, it is ironic that the spoiled child Joseph had been out on his own, in enemy territory, enduring hardships and mistreatment, all the while thriving in whatever circumstances. His older brothers, on the other hand, are painted to be dependent on and underneath the apron of their father. A commitment to family and keeping the family together is a noble pursuit. Ongoing dependence on our parents after moving into adulthood is irresponsible and immature.

**Briefly review Joseph's story. Remember and observe 1) the providential hand of God 2) the dysfunction of Joseph's family 3) the presence of God in Joseph's life 4) the disappointments in Joseph's life.**

**Consider how the brothers are still dependent upon their father while their spoiled, favored younger brother Joseph has really been out on his own thriving in various difficult circumstances.**

Another observation is Jacob did not allow Benjamin to accompany the other sons. The text says because he was afraid harm might come upon him. The question could be, why was he not worried about harm falling on the other brothers? Most likely, being the only surviving son of Rachel, Benjamin was the most favored. His age also could play into Jacob's decision. It is only 13 years removed from Joseph's departure. But Benjamin would be another set of hands and another pack animal to bring back food in a famine. You would think this would be an all-hands-on deck endeavor. Obviously, Jacob did not trust his sons to be able to bring Benjamin back safely, as past history would have it, that lack of trust was well-founded.

*"Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground."*

Joseph was the one who sold grain to people who were coming to buy. It is amazing he personally took care of that task (so much for delegation). It is also amazing that after all those years and what was probably a crowded grain distribution location, Joseph recognized his brothers (Genesis 42:6). They did not recognize Joseph. The text said he disguised himself to them.

*"When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, 'Where have you come from?' And they said, 'From the land of Canaan, to*



*buy food." Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him."*

Joseph did not have a dream warning him his brothers were on the way. He was not prepared in some ways, but in another way, he had been preparing for this day his entire life. This was the fulfillment of his dreams as a young man of his brothers bowing down to him. These brothers who hated him, despised him, threw him into a pit, sold him into slavery, and lied to their father about him are now bowing before him in Egypt. Joseph was not prepared for their arrival, but he did recognize them. His brothers were not prepared to meet Joseph either, but they did not recognize him.

Joseph's life vision as a teenager (Genesis 37:9-11) given to him in a dream by God was about to be fulfilled. Remember, the Lord was with Joseph. The Lord's presence in Joseph's life caused him to be aware and see what others may not see. In the crowds seeking help during a famine, most people would not immediately recognize even their brothers after not seeing them in over 10 years. The Lord's presence makes people see what others do not see.

And the lack of the Lord's presence in a person's life causes them to not see what some do see. They did not even recognize the victim of their crimes, nor their own brother.

**Discuss how the Lord causes us to see things differently. How do the lost view devastating earthquakes? How does the Lord's presence impact a believer's view of devastating earthquakes? Consider the contrast between meaningless events and divine opportunities.**

He spoke to them harshly accusing them of being spies. He gathered information from them about his younger brother and his father. He then imprisoned them for three days (Genesis 42:6-17).

Joseph did not know what the circumstances were for his father nor his younger brother, Benjamin. The hatred his brothers had for him was rooted in sibling rivalry that was exacerbated by the favoritism of their father. Jacob favored Joseph so much because he was Rachel's son. Benjamin was his full brother and Rachel's son. It would be understood that the brothers grouped together based upon who their mother was. Benjamin was the lone surviving son of Rachel who was no longer living. Joseph was on a fact-finding mission. He wanted to know if his brother and his father were alive and well.

It is altogether possible on a human level Joseph would execute his brothers if they had treated their father and his younger brother with the same hatred they had him.

In response to the accusation of being spies, his brothers make an outlandish reply.

*"We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies."*

Joseph knew what kind of men his brothers were. He spent 17 years with his brothers before the pit and slave sale. He had personally experienced their dishonesty and betrayal. At this point, Joseph did not know his father and brother were alive. His conniving brothers could not be trusted. He placed them in confinement for three days.

Joseph offered for one of them to go and retrieve their brother Benjamin (Genesis 42:16-17). He then asked for one of them to volunteer to stay (Genesis 42:18-20) while the others went. These were really tests and opportunities for his brothers to demonstrate leadership, to come clean, and rescue their families from famine. No one volunteered. They probably did not trust each other. They had all been involved in this hate-filled conspiracy against Joseph.

The brothers then talked among themselves of how what they had done to Joseph was coming back on them now. They were unaware Joseph could hear and understand what they were saying. Joseph wept, but he kept Simeon and sent the others back to get their brother.

Joseph gave them grain and returned their money in the grain sacks. Upon discovering their money, their "hearts sank, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, 'What is this that God has done to us?'" (Genesis 42:28)

Despite Joseph speaking harshly and imprisoning Simeon, giving them their grain and all their money back is a beautiful picture of grace. The brothers who had sold Joseph into slavery were now the recipients of an abundance from the one they hated. In the same way, we were enemies of Jesus Christ, yet while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Remember, we are more like Joseph's brothers than Joseph. We desire to be like Joseph but thank God He is extending undeserved grace to us when we treat our brothers in ways that do not honor the Lord.

Every step was a test for the brothers as it is for us. They had the grain and the money. Would they return for Simeon? I am sure Simeon did not count on their return. He had seen them in action and was actually a part of that action of putting Joseph in the pit and selling him into slavery. Why would they not sell Simeon out?

It is out of the grace God extends towards us that we can begin to be more like Joseph. What we need most is the Lord's presence in our lives. If the Lord is with us, then as with Joseph, He will give us favor and wisdom and grace in how we treat others.

**Discuss the tension in assessing the situation, considering a person's past, and hoping the best and giving another opportunity. Discuss the impact of a changed dynamic in Joseph's position, maturity, and authority from a 17-year-old with a dream to a 30-year-old with all the authority of Pharaoh.**

They returned to Canaan and told Jacob what had happened (Genesis 42:29-34). Upon opening their sacks, they discovered all the money had been given back. Upon hearing this and seeing this, he refused to let Benjamin go to Egypt, even with Reuben offering his two sons to die if Benjamin does not make it back. The dysfunctional family continues to play out. Why would Reuben offer his sons to die if Benjamin died? Like two more family deaths would make it better. Also, it is obvious Jacob was not willing to risk Benjamin to save Simeon (Genesis 42:35-38). The family continues life evidently until they run out of food again.

Chapter 43 picks up with the severe famine continuing and Jacob's family running out of food. Jacob tells his sons to go back and get food. They refuse to go unless Benjamin can go with them. Jacob questions why they even told that they had a younger brother. Jacob agrees to let Benjamin go. He sent double the money and other gifts to accompany them.

An unexpected leader arises. Judah offers to be responsible for Benjamin's safe return (Genesis 43:1-15). This is the son who had the ungodly detour involving Tamar in Chapter 38. It is interesting how the mantle is removed from the oldest, Reuben, then bypassing Simeon and Levi to fall to Judah. There was certainly some disqualifying on Reuben's part, but in human understanding, no worse than Judah's Genesis 38 departure. Ultimately, Judah was the choice of God's grace and His promise to preserve a seed through Jacob now through Judah.

When Joseph saw Benjamin, he had his steward slay an animal and prepare a meal for his brothers to share with Joseph. This action baffled the brothers. They began to make their case about the returned money with the steward. The meal was prepared, and they presented their gifts to Joseph. He inquired about their (his) father and asked if this was their younger brother (Genesis 43:16-29).

Joseph spoke to Benjamin and then had to rush out because he was deeply moved to weeping as he saw his brother. He cleaned himself up and shared the meal. He seated them in birth order which amazed them. He gave Benjamin five times as much food as anyone else (Genesis 43:30-34). It is an amazing story.

Joseph displays great control and intentionality in the midst of great emotion. Joseph felt what others did not feel because he saw what others could not see.

In many ways, Joseph's dreams are coming true. Some people would be stuck in the past disappointment. Some would think their dreams have been destroyed. Some have no dreams left. They have lost or been robbed of their dreams. This is not the case for Joseph. Throughout his life, his dreams had been erased. Dreams of living with his family were stolen from him by his brothers. Dreams of a nice life in Potiphar's house were stolen by a lying, immoral woman. Dreams of a swift audience with Pharaoh was taken by a forgetful chief cupbearer.

One key to Joseph never losing hope and never letting his dreams die is that his dream was not so much about his own well-being. Joseph's dream was not so much that his family would bow down to him. Although his family would bow before him because of his position, it was his position that would give him the opportunity and authority to save his family.

Joseph's dream or vision was not about his own well-being. It was about him being in a position and taking the steps to help his family. Valiant Warriors do not live for themselves. Valiant Warriors like Joseph live for the Lord's purposes and the blessing of others. The joy for the Valiant Warrior comes from rescuing, providing for, helping, empowering, encouraging, and building up others.

Joseph would receive great satisfaction in doing for his family what he had been doing for so many hungry and starving people who were coming to see him.

**Discuss Joseph's emotions, especially when he saw and talked to Benjamin. Consider how Joseph did not let his emotions derail his deliberate plan of getting information about Benjamin (earlier) and his father.**

**Discuss how you can keep past disappointments from eliminating hope and vision from your life. Consider how disappointment or failure can be used to instruct and motivate new dreams as opposed to complete discouragement and abandonment of any vision.**

Chapter 44 opens with Joseph filling their sacks with food and the money they brought. This time he had his silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack. After they left, Joseph had them overtaken outside the city and questioned about his missing silver cup. Joseph's brothers were unaware of the money or the cup being in their sacks, so they spoke defensively. Upon searching the sacks, the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack (Genesis 44:1-12).

These brothers could not get free from what they had done to Joseph. They were under constant conviction and paranoia about Joseph. Their actions that began with them being in full control of their choices have eventually brought them standing, unbeknownst to them, before the one they had put in the pit. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23) was coming true in their lives.

The reality of sin and brokenness in this world takes the shine off what one would consider a shining moment. Living in this fallen world leaves us scarred and limping.

**Discuss Numbers 32:23. Remember a personal story of when you thought your sin was covered up, but God would not let you get by with it. Read Psalm 51:3. How does this verse apply? Discuss the blessing and freedom of confession of sin. Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9.**

The brothers tore their clothes and returned to Joseph. The one who had the cup was to be a slave. Of course, Benjamin was the one who had the cup.

Judah asserts himself again as the leader and rehearsed to Joseph what had happened up to this point emphasizing the devastation this would have on their father.

*"Now, therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will die. Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow. "For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.' "Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. "For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me—for fear that I see the evil that would overtake my father?"*

Judah takes another step of leadership in offering himself as a substitute for Benjamin. A change has taken place among Joseph's brothers. Remember earlier when no one volunteered to go get Benjamin. No one volunteered to stay in prison while the others went to get Benjamin. They were in no hurry to go get Simeon. Jacob obviously did not trust Reuben's offer of his children as good enough to return for Joseph.

The family dynamics were changing. Jacob let Judah take Benjamin. Judah spoke up to Joseph. Judah offered himself in Benjamin's place.

What Joseph had dreamed as a young man had come to fruition. His brothers were bowing before him. Joseph had all the power. In some ways, it was not nearly as sweet as one might have thought it would be being Joseph at that time. It certainly was not for his brothers.

The brothers who once had no regard for their father's feeling now seem to be overwhelmed with the prospect of their father losing his last son from Rachel. Many things have come full circle in this story. But the story is certainly not over yet. The providential purpose is about to be revealed.

**Discuss this statement.**

Joseph saw what others did not see, felt what others did not feel, and did what others did not do.

# week six

FORGIVENESS & REUNION & FUTURE HOPE

Chapter 45 is the great reveal. Joseph had patiently carried out his plan from the first trip and had to wait for their return.

**Review the story of Joseph to set the stage for this climactic conclusion.  
The Pit to Potiphar's House to the Prison to Pharaoh's**

*"Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, 'Have everyone go out from me.' So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it."*

The text in verse one tells us "Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him and he cried..." He made everyone leave except his brothers. He wept so loud he could be heard by those outside the room.

*"Then Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph..." 45:3*

He called his brothers close. They could not answer him.

He gave them the greatest gift he could give. He gave them something better than the grain, the money back, or anything else. He gave them forgiveness and purpose.

*"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Please come closer to me.' And they came closer. And he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. **God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God;** and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.'"*

A lot is going on in this section of Scripture. As already mentioned, it is the great reveal. It is the moment in the script everyone has been waiting for. You wonder if the brothers even heard what he was saying after he said, "I am Joseph."

They were hearing this Egyptian leader speak to them in Hebrew. They remembered all they had said in Hebrew while in his presence thinking he could not understand.

The message of Joseph would be repeated to his brothers with these elements. First, Joseph expressed the sovereignty of God. He states here twice, "God sent me." He states the primary purpose of God **"to preserve life"** and **"preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance."** He also states the secondary purposes that positioned him for this task as **"made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt."**

Second, Joseph attributes his brothers' sinful choices to them and not to God. He repeatedly stated, "you sold me." As we are reminded, the providence of God is not overturned by the sinful choices of people, but neither does it prohibit sinful people from making such choices.

**God is sovereign in sending Joseph to Egypt to preserve life and a remnant, and his brothers were sinful in selling Joseph into Egypt.**



Third, Joseph gives the details of the famine and the provision that will be made for his family and his father.

God had allowed Joseph to embrace His purpose for his life. It was not so much about what his brothers had done to him, but it was about what God had providentially ordained for him to do.

This was about “*preserving a remnant in the earth.*” It was from this people, the seed of Jacob, Israel, that God would save the world, the nations.

**Consider different scenarios where certain people paid a great cost to provide for others (our military, first responders, and others are good place to start).**

**What makes the difference between men who are willing to sacrifice greatly for a cause or for other and those men who are not willing to sacrifice, but rather look out for their best interests?**

**Give some examples of people who have sacrificed greatly for a cause or for the sake of others. What were some of their character qualities?**

Joseph wept with Benjamin, then with the rest of his brothers. He was going to provide food and a place for them to live. It was in this act the 12 tribes of Israel would be preserved. But it is also in this act the 12 tribes of Israel would be enslaved. They would grow and multiply until there would be a Pharaoh who knew not of Joseph. This would be the occasion of the exodus that would be led by Moses.

There are several parallels between Joseph and Moses. Both men were prominent in Pharaoh’s house. Pharaoh welcomed Joseph’s people into Egypt. Pharaoh reluctantly released Moses’ people from Egypt. Jacob worshiped on the way into Egypt. Moses led the people in worship on the way out of Egypt. Pharaoh sent chariots to retrieve Jacob to bring him to Egypt. Pharaoh sent chariots to destroy Moses as he left Egypt. A famine created the need for Israel to go to Egypt. Plagues hardened Pharaoh’s heart and caused Israel to flee Egypt.

The small family of 75 would enter Egypt and come out centuries later numbering in the millions.

They returned to get Jacob.

*“They told him, saying, ‘Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.’ But he was stunned, for he did not believe them. When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. Then Israel said, ‘It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.’”*

## Chapter 46

*“So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob.’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’” He said, ‘I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.’ Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.*

*They took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him: his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt."*

This was a revival and renewal moment for Jacob. He had had such a roller coaster ride spiritually. Jacob was a trickster. With his mother's help, he had stolen his brother Esau's birthright. He had also wrestled with God. He had been blessed by God. He was on the roller coaster ride with Joseph's life. He was obviously not a great parent who showed favoritism and continued to rule over his adult sons. But this news of a dead son being alive resurrected Jacob also.

His revival began with belief. He believed Joseph was alive after initially not receiving the good news. He then got up and started in that direction. He did not just say he believed this, but he got up and was going to see and experience it for himself. He then worshiped God at Beersheba (46:1). God spoke to him and gave him visions there. Also, Moses uses his name "Israel" in chapter 46. God clarified His call to go down to Egypt. He also promised Israel, *"I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."* Jacob made the journey in faith and hope in the promise of God.

**Discuss Jacob's faith journey. Consider what are his negative traits and what he did wrong.**

**Consider how Jacob was blessed by God. What explanation can you give for God's blessing on Jacob?**

Joseph provided a land in Goshen where they could be shepherds. Certainly, shepherding would be a prominent role throughout biblical history with Moses, David, and "The LORD is my shepherd." This pleased Pharaoh to do this for Joseph. Joseph had certainly gone from the pit to the place of favor. It is noteworthy that Joseph would never return to his home, but his home would come to him. Relationships will rise above the land at this moment. Jacob and Joseph both knew to look beyond a physical land to heavenly land.

**Discuss the spiritual significance of Israel's family being shepherds. Consider the role of the shepherd and those who performed that role in biblical history.**

Chapter 47 tells of the tribes of Jacob settling in the land of Goshen. It also speaks of how Joseph accumulated great wealth for Pharaoh by obtaining not only money but also land from people who needed grain.

Chapter 48 shows Jacob's last days and his blessing of Joseph's children. He blessed the younger Ephraim before the older Manasseh.

Chapter 49 is the prophecy of Israel over his sons. We want to look briefly at the blessing of Judah. Reuben is first, then Simeon, then Levi. Judah was the fourth born. He was also the son of Leah, not Rachel. With this blessing, the inclusion of chapter 38 detailing Judah's detour and debacle with his daughter-in-law Tamar comes into clearer focus.

*"Judah, your brothers shall praise you;  
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;  
Your father's sons shall bow down to you.  
Judah is a lion's whelp;  
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.  
He couches, he lies down as a lion,  
and as a lion, who dares rouse him up?  
The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh comes,  
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.  
He ties his foal to the vine,  
and his donkey's colt to the choice vine;  
He washes his garments in wine,  
and his robes in the blood of grapes.  
His eyes are dull from wine,  
and his teeth white from milk."*

We must remind ourselves of Judah's role first in throwing Joseph in the pit and selling him into slavery. He was right in the middle of all that. Then Genesis 38 gives the account, *"Judah departed from his brothers and...saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her"* (38:1,2). She bore him three sons. The oldest was Er. Judah chose Tamar to be his wife. Er was evil in the sight of the Lord and died. His brother Onan would not perform his duty with Tamar to provide her a child. So, Tamar dressed as a prostitute at a location Judah traveled. Judah had relations with her, unknowing it was Tamar and thinking she was a prostitute. She requested his seal, his cord, and his staff as a pledge for her payment of a goat that would be forthcoming. Later, when Judah was advised his daughter-in-law was pregnant, he planned on having her burned. When she presented his seal, cord, and staff, Judah stated *"she is more righteous than I"* (38:26). Tamar had twins, Perez and Zerah.

Israel's prophecy speaks of Judah's preeminence in verse eight. He is praised and bowed down to by his brothers.

*"Judah, your brothers shall praise you;  
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;  
Your father's sons shall bow down to you."*

Israel's prophecy speaks of the power of Judah in verse nine.

*"Judah is a lion's whelp;  
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.  
He couches, he lies down as a lion,  
And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?"*

Israel's prophecy speaks of the royalty of Judah in verse 10.

*"The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh comes,  
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."*

Israel's prophecy speaks of the blessing and prosperity of Judah in verses 11-12.

*"He ties his foal to the vine,  
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine;  
He washes his garments in wine,  
And his robes in the blood of grapes.  
"His eyes are dull from wine,  
And his teeth white from milk."*

Out of the seed of Judah proceeds the Lion of Judah and the Root of David, the King of kings.

*"...and one of the elders said to me, 'Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.'" Revelation 5:5*

Judah, Tamar, and Perez are included in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:2-3).

*"The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram."*

Remember the transformation of Judah. He offered to be responsible for Benjamin (43:8), Jacob's most loved son before they took him to Egypt. He offered to be Benjamin's substitute for prison after Benjamin was caught with Joseph's silver cup in Egypt (44:32-34). He was trusted by Jacob with Benjamin. He was willing to be imprisoned on behalf of Benjamin.

The choice of Judah emphasizes the grace and providential hand of God. Joseph was the favorite of Jacob and Rachel was the favorite of Jacob. God chose the promised seed to come through Leah and come from Jacob's fourth born. It was not his first born, nor his favorite 11th born, nor his last born. Judah's life was much more checkered than Joseph's. God chose to save the family through Joseph's pain, discouragement, favor with God and man. God chose to save the world through Judah's seed. And even a greater statement of His grace, that seed would go through the Canaanite daughter-in-law posing as a prostitute.

This remarkable story should give hope to all in the power of God's grace and His providential orchestration of circumstances to bring salvation to His people.

**Discuss the blessing of Jacob upon his son Judah (Genesis 49:8-12).**

**Discuss the turnaround of Judah from co-conspirator against Joseph to the protector of Benjamin and trusted son of Jacob.**

**How does such a turnaround take place?**

**Consider the fact Judah was given a higher position long-term or throughout history than Joseph while Joseph was clearly the more consistent and godlier over time than Judah. What do you attribute God's selection of Judah over Joseph or Benjamin?**

**Clarify Judah's role in the fulfillment of prophecy regarding the Messiah. Whatever happened to Judah, his seed, or descendants?**

Chapter 50 opens with the death of Israel, weeping and mourning, then travel to Canaan to bury him.

Joseph's brothers became fearful that now their father was dead, Joseph may pay them back for the wrong they had committed against him. It is amazing how the guilt of sin continues to plague us. Fear continues to plague us. That is why one of the most often stated commands in Scripture is to fear not.

*"When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!' So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'Your father charged before he died, saying, 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, 'Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.' ' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.' And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. 'So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.' So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."*

The story of Joseph is a story of forgiveness. Joseph again looks to God and His providence in extending forgiveness. We see the emotions of Joseph. His forgiveness was emotional for sure at this point. But his forgiveness was theological, mostly. He asks *"am I in God's place?"*

**Discuss the problems for Valiant Warrior Christ followers who do not forgive.**

**Discuss some keys to forgiving other people. Think about people who you need to forgive. Think about people who you need to ask for forgiveness.**

Again, we see the sinful responsibility of people, *"you meant evil against me."* His brothers were responsible. But God was providential, *"But God meant it for good."*

*"But God causes all things to work together for good, for those who love God and to those who are called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28

**Discuss the providence of God and the sinful choices of people co-existing.**

**Discuss Romans 8:28 and apply it to Joseph's life. Consider how Romans 8:28 applies to your life.**

**What are the major takeaways concerning Joseph's life? What were the keys to his perseverance, faithfulness, finishing without giving up?**

**Remember Joseph saved his brothers and father physically, thus preserving Israel while also moving them into Egypt where they would be considered slaves for over 400 years until Moses delivers them. In light of all this, how do you position the story of Joseph in redemption history? Think about the journey of God's Valiant Warriors, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Judah, Moses.**