DAY 1

“A DREAMY GUY”
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
• Jeremiah 29:11-13
• Joel 2:28
• Hebrews 10:35-39

We are about to embark on quite the adventure together. In fact, it has all the makings of a great movie: family drama, a murderous plot, devastating secrets, foreign lands, sexual temptation, wrongful accusations, a climatic finale, audacious dreams, and a larger than life hero. Joseph was a “dreamy guy.” The Bible actually describes him in Genesis 39:7 as “well-built and handsome,” yet that is not what makes him the star of this tale.

Joseph’s life was set apart by God’s dreams and for God’s purposes. His story will actually point us to the life of Christ. Like Jesus, we will watch Joseph obey through suffering, ultimately saving God’s chosen people. We will witness Joseph living a life of redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Thus, foreshadowing Jesus’ earthly and eternal ministry. Joseph dreamed big dreams having no idea the journey those dreams would take him on, and he remained faithful through it all.

However, unlike a mere movie about someone else’s life, Joseph’s story is created for us. Joseph’s story can be ours. God has a plan, a purpose, and a dream for each of our lives. We, like Joseph, will walk hard roads, live mundane days, have to fight hard for that dream, but in the end, if we remain faithful, the finale will be just as victorious.

The first step in “Living the Dream” is believing that there is one.

Right here at the very beginning you have to decide if you believe that God
has a dream and a purpose for your life; not just your godly friend’s life, your pastor’s life, or even someone you admire. YOUR life. In today’s scripture reading, we find that God already knows the plan He has for your good and your future. We see that each of us will find God and learn about His dreams for us when we seek Him with all our heart. In Joel, we read the prophecy that God’s Spirit will be poured out on His people resulting in dreams and visions. I believe that time has come. Finally, in Hebrews we learn that God takes no pleasure in those who shrink back from His purposes for their lives, but like Joseph, the righteous will live by faith.

Are you ready to walk with Joseph down roads filled with suffering and success? Are you ready to embark on this journey not just for information but for transformation as well? Are you ready to embrace your role in God’s story for your life?

**Today’s Big Questions:** Do you honestly believe that God has a plan, a purpose, and dream for YOUR life?

**Prayer Response:** Take a few moments and get honest with God. I promise He can handle it. Tell Him if you doubt that He has a dream for you life. Confess if you have not been seeking Him with your whole heart. Declare to Him that you desire not to shrink back from all He plans to do in you.

**Optional Action Step:** Write down the top three circumstances or beliefs that keep you from embracing God’s dream for your life. Confess each one to God and either put a big red X on it or rip it up to signify that it no longer holds power on your journey.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
“WHOSE DREAM IS IT ANYWAY?”
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
• Genesis 37:1-4

Whose dream are you living? Whose purpose are you pursuing? I pray you have embraced the truth that God has a plan and dream for your life but the reality is He’s not the only one. In the first 4 verses of Joseph’s story, before God gives him His dreams, we see several other dreams Joseph could have chosen to live.

We see that Joseph’s family was settled in the land of Canaan, famously known in the Bible as the Promised Land of the Israelite people. Generations before, God told Joseph’s great-grandfather Abram to “Go from your country to the land I will show you (Genesis 12:1).” When he arrived as a foreigner God promised, “to your offspring I will give this land (Genesis 12:7).” And He did. We find young Joseph living in that rich land, tending to the abundant flocks of his father. To the world, it would appear that Joseph was already living the dream. Wealth. Comfort. Safety. Those things were certainly not wrong, they just weren’t all God had for Joseph. C.S. Lewis wrote, “Prosperity knits a man to the World.” Be aware, the world will try to sell each of us a counterfeit dream and it will probably look a lot like it did for Joseph: possessions, comfort, success, and ease. God has more.

We see that Joseph was his father’s favorite because he “had been born to him in his old age (Genesis 37:3).” Joseph was also born to Jacob’s beloved wife Rachel and he wore his father’s favor for all to see in the form of a beautiful robe. Quite literally, Joseph was Jacob’s dream. That’s a lot of pressure! When others hold us in unhealthy esteem it usually comes with unrealistic expectations. I’m sure Jacob had dreams of his own for his son (as most parents do) but those were not the same as God’s purposes for him. Everyone from our families, to our friends, to our employers, to
acquaintances on social media probably have an opinion of what we should do with our lives. We can get lost living for the permission, blessings, and approval of others. God has a different path.

Lastly, we see that the enemy had a plan for Joseph’s life as well. Through the seeds of bitterness planted by Jacob’s favoritism, Satan fostered hatred in the hearts of Joseph’s brothers to the point that they couldn’t even say a kind word to him. Satan knew God had big dreams for Joseph and wanted to destroy him before they could be fulfilled. So he fanned the flames of jealousy and division in Joseph’s brothers that resulted in a murderous plot. Satan wants to keep us from God’s best purposes for our lives as well. He is the thief that “comes only to steal and kill and destroy” the abundant life and eternal dreams of God in your life. He may attack that dream in us, or he may just numb us into an apathetic vision for our lives. God has better.

We all dream of living a life filled with purpose because God has placed that desire in us. However, He loves us enough to grant us free will to choose whose dream we will live. When we pursue the world’s dreams, other’s dreams, or the enemy’s dreams, we waste our lives. Could there be anything worse? When we hold tightly to God’s plans, we find the purposes we were created for.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Whose dream for your life are you living? Do you see the world’s dreams, other’s expectations, and the enemy’s plans having influence over your life today? Where?

**Prayer Response:** Get quiet before the Lord and ask Him to reveal the counterfeit dreams that are influencing your life. Confess any plans or purposes that are not from Him and ask Him to redeem His dream for you.

**Optional Action Step:** Make a chart with 4 sections or 4 separate lists labeled WORLD, OTHERS, ENEMY, and GOD. Now think about the direction your life is going, the decisions you are making, and the opportunities you have. Write them under the corresponding headings. For the remainder of
this series, continue to assign the dreams and desires you have to one of these influences.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 3

MOTIVES MATTER
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
• Genesis 37:5-11
• Philippians 2:3-8
• 1 Corinthians 4:5
• John 17:4

Glory. What do you think of when you read that word? Catching the game winning pass or securing the big account with “We Are the Champions” or “Glory Days” playing in the background? Or is it shrouded in a mysterious “Christianese” that you know are supposed to understand but really don’t? The Hebrew word “kabob” which is translated into English as “glory” has the root meaning of “weight” or “heaviness.” Glory is all about significance and value, and no one can bear up under the weight of it but God. Glory is the manifestation of God’s power, character, and beauty on earth.

Today, we read about Joseph’s dreams and you don’t have to be a dream interpretation expert to get the gist of them. You also don’t have to be an expert in family dynamics to guess how well those dreams were received by Joseph’s 11 brothers and father. It did not go well. The Bible does not speak to Joseph’s motivation or heart posture in sharing these dreams with his family. We don’t get to hear his tone of voice or watch the way he walks away. If the intelligence and people smarts that he displays later in his life are present in his 17-year-old self, we might assume that his motives weren’t entirely pure.

Motives matter. We can pursue the right things for the wrong reasons. God tells us in Isaiah 42:8 that He will not share His glory. In fact, His glory is His great purpose on earth and every dream and plan He has for us will be to glorify Him. Getting to show God off to the world is always for our good and
will forever be the missing piece of purpose when our lives become self-glorifying.

In Philippians 2:3-8 we are told to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,” but to be humble and value others above ourselves, putting their interests before our own. We are to have the same mindset as Jesus who walked away from His rightful place of glory to save us. We read in 1 Corinthians 4:5 that the Lord will bring to light every hidden thing and expose the true motivations of the heart. Yes, motives matter.

Joseph has a long journey before his dream comes true and his family ultimately bows before him. When it happens, he isn’t quite as cocky as the teenager in the colorful coat we read about today. Life does that. It will humble each of us that seek our own glory because we were not designed for it. To truly pursue God’s dreams for our lives, we will have to let Him purify our motives and seek to hand the heaviness of glory over to the only one who can carry it.

**Today’s Big Questions:** As you think about stepping out into God’s purposes and dreams for your life, are there some mixed motives you need to deal with? Do you feel like there are any impure motives that are holding you back from God’s plans?

**Prayer Response:** In John 17:4 we see Jesus praying to His Father saying, “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.” Our work is not finished yet so today pray, “God I desire to bring you glory in my life by doing the work you have for me today.” Ask the Lord to expose any impure motives and confess those to Him.

**Optional Action Step:** Listen to the song, “Glory to God Forever” by Steve Fee and worship the Lord with the refrain and chorus: “Take my life and let it be all for you and for your glory. Take my life and let it be yours. Glory to God forever.”
Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
DAY 4

DREAM TREASURERS

OR

DREAM SQUASHERS
Yesterday we speculated about young Joseph’s motives for sharing his dreams with his brothers and father. We wondered together if maybe he was a little puffed up, thinking about the glory of being bowed down to. We don’t know for sure what was in his heart, but we do know that the decision to share those dreams with his hateful brothers was not wise. We read in Genesis 37:4, “When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.” And that was pre-dream! Obviously, sharing dreams in which their bundles bowed to his, and 11 stars bowed to him did little to curb the family tension. Verse 8 says, “they hated him all the more because of his dream.”

The world will hate God’s dream in you too.

When God gives you a dream, who do you share it with? When you are wondering if a possible path is from God, who do you process it with? Most of the time dreams come in tiny, fragile whispers and someone else’s doubt or jealousy can squash them quickly.

God may call us to keep a dream silently in our heart for a season to protect it, but eventually we need the wisdom of trusted voices on our journey. We need people who love us and are invested in God’s story in our lives to
treasure that dream with us, to help us with our blind spots, to pray with us, and eventually to celebrate our dreams as if they were their own.

Today’s Scriptures are all about the power and importance of having wise friends and counsel in our lives to sharpen us and keep us safe. We need them to help us up when we fall and when we fail. We need them to rejoice with us when a dream is fulfilled and mourn with us when a dream dies. We need to know that they walk closely with Jesus and are renewed with His Word so that they can help us see things through His eyes.

Do you have a few of these “Dream Treasurers” in your life? Do you have a few trusted confidants who you know are safe and will point you to Jesus? Also, are you safe for others to share their dreams with, or do you tend to be a “Dream Squasher?” Do you celebrate God’s hand moving in other’s lives well, or like the brothers, are you dangerous in your bitterness and jealousy?

God’s dreams in us are something to steward with the upmost care. Be aware if you are sharing them with “treasurers” or “squashers.”

**Today’s Big Questions:** Do you have a few “Dream Treasurers” in your life? Honestly think about if you are a “Dream Treasurer” for others, or if you are a “Dream Squasher.” If you are a “Squasher,” spend some time thinking about why that is your tendency.

**Prayer Response:** If you have godly, wise people to share your dreams with thank God for them. If you don’t, ask God to send some “Dream Treasurers” to you. Then, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any places in your heart that keep you from celebrating God’s dreams in others. Confess them and ask for His forgiveness for being a “Dream Squasher.”

**Optional Action Step:** List the top 3 “Dream Treasurers” in your life and take a moment to send them a text or write them a note to tell them you appreciate their wise voice in your life.
**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 5

PAY ATTENTION
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
• 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11
• 2 Timothy 3:16-17
• Romans 1:19-20
• Job 33:14
• Mark 4:24

Have you ever declined an unfamiliar caller on your phone just to have the same number call you right back? It’s easy to ignore it the first time, but the second time makes me question. “Is it something important? Is it urgent? They must really need to speak to me!” When they call back, I pay attention.

We read that God gave Joseph two different dreams, on two different nights that pointed to the same destiny. We know that Joseph took notice after the first dream because he told his brothers about it, but I’m sure after the second one he was really paying attention.

This tells us a couple of powerful truths about our Heavenly Father’s character. First, He speaks. He speaks to us. He is our Creator God and He speaks in all kinds of creative ways. Earlier this week we read in Job that He will still speak through dreams and visions. Today we read that He speaks through the gifts of prophecy and words of knowledge. We also read that all Scripture is God breathed so He speaks through the Bible. In Romans we read that He makes Himself known to us through creation. He can also speak through our circumstances, and He is constantly speaking to His children through His indwelling Holy Spirit. God speaks. It’s one of my favorite things about Him.
God giving Joseph two dreams also teaches us that He wants us to “get it.” He is not trying to hide His plans for your life from you. We read earlier this week in Jeremiah that we can find Him when we seek Him with all our hearts. His ways are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9), and His agenda usually looks different than ours but He isn’t trying to trick us. I’m sure you have had seasons where God repeats a theme or truth to you over and over in several different ways. The verse you read during your personal time in the Word is the very Scripture that is preached about on Sunday morning! Then, the same subject comes up in conversation with a friend, in a book you are reading, or a podcast you are listening to! Today we read in Job that God speaks “now in one way, now another.” And in Mark He tells us to “consider carefully what you hear” in the NIV and to “pay close attention” in the NLT.

God speaks, and He wants us to pay attention. Just like He gave Joseph two dreams, He will speak to us again and again of who He is and who we are.

**Today’s Big Questions:** What has God been saying to you lately? How has He been speaking to you? Do you usually hear from Him through creation, through His Word, through others, in prayer and communion with the Holy Spirit, in dreams and visions? Are you paying attention?

**Prayer Response:** Today get quiet before the Lord and position yourself to listen carefully to what you hear. Repeat Samuel’s simple prayer from 1 Samuel 3:10, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

**Optional Action Step:** Take a walk and really pay attention to what God may be saying to you. Look around ask for revelation through creation. Notice any thoughts or Scriptures that come to mind.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
ANCHORING TO THE DREAM GIVER
When my daughter was 4-years-old I overheard her telling her 3-year-old brother that “you have Jesus in your heart, but I have Cinderella in mine.” I looked out from the kitchen and surveyed her dancing around in her well-worn blue ball gown complete with glass (plastic) slippers, elbow length gloves, and a perfect bun on her little head just like every other day. From the TV, Cinderella herself began singing “A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes” as I promptly decided that I had completely failed at parenting! Even at 4-years-old, my daughter knew that having someone or something “in your heart” was serious. She knew it was a place of upmost importance. She knew who or whatever resided there would be worshiped. She had just chosen the wrong god.

In our culture, it becomes really easy to worship a dream. Somewhere between Disney movies, Hallmark sentiments, and shampoo commercials, we have all been convinced that to follow our dreams is our highest calling, responsibility, and right. We are fed a steady diet of “listen to your heart” and “live your purpose,” just like my little girl had been fed a steady diet of princesses. And even when we know who is on the throne of our heart, we can worship the dream rather than being anchored to the Dream Giver.

Joseph’s life is about to take a turn for the crazy. His earthly father’s favor and protection will be stripped as quickly as his “coat of many colors.” We will walk with him on the long, hard road from the dream given by God to a nightmare coming true. Spoiler alert: the reality will look much different than Joseph thought! And if Joseph had worshiped the dream, I imagine he
would have lost hope right here in the first chapter of his story. But what we will see is that Joseph worshiped the Dream Giver instead.

Even a God-given dream is not God. And like Joseph, we will find that even a God-given dream might not turn out like we thought. There are no guarantees except that in this life we will have struggles. But when God is in the proper place in our hearts and we are worshiping Him alone, we will be anchored no matter what comes.

Feed yourself a steady diet of Him, rather than Hollywood and Hallmark’s religion of following your dreams. Anchor yourself to the Dream Giver and kick Cinderella out of your heart!

**Today’s Big Questions:** Is there a dream or a plan that has become an idol in your heart? Are you worshiping the dream or are you anchored to the Dream Giver?

**Prayer Response:** Confess to the Lord if any dreams or plans for your life have become disordered in your heart. Declare Matthew 22:37 back to Him, “I will love you God with all of my heart and with all of my soul and with all of my mind.”

**Optional Action Step:** Grab a piece of paper or a journal and draw a representation of the Lord or write GOD in big letters at the top of it. Below where you have written God, list the plans, promises, or dreams you are believing Him for. Let this be a reminder that those things sit below God in your heart and will not be worshiped.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 7

OUT FROM UNDER A FATHER’S PROTECTION
Today, we meet back up with Joseph and his brothers on a rather treacherous journey. In Genesis 37:12 we read that Joseph’s brothers went to graze their father’s flocks near Shechem soon after being told about the dreams. Shechem was a land of rich pastures but past destruction. Genesis 34 tells the story of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and sister of Joseph, being raped by the prince of this region. The brothers plotted revenge on the city by convincing all the men to be circumcised so that a marriage between Dinah and Shechem would be possible. While the men were incapacitated, two of the brothers attacked the city and slaughtered every male. Then the rest of Jacob’s sons showed up and plundered the land and looted the wealth. They even led all of the women and children away as captives. Let’s just say that the Jacob’s boys were not popular in Shechem. After they had been gone for some time, Jacob became nervous about their safety, so he sent Joseph on the 60 mile trek to find his brothers.

And here, on the road of past destruction, outside of the protection of their father’s home and authority, the brothers exact their revenge. Once again, a family is torn apart, and Joseph’s life is forever altered.

We know, in the end, that God’s hand was on every twist and turn in Joseph’s story. We know that it was all part of the plan. But the dangerous road to Shechem (and on to Dothan) presents some questions for us. In your life are there places of destruction you continue to return to? Do you ever choose to leave the protection and authority of your Heavenly Father’s presence through disobedience and unwise choices? The brothers waited
until Joseph was out from under Jacob’s favor to plot his demise. Our enemy will do the same. But when we reside close to home, close to His presence and His ways, our soul will avoid the dangerous traps the enemy has set.

I don’t know if your Shechem is a destructive habit, a toxic relationship, an apathetic attitude, a disordered desire, or a physical place that puts your soul in danger. Jacob’s decision to send his sons back to Shechem was unwise. His decision to send Joseph to his bitter brothers was dangerous. God is a better father and under His authority and our obedience, His presence will lead us to safety for our souls.

**Today’s Big Questions:** What is your Shechem? Have you found yourself back on a road of past destruction and danger for your soul? Have you wandered out from the safety of your Heavenly Father’s protection through disobedience or unwise choices?

**Prayer Response:** Spend a few moments asking the Holy Spirit to reveal any destructive or dangerous patterns you have been returning to. Commit to staying close to his side and beneath His protection.

**Optional Action Step:** Choose to fast for one meal today or tomorrow as a representation of walking away from old destructive habits. Spend the time you would have spent preparing and eating the meal praying and worshiping.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

_Ephesians 3:20-21_
DAY 8

THE GREEN EYED MONSTER
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 37:19-20
- Galatians 6:4-5
- 1 Thessalonians 4:11
- James 1:15
- James 3:16

It has been said that comparison is the thief of joy, but I think it might be the thief of everything. Comparison leads to jealousy which leads to, as James 3:16 says, every evil practice. No one would fault Joseph’s brothers for feeling envious of their father’s unequaled love and favor for Joseph. But they fed that green eyed monster like a pet until it was full-grown, and like we read in James 1:15, when sin is full-grown it gives birth to death.

Joseph’s brothers should have been about their own work, tending to their father’s sheep. As Joseph approached, they took their eyes off of what was theirs to do, and focused on what was not. Instead of looking at what they had, an abundance of blessings and inheritance to watch over, they looked at what they didn’t have; the favor of Joseph’s robe and the hope of Joseph’s dreams. You can almost hear the hatred in their voices and see their eyes turn green as they say, “Here comes the dreamer.”

We live in a crazy cultural moment. At the touch of our finger, we can peer into limitless lives. We can see everyone else’s homes, families, vacations, meals, successes, and colorful coats. We might not say, “Here comes the dreamer,” but have you ever caught yourself thinking, “Must be nice?” Because what we see is usually nice. Most of the time social media is merely a highlight reel. Most of the time we are looking at someone else’s
finish lines from our meager beginnings or messy middles. Most of the time we only see one page in the story.

But we compare nonetheless. And we take our eyes off of the work we have to do. We loose sight of the dreams, purposes, and plans God has given us when we start to look through squinted eyes.

Please trust this, God is not holding out on you. If He has given a blessing or a dream to someone else, that means it wasn’t meant to be yours. Someone else’s coat won’t fit and those colors don’t look good on you anyway! Don’t feed the monster. Walk away from comparison. Be busy with the work, the life, the purposes your Father has given you, and you won’t have time to hate the dreams he has for someone else.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Are there any areas of your life where you are dealing with jealously? Do you tend to be jealous of other’s possessions, positions, relationships, or spiritual lives? Are you aware of the ways you are feeding the Green Eyed Monster?

**Prayer Response:** Spend a few moments confessing to the Lord any areas of jealousy or envy in your heart. Ask Him to speak truth about the work He has for you and ask the Holy Spirit to heighten your awareness of your tendencies to compare.

**Optional Action Step:** Go through your social media accounts and unfollow any accounts that you know are a stumbling block to you in the area of comparison or jealousy. Consider taking a break from social media all together for the remainder of this devotional.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

_Ephesians 3:20-21_
DAY 9
AN UNSUCCESSFUL ALLY
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
• Genesis 37:21-22, 29-30
• Proverbs 29:25
• Isaiah 51:7
• Matthew 10:28
• Hebrews 13:6

Of all the brothers, Reuben was an unlikely ally for young Joseph. He was the firstborn and therefore should have received the favor Jacob unabashedly bestowed on Joseph. Nonetheless, when the rest of the brothers plotted to kill the “dreamer,” Reuben proposed a, less fatal plan. He suggested they merely throw Joseph into an empty cistern, as not to shed blood, while secretly planning to rescue him and return him to Jacob. Unfortunately, not only was Reuben an unlikely ally, he was also an unsuccessful ally. His weakness in not putting a stop to harming Joseph all together resulted in over 20 years of slavery and prison for Joseph and devastation for Jacob.

Rather than use his leadership as the firstborn to stand for righteousness, Reuben bowed to the hatred of his brothers. Rather than choosing to protect the one on the outside, he joined in with the crowd and still caused irrevocable damage. Rather than draw a hard line for good, he tried to have a foot on both sides of the issue. Reuben’s heart was in a good place, but he didn’t have the courage to stand up to his brothers. He wanted to please everyone, but not even Jesus did that during His life on earth.

The truth is, none of us can fear man and fear God at the same time. We cannot gain the approval of the crowd and the approval of our Lord. Like we read in Proverbs 29:25, fear of man is a snare, and Reuben was in a bigger trap than Joseph. Planning to do right in the future, planning to stick up for
someone later, planning on following God halfway will turn out for us just like it turned out for Reuben when he cries, “Where can I go now?” It takes courage to stand alone. It takes bravery to be the ally of the hated. It takes strength of character to speak truth in this cultural moment. Righteousness shouldn’t be a secret.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Is fear of man an issue for you? Do you ever succumb to attitudes or actions because you want to please the crowd? Are you an ally for righteousness and the righteous?

**Prayer Response:** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of your life where you have been caught in the snare of fear of man. Ask Him to show you any people or truths He wants you to be an ally for in your family, work, or with your friends.

**Optional Action Step:** Write the word ALLY on a notecard or post-it and put it somewhere you can see it for the next few days. Let it remind you to ask yourself who or what you are an ally for and commit to standing up for righteousness.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 10

A CHANGE OF CLOTHES
My 10-year-old daughter has a “unique” style. She has been opinionated about her clothes since she could slip a tutu on and no matter how “colorful” she looks when she emerges from her room each morning, I know that every piece of clothing, every pair of shiny high tops, every accessory, and every bit of purple dye and glitter in her hair was very much intentional. Though most of us wear fewer sequins than my girl on a daily basis, none of us clothe ourselves on accident.

Joseph needed a change of clothes. The robe representing a father’s sinful favoritism and a son’s youthful arrogance wasn’t the right fit for the next season. Though the brothers thought they were stripping Joseph of his destiny and destroying his honor, they were really just helping him out of some colorful self-importance that would be cumbersome on the journey ahead.

The verses we read today in Colossians and 1 Peter both mention some wiser outfit choices. We are told to clothe ourselves in compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, and humility. We are to put these attributes and attitudes on as daily and intentionally as my daughter chooses her glitter and jewelry.

James 4:10 explains that when we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will lift us up. The Lord is about to lift Joseph up out of that cistern too, but first in the form of Midianite Merchants, then as an important servant in
Potiphar’s house, then as a dream interpreter to Pharaoh, and finally as a savior to his family and all of Egypt. But before any of those new dreams could become a reality, the pride of his first dream needed to be stripped off of him, just like his robe. When the Lord lifted Joseph up, he was humbled.

As you choose to clothe yourself today in compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience and humility, notice any areas in your life where they are ill-fitting. Like Joseph, we may need to lose a little pride for them to fit properly.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Do you need a change of spiritual clothes today? Are you wearing the heavy robe of pride or arrogance in any areas of your life or in any relationships?

**Prayer Response:** Ask the Holy Spirit to be your spiritual tailor today. Ask him to make the necessary alterations to your attitude so that you are clothed in compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, and humility. Confess any areas of pride or arrogance.

**Optional Action Step:** As you get dressed today, declare Colossians 3:12 over yourself, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.” Consider posting this verse in your closet or on your bathroom mirror.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

_Ephesians 3:20-21_
DAY 11

EMPTY CISTERNS
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
• Genesis 37:23-24
• Jeremiah 2:13
• Isaiah 44:3
• John 4:14
• John 7:37-38

Cistern: noun, a reservoir, tank, or container for storing or holding water.

Water is life. We cannot live without it. That hasn’t changed since Joseph’s brothers threw him into an empty cistern. What has changed for most of us is the ease of access to water today. In Biblical times, (and still today in some countries), people had to travel, gather, and even fight for water.

That is why one of the names Jesus gave Himself was “Living Water.” We also see references to the Holy Spirit being a river, or being “poured out” like water throughout the Bible. Jesus knew that this would get the attention of the agrarian society He spoke to. He knew they knew water was life.

I guess Joseph was thankful the cistern he was thrown into was empty because it wasn’t being used in the way it was designed to be used. It provided no life because it was empty, and an empty cistern is useless.

I know that the Samaritan woman at the well was thankful she met Jesus, as she trudged shamefully in the heat of the day to collect water. Her interaction with and sharing of the Living Water led to many from her town believing (John 4:39). She was so filled up, it just poured out to all those around her.
As believers in Jesus Christ, we are designed to be filled to overflowing with His life-giving Spirit too. We are to show the world what life with Living Water looks like. If our cisterns are empty, it is because we are digging them ourselves (Jeremiah 2:13). If we are parched, it is because we are thirsting for the temporal.

We are not guaranteed this life is going to go our way. We don’t know when a betrayal, a pit, a false accusation, a life-altering turn of events will be right around the corner for us as well. No matter how hard I look, I can’t find the formula in Scripture that ensures all my dreams will come true. However, there is a guarantee that God’s presence is in EVERY circumstance. He longs to fill each of us in every situation with His Spirit. In fact, in John 3:34 it says, “for God gives the Spirit without limit.” That is a well that will never run dry.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Today do you feel filled up by the Holy Spirit’s presence or does the cistern of your heart feel dry? Are you thirsty for the Living Water or for the temporal things that will never satisfy?

**Prayer Response:** Pray Isaiah 44:3 to the Lord today. “Pour your water on my thirsty heart and your streams on my dry life. Pour out your Spirit on my family and your blessings to my descendants.”

**Optional Action Step:** Get alone in a quiet room or closet and play your favorite worship song. Lie on your back or kneel down and just soak in the Holy Spirit’s presence. Ask Him to fill you to overflowing during this time.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

_Ephesians 3:20-21_
DAY 12

IT’S THE PITS
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 42:21
- 2 Corinthians 4:8-9
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Yesterday we discussed the empty cistern that Joseph was thrown into but in other translations it is called a pit. Within the narration of Genesis 37 we don’t get much of a glimpse into Joseph’s reaction to being attacked, stripped, and thrown into the pit by his brothers, but in the passage we read today in Genesis 42, we see the brothers admit he was distressed and pleading for his life. Obviously.

Don’t forget Joseph was a real kid. Don’t assume he gave up his robe and jumped into the pit without a fight. Imagine him bloodied and bruised at the bottom of a hole, his eyes adjusting to the darkness. Imagine him yelling, begging, until his voice went hoarse. Imagine the fierce anger of a 17-year-old young man melting into the fear and desperation of a boy. Imagine the panic he felt when he realized that the life he had known and the one he assumed he would have was stripped as quickly as his coat. I bet he just wanted his dad.

Have you ever been there? Has the world ever thrown you such a hard curve you didn’t even recognize your own life? Have you ever been at the bottom of a pit screaming up to the silent betrayal of everyone you thought had your back? Has the darkness of the pit ever overcome the light of your dream? When our expectations of how it should be are slaughtered like the goat the brothers used to cover up their crime, what are we left with?

There is no doubt that today’s scriptures are challenging when we find ourselves in a pit. The chasm of suffering does not feel light and momentary
most of the time. When our flesh is bleeding, it is difficult to remember our souls are being renewed and fixing our eyes on anything is hard in the darkness of the unknown. We feel crushed, not merely hard pressed. We feel like we are in despair, not merely perplexed. We look around and feel abandoned, not merely persecuted. We assume the dream is destroyed, not mere struck down.

It is easy to trust in abundance and favor. It is difficult to trust in the pit. But a soul that has fought hard to not lose heart, like we read in 2 Corinthians 4:16, will be stronger for the journey ahead. Sometimes our expectations have to die to make room for the real dream.

Joseph’s cries did not reach his father’s ears, but yours do. If you find yourself in the pit of suffering and darkness today, call out to Him and watch Him come running. He may lift you out of those circumstances, or He may climb down into the pit with you and comfort you with His presence. Suffering is the pits, but your Father is mighty to save.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Do you find yourself in a pit of suffering today? Can you name your pit? Spend a moment remembering the past pits that God has gotten you through and let it strengthen your heart.

**Prayer Response:** If you are in a pit, it is okay to feel distressed and plead for your life to your Heavenly Father just like Joseph did. We don’t need to clean up our prayers for God. Cry out to Him from your pit.

**Optional Action Step:** A lament is defined as “a passionate expression of grief or sorrow.” There is a whole book of the Bible called Lamentations! The Psalms are full of laments as well, cries from the pit. Read Psalms 42 and 43 today and consider writing your own lament about your suffering.
Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
DAY 13

STEPPING STONES
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 37:28, 36
- Isaiah 30:21
- Zechariah 4:10

A little over a decade ago, my husband and I were prophesied over at church. When the words “You will be tremendously blessed in your profession” were spoken to my husband, my heart filled with hope for the first time in years. We had been struggling for a long time and “tremendously blessed” was a far cry from the prayers for mere survival I had been praying. Less than a week later, he was offered a new job out of the blue and we assumed this was it! Tremendous blessing here we come! Imagine our disillusionment when that job quickly went bust! What we didn’t know was that freed up an opportunity we could have never seen coming. Those tremendous blessings have looked a little different than we originally thought but we cannot deny God’s hand. Was that middle, terrible, in-between job a mistake? No! It was just a stepping-stone to where God was taking our family.

The Midianite merchants were just a stepping-stone in Joseph’s journey. He probably had no idea where he was going or what was coming next. He might have thought that he would be traveling with them forever. He could have never seen the blessings and opportunities coming down the road.

God has His own GPS system and it is often different than what our own road map would look like. We want to know exactly where we are going and we prefer the fastest route. In a culture that worships efficiency and lives on instant gratification, we can become disillusioned at the small stepping-stones and detours in our journey as well. Today we read in Isaiah 30:21
that no matter if we turn to the right or to the left our ears will here God’s GPS telling us, “this is the way; walk in it.” I think this also means that whether the road turns to the right without our choosing, or unexpectedly detours to the left without warning, we can still find our way to God’s destination for our lives.

Like we read in Zechariah, we should not despise the “small things” or the “small beginnings.” All of life is a process. We don’t put our infants in a crib at night and expect self-sufficient teenagers in the morning. We don’t come to Jesus one day and expect perfect Christlikeness the next. We don’t receive a dream, a call on our lives, and realize it in the same season. There will be stepping-stones. There will be detours. You won’t be traveling with the Midianite Merchants forever. Trust the God’s GPS.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Do you feel like you are in an in-between season on your journey? Do you feel like the beginnings of the dream have been impossibly small? Do you trust the stepping-stones? Can you identify the places God’s grace has redeemed the detours?

**Prayer Response:** Ask the Holy Spirit to speak clearly and loudly today, “this is the way; walk in it.” Position yourself to hear God’s GPS and ask Him for perseverance in a life that is marked by “a long obedience in the same direction.”

**Optional Action Step:** Draw a road map or timeline of your life. Mark the beginning of your journey with Christ and/or a dream He has given you and then significant events, detours, or stepping-stones along the way. If possible, note how long between major events and be encouraged that you are still on the right road!
**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 14

BELIEVING THE LIE
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 37:31-35
- John 8:32
- John 16:13
- Ephesians 6:14
- Colossians 2:8

Jacob believed a lie and it changed his life. When his sons brought Joseph’s falsely bloodied robe to him he believed the worst. Of course he did. All evidence pointed to the lie. Everyone around him corroborated the same deceitful story. Joseph was dead and with him Jacob’s dreams and joy. His whole world was crumbling down as his boy was actually being lifted up.

In John 8:44 Jesus says of Satan, “When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” He doesn’t play fair. He lied to Jacob and he is lying to us still today. He will tell you that your dream is dead. He will tell you that you are nothing but bait for those that seek to destroy you. He will tell you that the pit is a punishment and the suffering will last forever. He will tell you no one is coming to your rescue.

If we are not standing firm in God’s Word about our circumstances, our identity, our pit, and our dreams we can fall prey to the lies too. Colossians 2:8 implores us to not be taken captive through hollow and deceptive ideas that depend on the things of this world, but to depend on Christ. We see that it was Jacob, not Joseph, who was the real slave.

Truth is freedom. Just think if just one of the brothers had been moved by their father’s grief and had the compassion to tell him the truth. He would have been freed from decades of bitterness and mourning. He could have
gone running to rescue his son and Joseph would have been freed from slavery and prison. Truth is freedom in our lives as well. But to use it to break chains, we have to know it. We have to read it and meditate on it and recognize it when it whispers to us. The lies will come. It’s a given. It will take no effort on our part to be lied to. To stand on truth, to know it and declare it to the lies, that will take some fight! Are you up to it?

It’s a simple balance that is anything but easy. What are you filled with - truth or lies? What do you pursue - truth or lies? What do you spend your time on - truth or lies? What voice is louder in your heart? The world’s, the father of lies, or the Word, the Spirit of Truths? We get to choose what we listen to - truth or lies - and that choice will change our lives as well.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Honestly think about the amount of time in a day or week that you spend in the truth of God’s Word, vs. the hollow things of this world- TV, social media, Netflix, hobbies, etc. Do you need to make some changes if you want live in the freedom of the truth?

**Prayer Response:** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any lies you believe about yourself, your life, or others. Pray the promise of John 16:13 back to Him, “Spirit of Truth, please come and guide me into all truth concerning ________________.”

**Optional Action Step:** Spend some time in listening prayer today. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you through His still, small voice. Stay there long enough to recognize it. Ask him questions and listen for His answers. For example: “How do you feel about me? How can I please you today?” Journal what you hear and consider sharing it with a trusted friend.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

_Ephesians 3:20-21_
DAY 15

I WANT SOME OF THAT
**Opening Prayer:** “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

**Daily Scripture Reading:**
- Genesis 39:1-6a
- 2 Samuel 6:1-12
- Matthew 5:14-16

Today we find young Joseph off of the road with the merchants and in the house of Potiphar, Pharaoh’s captain of the guard. We aren’t told much about the transaction between Potiphar and the Ishmaelites (used interchangeably with Midianites). We don’t know why Potiphar bought Joseph, what his original job description was supposed to be, or what Joseph’s state of mind was at this part of his journey. We do see that the Lord was still with Joseph and caused him to prosper even as a slave in Egypt. **And Potiphar recognized it.** Somehow, this Egyptian that we can assume was not dedicated to the God of Israel, recognized that God’s hand on Joseph’s life was the reason he was successful in everything he did. And Potiphar wanted some of that! He wanted that success to spill out onto his household so he put Joseph over everything he owned.

King David had a similar situation in 2 Samuel 6 when he abandoned the Ark of the Covenant after Uzzah died attempting to move it incorrectly. David was angry and afraid so he left the Ark, the very place that the presence of God dwelled, in the home of Obed-Edom. We read that Obed-Edom’s household was blessed for 3 months while the Ark remained there. When King David heard about it, he decided he wanted some of that and made plans to bring the Ark home.

God’s presence carries God’s favor and the world cannot deny it.
In Matthew 5 we are called the “light of the world.” We are the very place the presence and favor of God dwells today - just like Joseph, just like the Ark of the Covenant. We are reminded that light is not meant to be hidden, but set on a stand for the good of everyone in the house. Joseph obviously let the presence and blessings of the Lord shine, even though he had been wronged, even though he was a slave. He allowed himself to be a vessel of blessing for Potiphar. Likewise, we are told to let our lights shine before others so that they will recognize our good deeds and God’s favor and glorify Him!

We should be living lives lit up with the presence of God. When we walk into a room, even those who don’t know our Heavenly Father should recognize His hand on us - on our attitudes, in our words, through our relationships, and in our stories. We should be spilling His blessing and favor everywhere we go. Our lives should cause those around us to say, “I want some of that!”

**Today’s Big Questions:** Are you letting your light shine to those around you? If not, what are the “bowls” you are putting your light under? Do you think your attitudes, words, and relationships cause others to say, “I want some of that?”

**Prayer Response:** Ask the Lord to make His presence so obvious in your life that no one can deny His favor on you. Ask Him for opportunities today to bless others by simply letting your light shine!

**Optional Action Step:** Ask a trusted friend or family member to honestly tell you where your life makes them think, “I want some of that” and where you are not shining as brightly as you can.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

_Ephesians 3:20-21_
DAY 16

FAITHFUL
FROM THE PIT TO PROSPERITY
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 39:6-10
- Matthew 16:26
- Romans 12:1-2
- 1 John 2:15-17

Being in the world but not of the world is simple to say but difficult to live.

Suddenly, it seems, Joseph finds himself with the world at his fingertips. He has honor, power, and success. He even looks the part, well built and handsome! When Potiphar’s wife took notice of him, I wonder if for a moment he felt entitled to that pleasure. After all, his road had been rocky. He had known betrayal. Why not betray? He had been rejected by those that were supposed to love him; why not enjoy being cherished by someone off limits? I wonder if for a moment he felt numb? After all, what did it matter? Underneath the trappings of success, he was still just a slave. I wonder if for a moment he felt lured by the glitter of the culture all around him. I’m sure he didn’t have to look far to use the justification “everyone is doing it.”

Prosperity has its own set of difficulties. We cling to God in the pit, but are we as faithful in Potiphar’s house? In the pit we feel our need for Him, but in Potiphar’s house of prosperity, we can become more self-reliant. In the pit, we have nowhere to look but up, but in Potiphar’s house of prosperity we can become hypnotized by culture. In the pit it is life or death, but in Potiphar’s house of prosperity the rules seem to change and “did God really say...(Genesis 3:1)?”

I think about another young, handsome, displaced Israelite named Daniel. In Daniel 1:8 it says, “but Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself...” In the palace of the King of Babylon, Daniel too had the
world at his fingertips. He resolved not to defile himself with the rich fare offered to him in prosperity, and remained faithful to God.

Joseph chose well. Though the transgression would have probably disappeared into the river of cultural acceptance and moral majority, Joseph too was determined to remain faithful and not “do such a wicked thing and sin against God” (Genesis 39:9). He did not succumb to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life, heeding the warning of 1 John 2. He didn’t offer his body up to sin, but offered it up as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1).

Being “in the world” speaks to our location. We will in fact be in the world until our time on earth is finished. “Of the world” speaks more to our integrity and identity and what we have resolved in our own hearts. Is it the same in the pit and in prosperity?

**Today’s Big Questions:** Where do you find yourself today, in a pit or in prosperity? Have you found that your character and your choices change based on your circumstances? Are there areas you have “conformed to the patterns of this world?”

**Prayer Response:** Confess if there are any parts “of the world” or anything in the world that you love (1 John 2:17-17). Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind today in the midst of the entitlement, moral numbness, and slippery compromise of our culture.

**Optional Action Step:** Who do you purpose in your heart to be, both in the pit and in Potiphar’s house? What are you determined not to be defiled by? Write a mission statement for your life or make a list of those things that are off limits for you no matter where your find yourself.
Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
DAY 17

ALL SHAPES AND SIZES
I love to garden, but I hate to weed. Every spring, I’m discouraged by how overgrown the garden has become while unattended. Before the fun of buying the vegetable plants and digging in the dirt, the big, ugly weeds have to go. I don’t have to look hard to find them. They are obvious, and when they are gone, it makes a huge difference in the garden. Then there are those pesky little weeds that pop up overnight after the garden has been planted. Pulling weeds usually requires getting down on my hands and knees and plucking them up one by one until my fingers are sore. They aren’t as obvious and it wouldn’t make a huge difference if I ignored them for a few days. But eventually those little weeds can choke out the harvest and change the landscape of the garden as well.

Temptation comes in all shapes and sizes too. Joseph’s temptation was obvious. Potiphar’s wife was forward and relentless in asking him to come to bed with her. There was nothing subtle in the seduction and there wasn’t a subtle escape route either. We see Joseph literally running out of the house as she clutched his coat.

Falling to the “big” temptations make a big difference in our lives. Adultery, addiction, murder, stealing - these transgressions are frowned on even in secular culture and can certainly change the landscape of our lives, our witness, our legacy. The longer we walk with Jesus, the farther away those
“big” temptations usually become. We learn how to guard ourselves, we weed out the opportunities, and as Jesus directed His disciples in Luke 22:40, we pray not to fall into temptation.

But then there are those painstakingly “small” temptations. We are tempted to worry, to become envious, to yell at the kids, to hold a small grudge, to exaggerate a bit, to tell a “little white lie,” to watch that questionable show everyone is talking about, to have another glass. Just like those little weeds in the garden, the small temptations leading to subtle sins can choke out God’s purposes and a life of integrity over time as well. In God’s economy, all sin is missing the mark of holiness. There is no “big” and “little,” just right and wrong.

Escape routes come in all shapes and sized also. We may not find ourselves losing our coats as we run out of a room, but we are told to flee the devil. It may be as simple as taking a deep breath before speaking, walking away from a conversation, turning the TV off, refusing to have that conversation in your head. Dramatic or subtle, big or little, God will provide a way out!

**Today's Big Questions:** What are the temptations coming at you today? Have you wrongly made a distinction between “big” and “little” temptations? Are you making excuses for ignoring small sins? Can you identify the escape routes God is providing?

**Prayer Response:** Today take a moment to ask God to deliver you from each temptation you identified by name. Ask your Heavenly Father to make your escape route abundantly clear. If you are willing, speak to a trusted friend and ask for accountability with the temptations you are facing in this season.

**Optional Action Step:** Go outside and pull a few weeds in the garden, yard, or flower bed. Think about the intentionality and persistence it takes to keep weeds out. Think about how you can be more intentional in recognizing temptation in your life before it becomes sin.
Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
ARE YOU A STUMBLING BLOCK?
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 39:10-15
- Romans 14:13-21
- Philippians 2:3-4

Stumbling block: (noun) an obstacle or hindrance to progress, belief, or understanding

It isn’t a role we want to claim. We deny it. We defend against it. But in Christian community, we have to address the places we may be causing others to fall. Hopefully we are not as bold and brash as Potiphar’s wife and her persistent pursuit of Joseph. We may not even be aware of the ways we are making spiritual growth difficult for our brothers and sisters. But if we are to be obedient to Philippians 2:2-4, and value others above ourselves, we have to get honest about the ways we may be tempting others to sin.

The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of grace. As Paul points out in Romans 14, there is an abundance of freedom on our journey - Not permission to sin, but ample room in choosing entertainment, clothing, food, drink, activities, and so much more. God is a good Father and the Holy Spirit will be faithful to direct you as you pray for discernment in each area. However, when the desire to exercise our freedom is more important than the good of others, it becomes an idol.

In his book “Invitation to a Journey,” Robert Mulholland defines spiritual formation as a process of being formed in the image of Christ for the sake of others. We forget this in a culture that elevates independence and privatized faith and morals. Dying to ourselves means that we are intentional about those on the faith journey with us, and we are aware of how our choices affect them.
So, are your social media posts causing your sister to struggle with envy? Are your thoughts about food and health encouraging or are you heaping shame on your brother? Has your “venting” caused your friends to entertain anger and negativity about their own situations? Do you tempt others to complain or gossip with you? Are your choices in entertainment or clothing causing someone else to lust? Is your freedom with alcohol confusing to a new believer or hurtful to a friend with an addiction?

When Joseph fled Potiphar’s wife, she became enraged and falsely accused him of attempted rape. When others refuse to participate with us in some of these gray areas, what do we do? Are we convicted, or do we defend our “rights?” Do we repent or at least recognize where we have been a stumbling block, or do we roll our eyes at the “goody two shoes” or the “holier than though” rub? Your reaction may reveal an idol of your heart.

**Today’s Big Questions:** First think about a few of these examples and identify if others have either unknowingly or consciously been a stumbling block to you. Now, honestly assess your choices, your behavior, your words, or the image you may portray to others. Can you see any possible ways you are being a stumbling block?

**Prayer Response:** Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal any areas that you have put your freedom above the good of others, causing them to stumble. Confess and repent of any ways you have been a stumbling block to your brothers and sisters.

**Optional Action Step:** If you are feeling brave, ask your family and friends if you have ever caused or encouraged them to sin by your choices, behavior, or words. If so, ask for their forgiveness and give them permission to be honest with you in this area in the future.
**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
IDENTITY CRISIS
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 39:13-20
- Romans 8:14-17
- 1 Peter 2:9
- 1 John 3:1

I’m not great at math, but by my calculations Joseph was in Potiphar’s home for 11 years. He was 17 when his brothers sold him, and he was 30 when Pharaoh promoted him after 2 years in prison. So, 30 - 17 - 2 = 11. After 11 years of faithful service to Potiphar, Joseph’s reputation was trashed, his integrity questioned, his character ignored, and his place of honor and employment ripped away through the false accusations of Potiphar’s wife. 11 years is a long time. And before that, for 17 years Joseph was Jacob’s favorite son. For 17 years it looked like his future would be in the family business and beneath the family umbrella of blessing. For 17 years his identity was wrapped in a coat of many colors. At the age of 28, Joseph’s identity had been shattered twice. No longer was he Jacob’s son. No longer was he Potiphar’s powerful attendant. In prison no one cared what his last name was or who his boss used to be.

Can you relate?

Have you ever had an identity crisis? Have you ever looked into the mirror of who the world said you were only to find it shattered by change? Have you ever been left asking yourself, “Who am I...? After graduation? After divorce? After the kids leave? After the lay off? After the move? After the death? After the dream failed?”
Finding our identity in Christ is something we talk about often, but it is more than a trite pat on the head in times of transition or loss. In fact, it is foundational in times of success and achievement as well. The world may call us student, husband, mother, infertile, single, employee, divorcee, leader, and so on. All of those titles can change as quickly as Joseph was thrown out of Potiphar’s home. God calls us His chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His special possession. He calls us His children, adopted into sonship. He rescues us from the false identities given by the world, and declares us heirs to His eternal inheritance.

The truth is, even the best earthly identities become ill fitting. They are supposed to. Maybe the biggest identity crisis of all is believing the lie that they can define us. Even when we get the promotion instead of the pink slip, even when we get the ring instead of the break up, even when we finally hold the baby we have prayed for, even when the dream comes true, we will never be completely satisfied. We aren’t supposed to be. Our identity in Christ is the only one that will remain and the only one that will fulfill.

**Today’s Big Questions:** If you were to meet someone new today and they asked, “Who are you?” what would your initial answer be? Would you identify yourself with earthly roles and identities? How can you change the way you think of your identity so that it lines up with who God says you are?

**Prayer Response:** No matter if you find yourself in an identity crisis today or not, God is our only constant. Pray into Psalms 62:8 that says, “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to Him; for God is our refuge.” Confess where you have put your trust in any other identity and pour your heart out to God.

**Optional Action Step:** Make a list of all your earthly roles and identities (for example: son, wife, father, employee, teacher, etc.) down one side of a piece of paper. Then reread today’s scriptures and list everything God calls you down the other side. Put a big “less than” (<) symbol in the middle to remind yourself that your earthly roles are less than your identity in Christ.
Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
DAY 20

SABOTAGING SOUND BITES
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
• Genesis 39:20-23
• Romans 8:12-13
• Ephesians 4:22-24
• 1 Peter 1:15-16
• 2 Peter 3:9
• 1 John 3:7-10

Recently a post come across my social media feed that said something like, “If you think your mistakes can mess up God’s plan for your life don’t worry - you’re not that important.” The words were written in lovely script overlaid on a peaceful stock photo of a mountain stream and at first I scrolled right past, silently agreeing with the encouraging quote. But the more I thought about it the more I wondered; can we blow God’s plans and purposes for our lives? Don’t our choices matter? Don’t our decisions, good and bad, play a role in how this thing will go or was it all set in motion before the beginning of the world? I think the Word teaches that we can, in fact, derail God’s best for our lives by the choices we make.

Our God is a God of redemption, forgiveness, and love. Like we read today in 2 Peter 3:9, He does not want anyone to perish but all to come to REPENTANCE. He is so passionate about the salvation of our souls that He sacrificed His own Son so that we could spend eternity in right relationship with Him. He is also passionate about the salvation of our lives today, here on earth. He is passionate about saving our minds, our motivations, our decisions, and our character. When we come to Christ and submit our lives to His Lordship, He redeems our mistakes- past, present, and future. He forgives our sin - past, present, and future.
However, God is after our hearts and loves us too much to force right choices on us. When we continue to allow sin to rule our lives, we gradually slip back into the deadness of our “old self.” Robert Mulholland says in his book *Invitation to a Journey*, “If you continue to allow the dynamics of your deadness to shape your behavior, you will make a shipwreck of your faith.” That sounds very different than “don’t worry, you’re not that important.” Eventually, our loving Heavenly Father will give people over to what they really want, to what rules in their heart (Romans 1:28-32). He calls us to holiness. He calls us to live according to the Spirit and put to death the sins of the flesh. He calls us to life as our “new selves.”

We don’t know what would have happened in Joseph’s life if he had taken the bait and fallen into sin with Potiphar’s wife. After all, he ended up in prison even though he had high integrity and chose righteousness. But sin is a prison of the heart and can keep us locked away from God’s best plans and purposes for our lives. Your choices matter too. Don’t choose the fleeting over the eternal. Don’t choose a good time over real contentment. Don’t choose distraction over purpose. Don’t believe a sabotaging sound bite over Truth. I believe we are that important and our actions and attitudes can, in fact, jeopardize God’s dream for us.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Do you have unconfessed sin patterns in your life that are jeopardizing God’s plans for you? Do you know of areas that you consistently choose to behave like your “old self?” Does the command to “be holy just as I am holy” feel impossible to you?

**Prayer Response:** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any “old self” patterns in your life and repent of them. It is only by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that we can ever “be holy.” Ask Him to infuse you with that power and tell Him today that you choose to live by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

**Optional Action Step:** Take a moment to look back on your life at decisions and choices you have made that have brought you to where you are today. Can you identify temptations and sin patterns you are glad you did not fall
into or got out of? Make a list of the pitfalls you avoided because you chose righteousness like Joseph and “old self” ways that you have repented and grown out of. Let this list be an encouragement and give you strength in any current temptations.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 21

POSITIONED FOR PEOPLE
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 39:20-40:4
- Matthew 22:36-40
- Philippians 1:12-14

The missionary Jim Elliot, who was killed in 1956 evangelizing to the people of Ecuador, wrote “Wherever you are, be all there.” It seems he took a page out of Joseph’s book. From the pit, to Potiphar’s house, to prison it seems that Joseph indeed was “all there” in each place. And although he had no control of his circumstances, he never wasted an opportunity to influence, love, and serve the people in his path.

It is difficult for us to read about Joseph’s years in prison for a crime he didn’t commit and not think of it as another devastating injustice and confusing circumstance in his life. But God was positioning him for relationships. You see, in God’s economy, people are much more valuable than the positions we hold or the places we occupy. We read in Gen. 39:21 that, “the Lord was with him [Joseph]; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.” God’s kindness and favor were found even in prison, but that favor did not immediately lead to an acquittal and the restoration of Joseph’s good name. It did not materialize as the answer to the prayers we can assume he was praying. God’s kindness and favor looked like an opportunity to influence, love, and serve new people - first the warden, then the other prisoners, and then Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker, and eventually Pharaoh himself and all of Egypt.

The apostle Paul found himself in prison a time or two as well. We read in Philippians 1:12-14 that he believed his incarceration actually advanced the gospel as he witnessed to the “whole palace guard” and “everyone else.” He goes on to say, “And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters
have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.” Position didn’t matter. Place didn’t matter. Even prison didn’t matter. Only people mattered.

We live most of our lives looking up or down. We look up to the places and positions we are trying to get to...climbing our individual ladders. We look down, distracted by our to-do lists and daily agendas. I believe Jesus is asking us to spend a lot more time looking around at the people He has placed in our path. Our place is not an accident because the people there are on purpose. When Jesus was asked what the greatest command was He said, “To love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind.” But He didn’t stop there! He went on and said that the second greatest commandment was like it - to “love your neighbor as yourself.” The only way the warden, the prisoners, the cupbearer and baker were going to be Joseph’s neighbors was if he was in prison himself. God positioned him for people because that is His heartbeat... people. Ours should be as well.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Do you find yourself living most of your life looking up or down rather than around at the people in your path? Honestly, are you more consumed with your personal position and agenda, or relationships? Do you find yourself frustrated by interruptions in your plans or do you see it as an opportunity to influence, love, and serve others? Is there enough margin in your life to pour into people when the opportunity arises?

**Prayer Response:** Today, ask the Lord to highlight someone on your path to influence, love, and serve for the glory of God. Every time you walk into a new place, ask for a new person to point to Jesus. Make this a prayer practice!

**Optional Action Step:** Make a list of all of your “places” or “positions.” For example: home, work, school, gym, etc. Then, next to each place or position, write the names of the people and relationships connected to it. This week,
as you are planning your days, note the people you will encounter in each place and plan to invest well.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

_Ephesians 3:20-21_
DAY 22

DEVOTED OR DIMMING COAL?
**Opening Prayer:** “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

**Daily Scripture Reading:**
- Genesis 40:6-7
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Acts 2:42-47
- Galatians 6:2,10
- Hebrews 10:24-25

We have a sign over our bed with the word “Proskartereo” painted on it. “Proskartereo” is a Greek verb that means; “to adhere to, to be devoted to, to be steadfastly attentive, to give unremitting care to a thing, to continue all the time in a place, to persevere and not to faint, to show one’s self courageous for, to be in constant readiness for one.” Some people want an “Always Kiss Me Goodnight” kind of marriage. I’ll take a proskartereo marriage. Proskartereo is the word that is translated as “devoted” in Acts 2 where we read about the way the early believers did life. It looks a little different than “church” today, doesn’t it?

Joseph wasn’t merely in charge of his fellow prisoners. We see that he was devoted to their well being too. In Genesis 40:6-7 we read that he noticed when the cupbearer and baker were “dejected,” and he took the time to ask them, “Why do you look sad today?” Joseph paid attention. I doubt the emotional health of the prisoners was of concern to the warden or part of Joseph’s job description, but he cared. He took the risk of getting into a messy conversation. He sacrificed his time for the good of someone else. He showed compassion that went above and beyond, when he himself had been shown very little.

In today’s culture of individualized and privatized faith, we tend to look at devotion to a church or community of believers as a convenient bonus. Or
maybe we long for community, but have sabotaged ourselves by believing in the unrealistic fairy tale of utopian relationships that meet every need and bow to every personal preference. Real community is costly. We are called to sacrifice time, like Joseph, to pay attention to our people and press into the messy places. We are called to risk being vulnerable, and having others see our sins and wounds. We are called to put our insecurities and fear of rejection on the line to make someone else feel secure and pursued.

For God, living in community is not an add-on, or a matter of convenience. In fact, God’s very character is tied to community that he has been in relationship with Himself - Father, Son, and Spirit - for eternity. To Jesus, devotion is not an option. In fact, community was such an integral part of His earthly ministry that He traveled, taught, slept, ate, and healed in the context of it. If Jesus lived in community, shouldn’t we? If God designed us in His image, don’t we need relationships as well? And if our boy Joseph could sacrifice time, be attentive, and press into hard places in prison, can’t we in our church?

Community is costly, but not near as dangerous as walking this path alone. There is an old story about the evangelist D.L. Moody meeting with a citizen who wanted to argue against the importance of church commitment and devotion to community. As the man spoke, Moody quietly removed a single burning coal from the roaring fire in the room and placed it on the stone hearth. Before the man had finished, the coal dimmed and went out. As Moody silently looked up, the man simply nodded and said, “You have made your point.”

**Today’s Big Questions:** Do you live your life and pursue the Lord in the context of sacrificial community or are you a dimmed coal on the hearth? Who are the people you are devoted to share your burdens with, to confess your sins to, to reveal your wounds to?

**Prayer Response:** Today, pray Hebrews 10:24-25. “Lord, let me consider how I may spur others on toward love and good deeds. Give me the strength
and devotion to not give up meeting together with those in my community as some are in the habit of doing, but help us encourage one another all the more as we see the Day approaching.”

**Optional Action Step:** Take time to reach out to a brother or sister in Christ today and schedule a coffee or lunch devoted to encouraging each other and praying together. Sacrifice your time to really pay attention to their well being.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 23

BODY BUILDING
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 40:6-15
- 1 Corinthians 12:7-31
- 1 Peter 4:10

Today we see the dreamer become the dream interpreter. Not only did Joseph notice that the cupbearer was “dejected,” and ask why he “looked so sad,” he went on to help him by interpreting his dream. We can learn a couple of important lessons through this interaction. First of all, Joseph recognized and declared, “Do not interpretations belong to God?” before he ever asked to hear the cupbearer’s dream. He was extremely clear on who held the power, and immediately gave God the credit for the gift he was about to use. Secondly, we see Joseph courageously risk being wrong or looking crazy as he interpreted the cupbearer’s dream. What if things didn’t turn out like he said they would? Wouldn’t he look like an idiot? Wouldn’t he give God a “bad name” by claiming His power then blowing it? Joseph doesn’t seem deterred by these doubts. He knew that the bigger risk was being disobedient and withholding a gift that could help another.

In 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 we read a long list of spiritual gifts that God uniquely blesses us with when we come to Christ. Some of these feel very supernatural-prophecy, tongues, healing, and miraculous powers. Other gifts listed here and other places feel a little more natural-faith, generosity, administration, craftsmanship, teaching. The important thing to know is that every Christian has the Holy Spirit living inside of them and is gifted in one or more of these areas. Yes, even you!
Then in verses 12-31, we read Paul’s masterful metaphor of the Church as a body. The body needs all the parts to function wholly. Though some parts seem more important than others, they can only do their job if every other part is healthy. A body with 5 heads and no feet would be non-functional. We can’t all be the eyes. We can’t all be the hands. A healthy body is diverse. A healthy body protects its members. A healthy body is only healthy when every part is strong and willing to do its job.

And then in I Peter 4:10 we read that each of us should use our various and unique gifts to serve each other. We are to pull each other into wholeness using all of who God created us to be! I have not been asked to use your gifts and you have not been asked to use mine, but I have been called to use every bit of my gifts FOR your benefit and yours FOR mine! It goes much further than a neat list on the pages of Scripture. We are to use our unique experiences, our personality types, our introversion or extroversion, the special strengths of our gender to build up the body of Christ. No one person with one set a spiritual gifts, one personality type, inhabiting one gender can fully represent the character of God, though we are all made in His image. We all have the privilege of showing our part of the Father to the world. “Oh look, you have His eyes. You have His smile. You have His Hands.”

Be a Body builder and an image bearer. Be courageous and take risks as you seek to be obedient in using your gifts. Your Heavenly Father has blessed you so that you can bless others. Don’t hold back!

**Today’s Big Questions:** Are you a Body builder? Do you use your unique gifts, experiences, and personality to build up the Body of Christ? If not, what is holding you back? Are you unsure of your gifting? Are you afraid to risk messing up? Are you too consumed with your own dream to invest in someone else’s?

**Prayer Response:** Today ask the Holy Spirit to show you for the first time or remind you of ways He has uniquely gifted you to build up the Body of
Christ. Then ask Him for the awareness and the courage to use those gifts today to bless those He puts in your path.

**Optional Action Step:** Make a few lists under several categories to help you clarify the ways you are being called to build up the Body of Christ. List unique past experiences. List the things you are naturally good at or talents you have. List the activities you love to do. List the issues that fire you up and make you exceptionally excited or exceptionally angry. If you know your spiritual gifts, list those. If you know your Enneagram number or Myers Briggs personality type, list those. If you need some help, ask a trusted friend or family member to speak into some of these areas. When you are finished, see if you can identify a few threads or things you know God is asking you to be or do for the Body.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 24

WHEN THE TRUTH HURTS
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 40:16-22
- Proverbs 27:5-6
- Acts 20:20
- Ephesians 4:14-16

“Hard words, if they be true, are better than soft words, if they be false.” - Charles Spurgeon

After the baker saw that Joseph’s interpretation of the cupbearer’s dream was “favorable,” he stepped right up expecting to hear the good news of his own imminent release. Unfortunately, that’s not what he got. Instead, Joseph was faithful to speak the truth, rather than tell him what he wanted to hear. Obviously, this is an extreme example. Most of us will not be called to reveal forthcoming death by impalement, but we are called to speak the truth in love to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are living in a moment in history that says love is singularly defined as agreeing with and affirming every lifestyle choice, emotion, and behavior of another. We are deceived by culture because it tells us if you love someone you will blindly support whatever they want. The problem is that this view doesn’t line up with Scripture or reality. You don’t have to look very hard to see a world that is dying from their own indulgences and desperate for a better way. The Bible calls us to something different.

None of us would discover a drowning friend and not do everything in our power to save them. We would risk life and limb to pull them out of danger, even if they struggled against us and claimed the water was fine. But do we fight as hard when a friend says they want a divorce, continues in a destructive addiction, turns their back on godly community, or speaks death over their children? Are we brave enough to offend? Are we willing to swim
upstream in these cultural waters to reclaim Truth as love and courageous enough to not affirm and agree with sin?

On the flip side, are we the kind of Christ followers who can view the Truth as love in our own lives? Are we willing to humble ourselves and listen when a brother or sister comes to pull us out of our own murky waters? Do we trust others with our blind spots or are we only after “favorable” affirmations? Proverbs 27:6 states, “Wounds from a friend can be trusted.” Are you a brave enough to wound a friend when it is needed? Are you humble enough to trust the wounds of a friend when you are drowning? The most important part you can play in someone else’s dream may be reminding them not to sabotage it!

**Today’s Big Questions:** Has there ever been a time when you knew you were supposed to speak the Truth in love to someone even though they only wanted you to affirm their sin? Were you brave enough to do it or did you shrink back? How did that feel? Can you think of a time when someone else was brave enough to call you out of your sin? How did you react?

**Prayer Response:** Today, pray Paul’s words from Acts 20:20; Lord, I ask that you would find me a faithful friend and give me the power not to hesitate to speak the Truth that would be helpful to others. Ask the Holy Spirit if there is any situation He is calling you to be courageous and speak hard words into.

**Optional Action Step:** If someone else has ever bravely spoken difficult Truth into your life and helped to pull you out of sin, take a moment today to write them a letter, send them a text, or call them to say thank you. If you have ever spoken Truth to a friend and they received it and redirected their ways, reach out to them to say that you recognize the changes they have made and that they are on the right track.
**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 40:20-22
- Romans 12:12
- 1 Timothy 2:1
- 1 Timothy 4:10
- James 5:16

“If your dream only includes you, it’s too small” - Ava DuVernay (American film maker)

Today we see the interpretations Joseph gave to the cupbearer and baker come to pass, exactly as he had said they would in the exact time frame. I wonder how that felt for Joseph. Though we aren’t let in on his reactions or emotions to the release of the cupbearer and the death of the baker, I think we can exact an important principle by putting ourselves in his position. First of all, I’m sure Joseph was disappointed he wasn’t the one being released from prison (though glad he wasn’t the one impaled at the feast). But, I wonder if he didn’t feel encouraged that God had come through just as He had told Joseph He would through the interpretations. I wonder if Joseph’s faith and hope was built as He watched God do just what He said He would. If God could do it once, He could do it again.

If Joseph hadn’t been brought into the cupbearer and baker’s dreams, their fates would have meant very little to him. He would not have had the benefit of getting to see God be faithful to His word in their lives. When we invite others into our story and our dreams, we are giving them a gift. When we ask for help, prayer, and the hard truths we are expanding the faith and hope of others. A shared story means shared miracles and shared answered prayers. Likewise, when we invest in the dreams and stories of others, we get the blessing of a shared victory!
You see, it doesn’t have to be an answer to MY prayer for MY circumstances to build MY faith and hope in God. When I walk with a friend through dark days and intercede for them with as much fervent prayer as I would for pray for myself, not only is the burden shared, but the blessing is as well. When I see God come through for you, I know He can for me too. But the only way we will see His hand in each other’s lives is if we share our stories. Then the ordinary, unnoticed moments of life become testimonies. The end of a story only matters when you know the beginning. A pregnancy announcement becomes a miracle when you have walked the path of infertility with a friend. A child sitting with their parents at church becomes a celebration when you have prayed for that wayward son for years. A redeemed marriage builds hope for your own struggling relationship when you know where they have been. The graduation of a child who barely made it, the success of a business that was a huge leap of faith, the smile on a face that used to be clouded by depression. When we know each other’s stories, we can know more of God’s faithfulness. When we multiply our investment in each other, we multiply our ability to see God move. And one day, we will get to remind each other of His faithfulness when we are tempted to forget. We will have witnesses to miracles because we had intercessors along the way. Share your story. Invite someone into your dream. Be a faithful friend and prayer warrior for others so you can watch God’s hand move in their lives as well!

**Today’s Big Questions:** How well do you invite others into your story? How willing are you to be vulnerable and ask for prayer? Do you view including others in your struggles as a burden to them or a gift? When others share their stories with you, are you expectant for your faith to grow as you intercede for them or is your hope only inwardly focused?

**Prayer Response:** Today, write the names of three friends or family members who you know need prayer for something. Spend your time in prayer interceding for them and ask God to constantly grow your faith and expand your hope in Him through His movement in other’s lives.
Optional Action Step: Call or text those three people and tell them you prayed for their situation today and ask them where they see God’s hand. If you haven’t been brought into someone else’s story, make the time to invest in someone today and ask them how you can pray for them.

Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
DAY 26

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 40: 23-41:1
- Psalms 27:13-14
- Lamentations 3:25-26
- Micah 7:7
- 1 Corinthians 15:58

“We read, “when two full years had passed,” in a breath, but for Joseph 730 days slowly crept by in that short verse. It seemed like he was betrayed again by someone that he had served well. The cupbearer forgot him, another broken dream. But in reality, Joseph wasn’t waiting on the cupbearer to remember him or Pharaoh to lift him up and release him. Joseph was waiting on God’s perfect timing. The delay and the detours did not mean the dream was not real. They just meant the dream was not yet.

When David was a teenager, the prophet Samuel anointed him as the next king of Israel. At the time, David, the youngest of 7 brothers (sound familiar?), was merely a shepherd boy, an unlikely choice considering King Saul was still alive and well with an heir of his own. It was nearly 15 years from the time David was anointed to the time he began his rule. For 15 years he had that dream in his heart, he held that promise, though his circumstances did not match up. And what did David do during those 15 years? He faced Goliath, he lived on the run from a jealous Saul, he led a group of “mighty men,” he fought countless battles, and forged faithful friendship and community. David continually pressed into God, crying out to him in his waiting, crying out to him in the testing. See, God knew that David was not ready to lead a nation fresh out of the sheep pasture. He
molded David through waiting and testing into the man who would steward that dream well. God was **creating** a king out of the one He had already **anointed** as king.

It was nearly 14 years from the time Joseph received the dreams of his brothers and parents bowing down to him, to the time he was released from prison and became Pharaoh’s second in command. 14 years. During that time, he lived a life of high integrity, he rose to leadership in every circumstance he found himself in, he served those above and below him, and he stewarded every opportunity well. The New Living Translation of Psalms 105:19 reads, “**Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the Lord tested Joseph’s character.**” God was creating a leader that would save a nation from an arrogant young dreamer through waiting and testing.

I believe God still does this today. He loves us too much to fulfill a dream we are unprepared for. Zechariah 4:10 tells us, “**Do not despise these small beginnings.**” And do not waste the waiting. Remain faithful and pursue the preparation for the dream that God gave you. Be a good steward of your current situation. Work on your character. Press into community. Cry out to God and deepen your dependence on him. Augustine said, “**Without God, we cannot, and without us, He will not.**” We may not be able to bypass the testing or quicken God’s timing, but we can be ready when He lifts us up to fulfill His dream for our lives.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Is there a dream you are still waiting for God to fulfill? Do you honestly believe you were completely prepared to steward that dream well when God placed it in your heart? Do you believe you are prepared now for its fulfillment? Can you identify places you believe God has tested your character in the waiting? How are you doing?

**Prayer Response:** Pray Zechariah 4:10 over yourself and your dream today. Ask the Lord to help you not despise the small beginnings or waste the waiting. Ask Him to give you the power to strengthen your character and to find you faithful when the time comes.
**Optional Action Step:** List 3 small steps you can take today toward a dream God has put in your heart, and then plan to do them. Pursue preparation in the waiting and do your part.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 27

NEVER COULD HAVE DREAMED
Imagine you are Joseph for a moment, sitting in prison like you have been for at least 730 days. It has been a "full two years" since the cupbearer promised to remember you, show you kindness, mention you to Pharaoh, and get you out of this prison (Gen. 40:14). It seems he forgot. And then all of a sudden, the guard is calling your name. You are rushed from the dungeon to the bathhouse where you are commanded to get cleaned up, clean-shaven, and given a fresh new pair of clothes. Before your hair is even dry, you find yourself before Pharaoh himself. You catch a glimpse of the apologetic cupbearer in the corner giving you a timid "thumbs up" as you look around confused. Pharaoh looks like he isn’t sleeping well as he booms, "I had a dream and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

No pressure.

After all the years of waiting, it seems the rise happens at a dizzying pace. Joseph gives credit to God before clearly interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams, but he doesn’t stop there. Without being asked, he goes on to succinctly outline a 14-year plan for the preservation of a nation. Did I miss the part of the story where Joseph got his masters in business with a minor in foreign affairs? His quick thinking and obvious wisdom left Pharaoh asking his officials, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit
of God?” A day that started off in prison, ended with Joseph second in command of Egypt.

He never could have dreamed the turn of events.

I’m struck with the seamless mixture of the supernatural and natural in this part of Joseph’s story. Joseph was given the supernatural gift of being able to interpret Pharaoh’s dream when no one else could. He knew that wisdom came straight from God and he had the supernatural courage to use it for the good of a nation. But he also needed a shower. And instead of advising Pharaoh to offer sacrifices and pray for God not to send the famine, Joseph presented a solid, very natural plan to save Egypt.

I’m also struck with the fact that Joseph skyrocketed to leadership with seemingly few earthly qualifications. Before this, he had been a shepherd, a slave, a personal assistant, and a prisoner. God had used him in every place, but this was a whole new league. But what Joseph lacked in experience or education paled in comparison with who Joseph had in His corner.

I hope we can be encouraged in these things today. God can use the supernatural and the really ordinary parts of your story to take you to where He wants you to go. You may need to pray and press into the gifts of the Spirit, and you also may need to come up with a very “boots on the ground” plan. Your earthly qualifications, or lack there of, doesn’t matter if God’s dream for your life is qualifying you for a position. I believe God wants His children in places of influence and leadership and I believe He is ready and willing to pour out the creative ideas, wisdom, and knowledge needed to get us there. And lastly, you just never know what a day will hold. You just never know when the waiting will end and you will be skyrocketed into your purpose as well. Don’t lose heart.
Today’s Big Questions: Do you tend to rely on your own knowledge, experience, wisdom, education, and intelligence or do you pray continually for God to supernaturally increase those things in you? Are there places you are being held up because you are waiting for the supernatural when God may be asking you to put a natural plan into place? Are there places you are relying too heavily on your natural abilities rather than on the God of all wisdom?

Prayer Response: Today, very simply pray James 1:5 over yourself and your dream. Admit to God where you lack wisdom, ask Him for it, and thank Him that He gives it generously without finding fault.

Optional Action Step: Take a walk to get away from distractions and focus on a dream you have been waiting on. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak clearly to you about it. Ask for clarity, wisdom, and creative ideas concerning that dream. Ask if there is a plan you should construct or if you should continue to wait.

Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
Opening Prayer: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

Daily Scripture Reading:
- Genesis 42-45
- Matthew 6:14-15
- Ephesians 4:31-32

“And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.” Genesis 41:57

I wonder if Joseph looked for their faces in every crowd that came through Egypt to buy grain. I wonder if he had rehearsed the confrontation in his head for years. I wonder if he was expecting his band of betraying brothers to show up hungry at some point because he recognized them right away. This was the moment. The youngest brother crying out for his life from the pit was now the one who held all the control. He could have them killed on the spot. He could send them away without grain to a slow, starving death. What would Joseph do to his brothers?

When the time came, I don’t think Joseph was ready. For three chapters it seemed he played games with them, testing their character. He kept his identity hidden as he made false accusations and unreasonable requests, pressing them for information on the family. Joseph doesn’t appear ready to roll out the red carpet of forgiveness at first sight.

Are his brothers money hungry still, as they were when they decided to sell Joseph rather than kill him? No, because they returned the silver they found in their bags twice.

Did they still hate the favored sons of Rachel and care little for their father’s heart? No, because they were willing to sacrifice themselves for young Benjamin and fought to protect Jacob from further heartbreak. Were they still calloused to Joseph’s plight and the memory of him crying
out? No, because in 42:21 they recognized, “surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life but we would not listen.” Though we never read an apology from the brothers to Joseph, I think we see a change in their character by the time they reach Egypt. We don’t know if Joseph wanted to discern that before he offered forgiveness.

The truth is, we aren’t commanded only to forgive if the offending party is sorry or changed. We are commanded to forgive because Christ forgave us. But I think Joseph’s fear of forgiveness overlaid on his deep concern for his family shows us that Egypt’s savior and second in command was still very much human.

Ultimately, Joseph revealed himself and started walking the road toward forgiveness and reconciliation because he was more attached to God’s sovereignty and His plan, than he was to his own agenda. In Genesis 45:5,7-8 Joseph, overcome by emotion, says to his terrified brothers, “Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here but God.” Joseph couldn’t deny God’s hand in his unexpected life. He had relinquished his own self-serving dreams somewhere along the road to slavery or inside a prison cell. There is something about hitting rock bottom that gives you perspective. There is something about having absolutely nothing that frees the ordinary blessings to become everything. And now Joseph’s life truly was immeasurably more than he could have asked or imagined when he was dreaming of stalks of grain. The puzzle pieces fell into place for him and he no longer hated his brothers for the part they played in getting him to this day.

Finally we see that Joseph didn’t just forgive his brothers, like my kids do when I make them apologize to each other. He didn’t stop at a disgruntled, “I forgive you” under his breath. He went on to abundantly pour all the blessings he had access to onto his family. Instead of giving them only the
sacks of grain they had come for, he gives them “the best of the land of Egypt (45:18).” In this example, we really see what Jesus has done for us. He doesn’t stop at forgiveness or even at eternal salvation. He desires to give us “every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3).”

Refusing to forgive is like refusing to take the trash out. The job might be tedious and smelly, but refusing to do the work brings far more rancid consequences. From Joseph we learn that taking some time to process may not be bad but we are called to forgive no matter how sorry or changed the other person is. We also learn that tying ourselves to God’s sovereignty and dream for our life will free us up to forgive others that may have interrupted our own agenda. And if we really want to be like Christ, we will not hold back, but offer abundant blessings to those we forgive.

**Today’s Big Questions:** Is there someone in your life that you know you need to forgive today? Are you waiting for an apology or a changed heart? Can you see where God has had his hand on the situation, even if it hurt?

**Prayer Response:** Today, ask God to not only give you the ability to forgive just as Christ forgave you, but also ask for the power to bless those who have hurt you.

**Optional Action Step:** Volunteer to take the trash out today at home or at work. As you do, remember Ephesians 4:31-32 and imagine yourself getting rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Remember that the rot of forgiveness in your heart is so much more than the stink of that garbage.

**Closing Prayer:** “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

*Ephesians 3:20-21*
DAY 29

WHAT WAS MEANT FOR EVIL
The Sovereignty of God. It is a theology that entire denominations have been built and broken on. Questions like what does God cause and what does God allow are more than just semantics. Where does God’s control end and free will begin? How do His plans interact with the sins of man and the will of Satan to steal, kill, and destroy? People a lot smarter than me have been arguing these points for centuries and we will not perfectly answer these questions today.

What is not in question is God’s hand in every twist and turn of Joseph’s story. He was with him in the pit, in Potiphar’s house, in prison, and in the palace. He used the good, bad, and ugly parts of Joseph’s journey to bring Him to Genesis 50:20 where Joseph declares to his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Joseph’s brothers intended death, but God intended life. Joseph’s brothers thought it was the end of his dreams, but God knew it was just the beginning. We may never know the exact line of what God causes and what God allows in a fallen, broken world, but we can be confident that He can USE every bit of our story for His purposes as well.

Have you ever used fertilizer or compost in your yard, garden, or flowerbeds? There are many store brand fertilizers full of chemicals but when we
get back to basics we find that it is usually made of manure. The actual definition of manure is “excrement, especially of animals, or other refuse used as fertilizer.” Similarly, compost is “a mixture of various decaying organic substances used for fertilizing soil.” It’s the watermelon rinds, the old newspapers, the grass clippings, the used coffee grinds and the eggshells. It’s the unused, inedible, and rotting. Both fertilizer and compost are smelly, dirty, and gross. But every good gardener, farmer, or green thumb knows it is golden. It adds life and nutrients to the soil and to the plants that will eventually grow in it. Something rotten becomes something beautiful. Something dead brings life.

God can redeem all things. With Him, nothing is wasted. He can use our hurts, our shame, the things that were done to us and even our own mistakes. On their own, these things can stink up a life and rot out a soul. But when we remain faithful and bring them to God we can say like Joseph, “God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.” He can use the parts of our story, our past, the detours on our journey for our good and His glory.

**Today’s Big Questions:** When you look at your own journey towards God’s purposes and dreams for your life, can you identify places where someone meant to harm you, but God used it for good? Have you turned over the rotten parts of your story to Him for Him to redeem?

**Prayer Response:** Today ask the Holy Spirit to reveal those detours He has used or desires to use you in your life. Sit still in His presence long enough to be encouraged that “no weapon formed against you shall prevail (Isaiah 54:17)” and His sovereignty means that nothing is wasted or unredeemable.

**Optional Action Step:** Tell someone about the ways you have seen God use what was meant for evil and death in your story for good and life. Encourage them to share their own “fertilizer to fruitfulness” story. Maybe even start collecting kitchen scraps in an old coffee can to use in your flowerbeds as a reminder that nothing is wasted with God.
Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21
DAY 30

A BIGGER DREAM
In the end, Joseph’s dreams were fulfilled. We read of at least 3 different instances in which his brothers literally bowed down before him (Genesis 42:6, 43:26, 43:28). I wonder what those moments felt like. I wonder if he had that lightening bolt thought, “This is it. It’s happening. This is my dream coming true.” I imagine the road had been so long and his personal transformation so enormous, that moment was very different than what his 17-year-old self thought it would be.

In the beginning, I believe Joseph was like most of us, assuming his dreams were about himself. By the time he was standing above his bowing brothers, second in command of all of Egypt, he was clear that God had sent him ahead of them to save their lives. Not only their lives, but the future nation of Israel fulfilling the promise God had given to Abraham generations before. Not only the nation of Israel, but the family line of Jesus, thus protecting the Messiah’s lineage hundreds of years ahead of His arrival. Though Joseph had one of the most adventurous, exciting stories in the Bible, he knew and we see that it was just a small chapter in God’s greater story.

Is this how you look at your life? Are you still assuming that the plans and purposes God has for you begin and end with the fulfillment of your own dreams? The tidal wave of our self-obsessed culture is hard to fight. We see everything through the lens of “me.” But what if that raise wasn’t just to fund your dreams? What if that new job wasn’t just about your own upward mobility? What if that new home is to open to the lonely? What if
that experience - good or bad - wasn't intended to terminate on your own personal growth? What if your broken heart was to heal someone else's? What if your blessings are to bless others? What if it's all a part of a bigger dream?

In 1 Corinthians 3:9 we are called God’s co-workers, or co-laborers. We are the conduit of His power, grace, healing and love to this broken world. And we bring all of this with all we are. We have to embrace His bigger dream for the redemption of His world. We get to tell our small chapter of His great story with our lives.

Our boy Joseph was a foreshadowing of Jesus. He left a comfortable home and a loving father to live as a foreigner among hostile people. He was betrayed, falsely accused, and eventually became the savior of his family. In Joseph’s story we see Jesus’ heartbeat for His people. And for those who call Him Lord, we have that same heartbeat inside of each of us. Will you live your dream in context of His?

**Today's Big Questions:** Do you see your dreams in context of God’s bigger dream for the world, or do they begin and end with you? Try to identify how the dreams God has given you can fit into the bigger dream of loving on others and redeeming the lost.

**Prayer Response:** Today, ask the Holy Spirit to speak clearly to you about how your dreams, plans, and life are a part of God’s bigger story. Ask for specifics. Does He want you to financially bless someone today? Does He want you to tell your story to someone? Is He asking you to invite someone into your home? Confess if you have believed that your dreams are for only you.

**Optional Action Step:** On this, the last day of this devotional, take some time to journal your final thoughts. Make a bullet point list of lessons you have learned from the life of Joseph or areas of growth you have experienced. God does not desire more information in our heads if it does not translate to transformation of our hearts.
Closing Prayer: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21