



GENESIS

Dreams, Providence, & Faith *(Genesis 40-41)*

In Genesis 40–41, God is silently but sovereignly ordering Joseph’s humiliation and exaltation to preserve his people, foreshadowing the saving work of Christ and calling us to trust him in seasons of waiting. [biblegateway+1](#)

- Genesis 40:5–8, 20–23 (Joseph and the cupbearer/baker)
- Genesis 41:1, 14–16, 25–32, 37–43 (Joseph and Pharaoh)
- “Don’t interpretations belong to God?” (40:8)
- “I am not able to... God will give Pharaoh the answer” (41:16)
- “See, I am placing you over all the land of Egypt” (41:41)
- Joseph remains faithful in prison, interprets two dreams, and is forgotten for two years.
- Pharaoh dreams; Joseph is brought out, gives God the credit, and interprets the dreams as seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine
- Joseph proposes a plan; Pharaoh exalts him to second-in-command, and Egypt becomes the storehouse for the region

What most surprises you in this story: Joseph’s patience, Pharaoh’s response, or God’s timing?

God is active when he seems absent.

- God is rarely mentioned explicitly in chapter 40, yet he is clearly directing events—the officers’ dreams, Joseph’s placement with them, the delayed remembrance of the cupbearer.
- John Calvin observes that “the providence of God is the watchful, effective governance by which He turns all events to the end He has appointed.”

Key Texts:

- “Some time passed... After this... They were in custody for some time.” (40:1–4).
- “At the end of two years Pharaoh had a dream.” (41:1)

- The “two years” are not wasted time; they are preparation time, both for Joseph and for the right alignment of circumstances
- Joseph’s story anticipates his later confession: “God sent me ahead of you to preserve life.” (Gen 45:5)

Application:

- Where in your life do you most struggle to believe that God is at work “behind the scenes”?
- How does Joseph’s “two years” challenge our assumption that God’s love must mean quick relief?
- Name an area where you need to reinterpret “delay” as “discipline and preparation” rather than abandonment.

Faithfulness in Obscurity

Joseph served in prison before he ruled in the palace

- Joseph is “assigned” to serve the cupbearer and baker as a personal attendant (40:4).
- He notices they are “dejected” and engages them (40:6–7).

- He uses his God-given gift not on a grand stage first, but in a hidden, forgotten place.
- What does Joseph model for us about serving faithfully in “small” or unseen roles?
- Where might God be training us right now in an “uncomfortable classroom” rather than in a prominent platform?

Faithful use of gifts

Key text: “Don’t interpretations belong to God?” (40:8).

- Joseph does not claim ownership of his gift; he sees himself as a steward
- Later, he says, “God will give Pharaoh the answer” (41:16), consistently deflecting glory.
- Are there areas in which we are tempted either to hide our gifts (false humility) or to own them as if they were ours by right (pride)?
- What would it look like this week to say, in effect, “Don’t [results] belong to God?” in our ministry, work, or family?

God’s Wisdom and Human Responsibility

God reveals, Joseph plans

- God reveals the meaning of Pharaoh’s dreams: seven years of abundance, seven of famine.
- Joseph then proposes a concrete plan: appoint a wise man, collect a fifth during the good years, store grain for the famine (41:33–36).
- How does this passage correct the idea that trusting God means passivity?
- Can you think of areas where you pray for God to work, but resist the practical planning he may be calling you to?

Pharaoh’s recognition

Pharaoh says, “Can we find anyone like this, a man who has God’s spirit in him?” (41:3).

- Even a pagan ruler recognizes a wisdom in Joseph that is more than human.

- This is an example of what's known as common grace: God exalts his servant through the acknowledgment of a ruler who does not fully know him.

Application

- In a culture that may not share Christian convictions, how might God still use believers to bring blessing, wisdom, and preservation?
 - What would it look like to seek excellence in your vocation as a way of serving both God and neighbor?
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Joseph as a Type of Christ

Let's make careful, not fanciful, connections. Joseph is a **signpost** pointing to Christ, not equal to him.

Parallels to note

- Joseph is rejected and humbled, then exalted to save many lives (Gen 45:5–7).
- Jesus is “despised and rejected,” then exalted to God’s right hand to bring salvation (Isaiah 53:3; Revelation 5:9).
- Joseph is raised from the “pit” (41:14) to rule; Jesus is raised from the grave to reign.
- People from “all lands” come to Joseph for bread (41:57; context in 41:53–57). Jesus offers himself as the bread of life for the world

Questions

- How can seeing Joseph as a type of Christ deepen our appreciation of the Old Testament?
 - How might this shape the way you read other narratives of humiliation and exaltation in Scripture?
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“God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken; and when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.”

– Charles Spurgeon