

Not as Good as You Think

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[0 : 00] Last week we covered the first 36 verses of Genesis chapter 41.

! Remember in those verses we saw where Pharaoh had two bad dreams that troubled him.! After Egypt's magicians and wise men all failed to interpret Pharaoh's two dreams,! the cupbearer finally remembered how Joseph correctly interpreted the chief baker's and the chief cupbearer's dreams two years before. The cupbearer then told Pharaoh about Joseph. When he heard the news, Pharaoh quickly summoned Joseph from prison.

So for review, let's look at Genesis 41 verses 29 through 36. Those verses are where Joseph gave Pharaoh both the interpretation and a recommendation. So starting with chapter 41 verse 29, it says, Joseph said to Pharaoh, There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.

But after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. Now therefore let Pharaoh select the discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land, and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years.

And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine. Chapter 41 has one main idea that we saw last week, and we'll see that same main idea even more this week. Genesis 41 is that pivotal moment where God's providential purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances comes into focus. So again, Genesis 41 is that pivotal moment where God's providential purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances comes into focus. We've discussed in each of these studies how the main point of the book of Genesis, including Genesis 37 through 50, is to show the progression of redemptive history, or how God will redeem his people from the curse of sin.

[2 : 45] Throughout Genesis, including the account of Joseph, God shows that he's faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people. As we finish chapter 41 tonight, we'll see how Pharaoh reacts to Joseph's recommendation. Then we'll see what happens to Joseph. Here's a bit of a spoiler alert, though. Relative to what Joseph has been through, we'll see a lot of good things happen to him.

However, unlike how most studies portray what happens to Joseph in tonight's verses, the events that happen to Joseph are not as good as you think. That statement sounds bold, but we will see how Genesis supports that, and we'll also look at how the New Testament supports that statement as well.

So for Joseph, circumstances really weren't as good as you might think. Despite that, though, we'll see that Joseph has maintained his faith in the one true God. I hesitated a little bit to use that title because I thought you might think it was a commentary on the lesson itself. But then I decided I was covered either way because if you don't like the lesson, you can't say I didn't warn you about that first. But let's go ahead and read Genesis 41, starting with verse 37, and read through the end of the chapter. These verses describe what happened immediately after Joseph made his recommendation to Pharaoh. It says, And Pharaoh said to Joseph, Joseph's name, And put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured. Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to

Joseph.

[6 : 01] Athenath, the daughter of Potiphar, priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. For he said, God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house. The name of the second he called Ephraim, for God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.

So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

We'll break tonight's passage into five sections, starting with verses 37 through 40. And in these verses, we see Joseph pleasing the pagan king. So pleasing the pagan king is your first fill-in.

We'll see here that Pharaoh liked Joseph's proposal for how to handle the seven years of abundance, and then the seven years of famine. So let's read verses 37 through 40 again.

This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God? Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command, only as regards the throne, will I be greater than you. You can see that Pharaoh obviously was pleased by what Joseph had said, and so were all Pharaoh's servants, the ones who heard Joseph's recommendation. And the king concluded that only a person who possessed the Spirit of God could have discerned the significance of the dreams. Joseph's blueprint for the chief administrator was really his own resume, discerning and wise that the phrase used by the king there is exactly the same phrase used by Joseph in verses 33 through 39. So the king realized that no one but God could have made all this known, making Joseph very unique in the kingdom. As in the case of Potiphar's house, Joseph received authority over the king's household. The second in authority to Pharaoh essentially was the prime minister at the top of the bureaucracy in Egypt. So that sounds really good for Joseph, doesn't it, there?

[8 : 58] Well, his new status is significantly better. However, that new status is not as good as you think. As we look deeper into tonight's verses, we'll see several contrasts. Moses used those contrasts to show why Joseph's circumstances really aren't as good as we typically think. And the first contrast is between Pharaoh and Jacob. Joseph started his journey as the favorite son of the patriarch Jacob.

Joseph was looking after his father's affairs and was an asset in his father's house. Since then, he's been an asset to the captain of the guard and the keeper of the prison. Now he's going to serve a new master. The thing we need to remember is that Joseph is as much a slave in chapter 41 as he was two chapters earlier. However, because his new master is the most powerful man in the world at the time, we tend to read the story a little bit differently. Here's something to keep in mind.

Joseph can make nearly every important decision on behalf of Pharaoh, but he can make very few decisions about his own life.

We'll see that as we go through the verses tonight. So just remember that despite his new authority, Joseph can make very few decisions about his own life. So with that, let's move on to the next section of the lesson.

In the second section, we see Joseph ruling the pagan land. So ruling the pagan land is your next heading. That ruling the pagan land comes from verses 41 through 45. And those verses say, And Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, Bow the knee.

Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without your consent, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

[11 : 12] And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphoneth-Paneah, and he gave him in marriage Aseneth, the daughter of Potipharah, priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

Joseph gives, or Joseph receives more authority from Pharaoh than just the authority over Pharaoh's household. The extent of Joseph's authority will include the entire sphere of Pharaoh's realm.

The phrase, over all of the land of Egypt, begins and ends verses 41 through 43. To demonstrate Joseph's new authority, the king bestows on him the symbols of royal power.

The signet ring that Pharaoh gave Joseph was a ring that was used to seal documents after they were signed. When the seal was impressed on a soft clay document, which then hardened, it left an impression of the ruler's seal and carried the ruler's authority. We see there that Pharaoh also dressed Joseph in linen clothes and put a gold chain on his neck. He made him second in command to Pharaoh.

Then he got to ride in the second chariot so that all of the people could do homage to Joseph. As a token of Joseph's new status, Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife from the priestly family of On.

[12:32] On was a city in which they had the center of sun worship. It was seven miles north of Cairo. And we see there also in these last verses that we're covering in this section, Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian name as well. So things really are looking up for Joseph, especially when we consider that just a few hours ago, Joseph was to Pharaoh, an unknown prisoner in a dungeon who was just watching the time slowly tick by. But guess what? Joseph's newfound status is not really as good as you think. Some events in verses 41 through 45 are similar to previous things that happened to Joseph.

Remember that in the first section of our lesson, Moses provided the contrast to show how Joseph's situation wasn't as good as we thought there. And in this section, we'll see several more contrasts come in rapid succession. That next contrast comes when Pharaoh places jewels and clothes on Joseph.

Remember, that's just what happened to Joseph when Jacob put clothes on him. Look at those verses. Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. All the way back several weeks ago in our second lesson about Joseph, we covered the first verses of Genesis chapter 37. Genesis chapter 37 verse 3 said, Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons because he was the son of his old age and he made him a robe of many colors. Perhaps when Pharaoh gave Joseph the symbols of Joseph's new power, Joseph thought about the day his father gave him the special coat and perhaps also the day his brother stripped him of that coat. But in any case, the contrast is unmistakable. Giving Joseph the signet ring meant that Pharaoh was trusting him with his affairs, just as Jacob had done when Joseph lived at home. The linen robe is a more direct contrast, but the picture is clear. Joseph is in the wrong land serving the wrong leader of the wrong nation. So we need to realize that Joseph is in the wrong land serving the wrong leader of the wrong nation. The next contrast goes back to the first pair of dreams that were recorded in the Joseph story.

Remember back in Genesis 37 7, Joseph told his brothers,

And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf. Then after his second dream, he included his father. Jacob responded with these words in Genesis 37 10. He said, Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?

But in the house of Pharaoh, we find a different story. Look at Genesis 41 verses 43 and 44 again. It says, And he made him ride in his second chariot. Of course, this is talking about what Pharaoh did for Joseph, and they called out before him, Bow the knee. Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.

[15:59] Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without your consent, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. So think about the contrast here. Joseph's own family balked at the idea of bowing down to Joseph and having Joseph rule over them. Genesis 37 5 said that after Joseph's older brothers heard Joseph recount his first dream, the brothers hated him even more. Fast forward, though, to where we are here in chapter 41, we see that the pagan Egyptians have no trouble bowing down to Joseph. In this contrast, we see Joseph being honored by the wrong people. Joseph should have been honored by his family. Instead, he's being honored by unbelievers. When Jacob heard Joseph's interpretation of his own dream, Jacob didn't believe him, and we saw even that Jacob and his sons were offended at the idea of bowing the knee before Joseph. Pharaoh has no such reservations. He sees Joseph's dream as a word from on high sent to save him and his people. Jacob would have done well to respond likewise.

Of course, being honored by pagans never would make up for Joseph being doubted by his own family or for Joseph being sold into slavery by his own brothers. However, Joseph was beginning to get a glimpse of the main idea for chapter 41. And again, that main idea is that Genesis 41 is a

pivotal moment where God's providential purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances comes into focus. So we're beginning to see the difficult circumstances and the reason for them start to become clearer. Verse 45 provides the strongest proof that Joseph's newfound circumstances were not as good as you think. Verse 45 says, Remember a comment we discussed earlier. Joseph could make nearly every important decision on behalf of Pharaoh, but Joseph could make very few decisions about his own life. Joseph is still a slave. And we see evidence of that here. Joseph's master, not Joseph, gave Joseph a new name. And Joseph's master, not Joseph, selected Joseph's wife. When we read, and Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphoneth Paneah, our minds ought to go back to other instances in Genesis where we've seen name changes. Can you think of a few of those? We had Abram who became Abraham, right? Exactly. We had Sarai who became Sarah.

And we had one more that we've looked at in this study. We had Israel who, of course, was first Jacob. For those name changes, God gave the name change. In the case of the patriarchs, the changes reflected covenantal significance. Abram was told, No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. That comes from Genesis 17, 5.

Then when Jacob fought with the angel, he was told, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.

[19:47] Joseph's name change goes in the opposite direction. Joseph's original name reflected Rachel's plea for God to give her another son. We really have no idea what Zaphoneth Paneah means. You'll see some people who try to guess what it means, but it really doesn't have the same significance and probably has something to do with a pagan deity. Whatever the name means, the significance of the name change is clear. Just as like what would happen to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah later, this name change has to do with masking and or altering Hebrew identity. So keep that in mind. This name change was designed to mask or alter Hebrew identity. Traditionally, we view the name changes for Daniel and his friends negatively. For Joseph, though, we often skip over the significance of his name change, and sometimes we even skip over the name change itself. Perhaps that's because of our culture and how we tend to treat the Joseph story like a Hollywood-style rags-to-riches movie where the little man makes good. Plus, many people today would say that if somebody wants to give them fame, fortune, and power, that person can call them whatever he wants to call them.

For a Hebrew like Joseph, a name was more significant than names generally are to us. Joseph must have realized that Pharaoh was trying to obscure the fact that Egypt's new second-in-command was a foreigner. By giving Joseph an Egyptian name, Pharaoh was making Joseph seem even more like an Egyptian. So bring this forward to our day. Forget for a minute that our constitution requires that the president and vice president must be U.S. citizens born in this country. Think about the outrage even from the president's own party if our president named a foreigner as the new vice president.

Back in Pharaoh's day, Pharaoh had more unquestioned authority than our leaders do today, but some people bowing down to Joseph likely thought, who's that new dude and where did he come from?

And giving him an Egyptian name would help cover his past. Even more significant than the name Pharaoh chose for Joseph is the wife that Pharaoh chose for Joseph. Joseph is forced to marry a pagan lady. Asenath is not just any pagan lady. She's the daughter of a pagan priest. His marriage to Asenath would have completed his assimilation into Egypt. By marrying into a prominent priestly family, Joseph would gain additional acceptance. Marrying into the priestly class placed Joseph among the elite of Egyptian nobility. And the priest of On was especially honored. We talked about how On was seven miles northwest of Cairo, and that priest had the exalted title, greatest of seers. So once again, we see some divine irony here. Joseph, who was a real seer from God, married into the family of the one called the greatest of seers by a nation of pagans. So God's seer is against Egypt's greatest of seers.

The contrast of the pagan wife takes us back to Genesis 24, when Abraham made his servant swear not to take a wife or his son from among the Canaanites. It also takes us back to Genesis 28, verses 1 through 3, where Isaac repeats the same to Jacob. And we also go back to Genesis 38, where, as Judah did, Joseph has broken with tradition in marrying the Egyptian woman. Of course, there's a big difference between what Judah did and what Joseph did. Judah did it because he

wanted to.

[23 : 49] Joseph did it because he was forced to. But even if we go back as far as Abraham, we remember that Hagar, too, was an Egyptian. And that's just one more breadcrumb leading us into a proper interpretation of the Genesis narrative here. So now that we've seen Joseph begin to rule the pagan land, let's move on to verses 46 through 49. In those verses, we see Joseph storing the pagan grain. So storing the pagan grain is your next heading.

Let's go ahead and read verses 46 through 49 again. They say, Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. During the seven plentiful years, the earth produced abundantly, and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured. These verses are straightforward, so we won't spend too much time on them, but they do provide some important information for us. Moses first confirms Joseph's age when he began serving Pharaoh. And we see here that Joseph was 30 years old. So it had been 13 years, almost half of Joseph's life, since Joseph was sold into slavery. Joseph was now the highest ranking slave in the country, but he was still a slave in a foreign country far from his homeland. Moses next tells us about Joseph's get acquainted tour. And Joseph's travels are documented in verse 46. These travels would have been his first opportunity to sightsee in Egypt, but they also were likely an introduction to Egypt of their new vice regent set in place by the Pharaoh himself. Then look at verse 47 again. It says, During the seven plentiful years, the earth produced abundantly. Seven years of plenty is exactly what Joseph predicted when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream. Things are happening just as Joseph said they would.

[26 : 16] More accurately, though, things are happening just as God, through Joseph, said that they would. Joseph must certainly have recognized that fact as he saw the abundance of grain everywhere in Egypt.

One-fifth of each harvest is collected in federal tax. And we know that the ground must have yielded huge amounts because nowhere do we see anybody complaining about the increased taxation. Look how much grain Joseph's program collected. Verse 49 says, And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured. So far, we have seen Joseph pleasing the pagan king, ruling the pagan land, and storing the pagan grain. Are you beginning to see a pattern to the headings?

Well, the fourth section of the lesson comes in verses 50 through 52. And in these verses, we see Joseph praising the one true God. So we see Joseph praising the one true God.

I tricked you a little bit there. The heading pattern is different because these verses are different. These verses have the best news in the chapter, and we'll see why Joseph is praising the one true God in these verses. They actually have airtight evidence that Joseph has remained faithful to God throughout Joseph's affliction. We've seen circumstantial evidence of Joseph's faithfulness, such as how Joseph gave credit to God for the ability to interpret dreams.

[27 : 50] But verses 50 through 52 give us solid evidence of Joseph's faithfulness through the names that Joseph picks for his two sons. Even more importantly, these verses give solid evidence that Joseph knows that God has been faithful to him. So look at verses 50 to 52 again.

They say, Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Athenath, the daughter of Potipharah, priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, for he said, God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.

The name of the second he called Ephraim, for God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. Joseph was forced to take an Egyptian name, but Joseph got to name his two sons, and those names speak volumes about Joseph's character and his faith, a faith that he has maintained for all these years despite being a slave in a pagan nation.

The meaning of the names are significant. Moses gives us those meanings, and we'll consider those meanings in just a minute. But perhaps the most significant thing about the names is the nationality of the names.

The names are Hebrew names, and we need to really let that sink in. The names are Hebrew names. Joseph has been gone from his Hebrew family since he was 17.

[29 : 21] He looks like an Egyptian by now. He sounds like an Egyptian by now. He dresses like an Egyptian by now. He's honored by Egyptians now.

He has plenty of material possessions from those Egyptians now. And he's even married to an Egyptian by now. And to top it all off, he officially has an Egyptian name by now.

So who could have blamed Joseph if he had given his two sons Egyptian names? Yet when he got the opportunity to make a statement by choosing names for his sons, he chose Hebrew names instead.

He really had a chance to reveal a bit of his character. Up to this point in chapter 41, other than his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, all we have seen are the actions of Pharaoh.

Moses has not provided any insight into Joseph's reaction to all that has happened to him. And now we actually hear from Joseph by what he names his children.

[30 : 22] And his actions are clear, decisive, and in complete contrast with the typical interpretation of previous events. Joseph identifies with the people of the covenant by giving his sons Hebrew names.

As a slave, he had no choice to receive the name and the wife that Pharaoh gave him. However, when his own sons were born, he had a choice.

And had he accepted his Egyptian identity, and more importantly, had he rejected his Hebrew identity, he would have given his sons Egyptian names. But he doesn't.

And this clearly reveals his loyalty to his father and to God. Manasseh means forget. Joseph actually fleshes out the meaning of the name of his firstborn when he says, For God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.

His point here is not that he's forgotten his father, or the covenant community for that matter. What he means is that he's forgotten the hardship. He's chosen not to be defined by the difficulties of his past, but by the promise that gives him to hope in his future.

[31 : 32] Vodibachum notes that Joseph's name choice for Manasseh is a tremendous picture of grace in three ways. One is that God alone can be credited with keeping a 17-year-old who experienced all that Joseph did from becoming a 37-year-old filled with bitterness, resentment, and hatred toward those who inflicted hardship upon him.

A second thing we can tell by that is that choosing the name Manasseh is a picture of the grace that Joseph extended to his brothers. They may not be obvious at first, but let me explain why it's a picture of the grace that Joseph extended to his brothers.

For Joseph to give his son a Hebrew name was to essentially identify the boy with the band of murderous men who had sold Joseph into slavery. Remember that there was no nation of Israel at this time.

There was just a small clan, one family, and most of that family had thrown Joseph into the pit, yet he still gives his son a Hebrew name.

Finally, choosing a Hebrew name for his son is an act of grace for Manasseh, his son. Joseph was married to the daughter of a pagan priest, and had he not wanted to make sure Manasseh knew of his heritage, he could have just given Manasseh an Egyptian name.

[32 : 58] Joseph by this time had not been exposed to the worship of the true God for two decades. However, rather than adopt the empty religion and identity of Egypt and pass that along to his son, Joseph gave his son a name that would remind him all the days of his life that he was part of a special covenantal community of servants of the Most High God.

Before the famine hits, Joseph's second son, Ephraim, comes along, and the name Ephraim means fruitful. Joseph's explanation of why he chose the name says much more than that.

He says that God made him fruitful in the land of his affliction. So Joseph goes beyond even identifying with the covenant community. He flat out rejects Egypt and all that it has brought him.

Think for a minute how a patriotic Egyptian would have been offended by Joseph's characterization of Egypt as the land of my affliction. Looking at it from the outside, Joseph has the finest clothes, jewels, chariots, houses, and lands at his disposal.

He has all the best foods the land of the Nile had to offer. He has the finest entertainment and more. He's living a life of opulent wealth now beyond anything that he would have experienced as the son of a shepherd.

[34 : 20] However, he calls Egypt the land of his affliction. With this second name, Joseph makes it clear that he's doing more than just giving a nod to his heritage.

He is identifying himself as a Hebrew among Egyptians. Joseph identifies himself with the land of promise, not with the land of Egypt.

It had to be obvious to Joseph by now that he was never going home again. By now he knew that his journey from his father's house to find his brother was a one-way trip.

For all practical purposes, Joseph was an Egyptian. However, his heart held the hope of the promise that God made to Abraham and confirmed with Isaac and his father, Jacob, or Israel.

We have one more section to cover tonight. In verses 53 through 57, we see Joseph feeding the pagan world.

[35 : 17] Feeding the pagan world is your last heading. Here are verses 53 to 57. The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said.

There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph.

What he says to you, do. So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.

Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth. You think Moses wanted us to know that the famine was severe everywhere?

How many times did he put all in those verses? So now we see that the bumper crops have ended. Famine has just begun, just like Joseph predicted.

[36 : 23] Thanks to Joseph's planning and leadership, Egypt is in good shape. In fact, Egypt is in such good shape that other nations have started coming to Egypt to buy some of the surplus grain.

Some of those people from other nations may have been from the same area where Joseph's family was. And if so, Joseph had even more evidence of why he'd endured so much in the land of his affliction.

So remember the main idea. Genesis 41 is that pivotal moment where God's providential purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances comes into focus.

Joseph was smart, and he was in tune with God. He probably already had connected the dots about God's purpose for sending him to Egypt. If not, he soon would.

God sent Joseph to Egypt not to become rich and powerful, but to preserve the promised seed and ensure the salvation of God's people, both in the short run with Jacob and his family, but also in the long run, all of us who believe and belong to the lion of the tribe of Judah.

[37 : 31] So that's why we have to be careful to avoid turning this story into just a story about Joseph gaining material wealth. There's much more than gaining that material wealth.

In addition to the main idea, we can take a few more things from the text tonight. First, Joseph refused to be defined by his past.

Joseph refused to be defined by his past. And we would do well to follow his example. Here's another quote from Vodibacham. He says, That's an important thing to remember.

Nobody can make you something that Christ's blood is insufficient to cover. He continues, That church you grew up in, filled with backbiting hypocrites, is no excuse for you to reject God's people today.

In short, you need a Manasseh. Or in other words, you need to forget the bad things of your past. Don't be defined by the difficulties of your past. Instead, be defined by the hope that is yours in Christ.

[38 : 55] Teaching children about God matters. And that's the second thing we can take away from this besides the main idea. Teaching children about God matters.

From the time he was born until he was 17, Joseph was raised in a home where he obviously learned about the God of his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather.

That knowledge learned when he was young sustained him through years more difficult than most of us can even imagine. When Joseph became a father himself, he gave his sons a permanent reminder of the one true God by giving him those Hebrew names that we talked about.

And those names meant something. So just imagine for a minute what it was like when Ephraim and Manasseh were old enough for Joseph to explain the meaning of their names to them.

They might have asked him why their names sounded different from all their Egyptian friends' names. Really, that's an incredible opportunity for Joseph to teach.

[39 : 58] He could have said something like, Boys, I want to tell you about your grandfather and your uncles and how God used them to bring your daddy to Egypt. He had an opportunity to teach them about God's promise to Abraham and how he promised to make a great nation from Abraham.

Joseph was able to teach his sons about loss and hope, and he was able to turn mundane introductions of his children into witnessing opportunities. You know, maybe when Joseph was out in public, somebody says, How did you come up with a strange name like Manasseh?

And he had an open door then to explain what Manasseh really meant. Who knows, Joseph may even have told his sons, Boys with so many years of this famine still to come, I have a hunch that you may meet your grandfather and your uncles soon.

The next thing we can take away from this chapter is that allegiance to God is more important than what others think of us. Allegiance to God is more important than what others may think of us.

When Joseph explained Ephraim's name by calling Egypt the land of my affliction, Joseph was unconcerned about the political ramifications.

[41 : 12] Joseph was concerned about the spiritual ramifications instead. Just think about how our news media would react today if a prominent government official called our country the land of my affliction.

It would be hard for that person to overcome that when the next election came along. The other thing we can take away from this chapter, besides the main idea, is that this world is the land of our affliction no matter how good it gets.

We obviously have a lot of good things here living in the United States, but the world still is the land of our affliction no matter how good we may have it. The New Testament writers make no mention of Joseph's prized prominence in Egypt.

Instead, they focus on his choice of covenant over convenience. Just listen to the way that Stephen preached the Joseph narrative and see if there's any hint of chapter 41 being the big payoff for Joseph.

These verses are Acts chapter 7, verses 9 through 16. I see some of you turning there, so I'll give you a minute to turn to those verses. These happen when Stephen is about to be stoned.

[42 : 26] Starting in verse 9 of chapter 7 in Acts, it says, And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt.

But God was with him and rescued him out of all of his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.

Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers on their first visit.

And on the second visit, Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all.

And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, and they were carried back to Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamar in Shechem.

[43 : 30] Stephen certainly didn't see elevation to power in Egypt as the end in itself. He clearly saw the broader purpose of God as the key to the story.

That broader purpose of God is to save for himself a people, a people made holy and blameless through the self-sacrifice of the ultimate Savior of God's people.

And of course, we know that's Christ himself. The line of that Savior, however, would never have been preserved without Joseph. But even with all of Joseph's great accomplishments, nobody, including Joseph, can experience eternal life without trusting in that true Savior.

And that's why the good news is as applicable for Joseph as it is for us. It's kind of hard to know how to close this chapter, but the best way to close it is to remember that good news.

And that good news is, for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. And here we get a glimpse of what God has gone through to make sure that that line will be preserved so that everyone who does believe in the true seed of God will not perish, but will have eternal life.

[44 : 46] With that, let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the reminder that you had many more things in mind than just giving Joseph power, fortune, and fame.

You were actually looking ahead to us and what it would take to save us and everyone before us and everyone after us who would believe in your Son as the one true Savior.
Help us use that knowledge to be more willing to share it with other people and help us be ever more thankful to you for what you've done for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.