

Fixed By God

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[0 : 00] In chapter 40, we saw Joseph correctly interpret the chief cupbearer and the chief baker's dreams.

! The chief baker was executed. The chief cupbearer returned to his job.! Then in Genesis 40, verses 14 and 15, while the cupbearer was still in jail, Joseph said to him, Only remember me when it was well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.

Chapter 40 ended with these words in verse 23. It said, Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. We'll see from Genesis 41.1 that two years have passed since the cupbearer got out of prison.

The title of this lesson is Fixed by God. Joseph applies that phrase to how certain he is about the outcome of Pharaoh's dreams, but that phrase also applies to the events in Joseph's life.

As we go through the chapter, we again will see that everything that happened to Joseph was fixed by God because of God's providence. Chapter 36 is a long chapter. We'll make it through the first 36 verses tonight, so let's jump right in and read those 36 verses.

[1 : 33] Starting with verse 1, it says, And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows, and Pharaoh awoke.

And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing up on one stalk. And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh. Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, I remember my offenses today. When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream.

And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged. Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit.

And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it. Joseph answered Pharaoh, it is not in me.

God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, behold, in my dream, I was standing on the banks of the Nile. Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows. But when they had eaten them, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke. I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. Seven ears, withered thin and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them.

[4 : 28] And the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me. Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, the dreams of Pharaoh are one. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years. The dreams are one. The seven lean and ugly

cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. It is, as I told Pharaoh, God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 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 a 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. Although we're going to break the chapter into two lessons for the sake of time, chapter 41 has one main idea that we'll see both this week and next week. Genesis 41 is a pivotal moment where God's providential purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances come into focus.

Once again, Genesis 41 is a pivotal moment where God's providential purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances comes into focus. We've covered 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. 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 God's providential purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances does come into focus, Joseph will begin to learn God's reasons behind the last 13 years of his life. We're going to break tonight's verses into six sections. It's the largest number of blanks you've had in a while. We're going to start with verses 1 through 8. In those verses, we'll see the agitation. So the agitation is what we'll notice first.

Let's go ahead and read verses 1 through 8 again. It says, After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive plump cows, and Pharaoh awoke. And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time, and behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. And the seven thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men.

[8 : 34] Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh. Two entire years go by after the cupbearer forgets Joseph, and Joseph spends those entire 24 months in jail. Think for a minute about what he goes through. Seventy-two hours after his interpretation of the cupbearer's dream, that man is set free. Joseph probably eagerly awaited, fully expecting release to come soon after. But then hour seventy-three came, and that stretched into hour seventy-four, and then eventually into hour seventy-five. The hours then become days, which become weeks, which lengthen into months, and finally years. More specifically, that's seventeen thousand five hundred twenty hours, or seven hundred thirty days, or a hundred four weeks, or twenty-four months that we're talking about here. Any way you figure it, the numbers add up to a long period of enforced, and certainly excruciating, waiting for Joseph. So he spends all that time waiting to figure out what would happen next.

Now we talk about Pharaoh's dreams, and we see that Pharaoh's dreams concerned the Nile, which was central to Egyptian life. Archaeologist Catherine Bard said, the Nile was ancient Egypt's most important natural resource. Within the Nile Valley and Delta, with the adjacent low deserts, all of the basic resources that sustained human life were available. Water, food, and the materials for tools, clothing, and shelter. Egypt was dependent on the annual inundation of the Nile for its prosperity, so any omen, as in a dream, that appeared to threaten that regular inundation was very serious, especially for Pharaoh, who was regarded as a godlike guardian of the Nile, in cooperation with the god of the Nile inundation, Hapi.

Pharaoh's government was responsible for maintaining the irrigation of the river system, distributing land grants, gathering taxes, and storing grain. Despite the success of natural irrigation and human engineering with the dams and canals that Egypt had, high and low Nile still occurred, and that produced famine and ill effects on the society. Because Pharaoh was viewed as being godlike, any breakdown in the regularity of the Nile flooding would reflect poorly on the competence of Pharaoh. The chief responsibility of the Pharaoh was to maintain universal harmony in the country as an intermediary between the gods and the people. The goddess Mayette was thought to work her will through the Pharaoh, but it was up to the Pharaoh to interpret the goddess's will correctly, and then to act on it. One of Pharaoh's responsibilities was to maintain records of the level of the Nile. So no wonder he was disturbed by his dreams. They might figure out that he's not a god after all. You notice that cows are the focal point of Pharaoh's first dream. Cows around the Nile were a normal occurrence. Cows like to stand half submerged in the Nile among its reeds, its reeds, I mean, in refuge from the heat and the flies. Then they come out of the water for pasture. Pharaoh's first dream initially shows seven healthy and fat cows doing what they normally do. The difference comes in verses 3 and 4. Seven ugly and thin cows come out of the Nile, and then all 14 cows move to the riverbank, where the ugly and thin cows eat the healthy and fat ones. That dream caused Pharaoh to awaken.

[12:29] Eventually, he fell asleep again and dreamed the second dream, and that dream has obvious similarities to the first. Instead of seven healthy cows, the second dream has seven healthy ears of grain.

Instead of seven ugly cows, the second dream has seven thin ears of grain blighted by the east wind. Like the first dream, the seven thin ears of grain swallow up the seven good ears.

If Pharaoh had only one bad dream, perhaps he could have rationalized it away. Maybe his new chief baker was still learning how to cook, and Pharaoh just had indigestion, and that's what caused the first dream.

But two dreams with identical endings were too disconcerting to ignore. Pharaoh was smart enough to realize that. Look at verse 8 again.

It says, So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

[13:30] Pharaoh. The combined expertise of the full council of Pharaoh's advisors and dream experts, all of whom had been summoned into his presence, failed to provide an interpretation of the two disturbing dreams.

Without knowing it, they had just set the stage for Joseph's entrance on the scene of Egyptian history. Last week, when we talked about how the chief cupbearer would have been a close confidant of Pharaoh, we talked about how close those cupbearers became to their kings.

And we can tell from verse 9 that he was one of the advisors who heard about the dreams. And after he hears, the cupbearer's memory finally gets triggered. The chief cupbearer's words to Pharaoh form the second lesson section.

And in verses 9 through 13, we see the recollection. The recollection goes into your second blink. And in those verses, we see, Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, I remember my offenses today.

When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation.

[14:45] A young Hebrew was there with us, the servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream.

And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged. The cupbearer remembering what happened at just the right time gives another example of God's providence.

Another example of how things were fixed by God. The man remembers because God is ready for him to do so. For 24 months, the Lord had blotted out the memory of Joseph from the cupbearer's mind because it was not yet in God's time schedule for the man to remember.

Then the proper day finally arrives, and behold, the fellow recalls what happened. Let's do a bit of speculation here. What do you think would have happened if the cupbearer had told people about Joseph as soon as the cupbearer got out of prison?

Well, Joseph likely would have been removed from prison, and he may even have been released from slavery. He wouldn't have been easily accessible to Pharaoh when Pharaoh needed somebody who could accurately interpret Pharaoh's dream.

[16:01] For two years, Joseph must have been wondering why the cupbearer had forgotten him. After those years, Joseph may have begun to reconcile himself to the possibility of never leaving prison.

However, Joseph's status is about to change as quickly as it did on the day he entered the prison. The cupbearer's statements give Pharaoh hope that somebody may be able to help him, and we see that hope in the third lesson section.

In verses 14 through 16, we see the introduction. The introduction is what comes next, and that happens when Joseph and Pharaoh meet.

When Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, it is not in me.

[17:06] God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer. The long wait is over, and Joseph, now 30 years old, stands before the most powerful monarch on the earth at that time, the leader of the Egyptian superpower.

Joseph surely sensed that something was about to happen that would make sense of his own dreams. But we're getting ahead of ourselves a little bit by wondering whether Joseph was thinking about his own dreams here.

Let's focus on what Moses records about this interchange with Pharaoh. Even before the two meet, we see evidence that Joseph showed respect to Pharaoh.

Verse 14 says that Joseph shaved and changed his clothes. Egyptian men not only shaved their face, but their entire body, and they generally wore wigs.

Egyptian officials scorned the hairy Canaanites, including the Hebrews. While in the service of Potiphar, Joseph probably adopted the manner and dress of the Egyptians, but in prison, he wouldn't have been able to keep up his appearance.

[18:09] After years in the dungeon, who could have blamed Joseph if he had balked at the idea of making himself more presentable to Pharaoh? It would have been easy for Joseph to think that if Pharaoh wanted to see him, Pharaoh could see Joseph just as he looked and no doubt smelled.

He would get an idea of what prison life was really like. But Joseph showed Pharaoh the respect that Pharaoh's office deserved. That respectfulness may have paved the way for Pharaoh to pay attention to what Joseph would say.

Pharaoh would hear inspired words from Joseph, and Pharaoh also would see that Joseph was anything but a typical prisoner. After Joseph cleans up and finds himself standing in front of Pharaoh, Pharaoh wastes no time in explaining to Joseph why Joseph is there.

Pharaoh has heard that Joseph can interpret dreams. Pharaoh wants Joseph to do just that for him. And he says to Joseph in verse 15, I have had a dream and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it. If I were Joseph, I would have been tempted to say something like, it's about time somebody finally realized what I can do.

[19:24] I might go on to say, you must have heard what I did for the cupbearer. That was one of my best, but I can tell you about more. And you're wise to ask me to help you. Joseph, however, refuses to take any credit for himself.

Look at verse 16. He says, Joseph answered Pharaoh, It is not in me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer. Joseph gives all the credit to God.

That really was quite a risk for Joseph, especially when Pharaoh was an unbeliever. One commentator noted that in the original Hebrew, there was a strong emphasis on the word God. Joseph praised the power of the living God in the pagan court of Pharaoh. He wouldn't take credit for his ability to interpret dreams or use his innocence to plead for his freedom. His comment about giving Pharaoh a favorable answer suggests that Joseph already knew the dream contained some good news for the Pharaoh.

Notice here that Joseph has never lost confidence in God. He's been waiting, but he's kept the faith. He's retained confidence in the Lord, and Joseph is willing to do whatever God wants to do with Joseph's life.

[20 : 38] Joseph knows that God's plan is being worked out, whether it's in three days, three years, or 13 years. God is always faithful to keep his promises, and we should never try to time him with a stopwatch.

So, so far we've seen the agitation, the recollection, and the introduction. In the fourth section of the lesson, we see the repetition. So, the repetition is your fourth fill-in.

The repetition happens when Pharaoh tells his dreams to Joseph. Let's read verses 17 through 24 again. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt.

And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, but when they had eaten them, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as the beginning.

[21 : 48] Then I awoke. I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. Seven ears withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind sprouted up after them, and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears.

And I told it to the magicians that there was no one who could explain it to me. We'll move quickly through these verses because they recap Pharaoh's description in verses 1 through 7.

But there are a couple of new details added in this version. Verses 19 and 21 tell us a little bit more about the ugly cows.

Pharaoh says that the thin cows were poor and very ugly, unlike anything he had seen in Egypt. I don't know, but for some reason that made me think of the old match game game show.

You remember that game show? Where they would say, those cows were so ugly? And the audience would say, well, how ugly were they? Well, Pharaoh says that they were poor and very ugly, unlike anything he had ever seen in Egypt before.

[22 : 55] But the other interesting thing was after those thin and ugly cows devoured the fat and healthy ones, the thin cows were still as ugly as before.

That would be very unusual, that you could eat an entire cow and not look any different than what you did before you started eating the cow, even if you were another cow yourself. The detail that Pharaoh adds about the grain dream is that the thin grains were withered.

So those are the new details that we see in this section. And Joseph patiently listens to Pharaoh recount the dreams. Then Joseph gives the interpretation. And the interpretation is the fifth section of the lesson.

And we see the interpretation in verses 25 through 32. Let's read those verses again. It says, When Joseph said to Pharaoh, The dreams of Pharaoh are one.

God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years. The dreams are one.

[24 : 06] The seven lean and ugly cows that come up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine.

It is, as I told Pharaoh, God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 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 surely bring it about. The items appearing in sevens represent periods of seven years, and we see that a time of tremendous prosperity will come to the land of Egypt.

Following seven years of the boom economy will have the bust. The agricultural surplus will soon give way to seven years of famine and intense poverty.

[25 : 16] So severe will the down period be that the years of abundance will be completely forgotten in a massive period of deprivation. The Egyptian downside is coming fast.

The events symbolically depicted in Pharaoh's dreams are going to start immediately. Joseph confirms that immediate start in verse 32. That's where he said, And the doubling of Pharaoh's

dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

Just a side note before we move on to the next section of the lesson. How many times did Joseph dream that one day he would rule over his own family? Remember, he dreamed twice as well.

So, his comment here about the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, meaning that the thing is fixed by God, gives us even more proof that Joseph maintained faith in his God.

After all these years, he still believed that the dreams about him were going to come true. So, so far, we have seen the agitation, the recollection, the introduction, the repetition, and the interpretation.

[26 : 29] In our last section we're going to study tonight, we'll see the recommendation. So, the recommendation is the last thing we'll look at. That comes in verses 33 through 36.

And the recommendation is clear. After explaining the meaning of the dreams, Joseph says, Now, therefore, let Pharaoh select a 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.

The 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. Joseph's recommendation has three parts.

Pharaoh should task a discerning and wise man with preparing Egypt for the famine. During the seven good years, the people should be taxed 20% of their crops. And the grain paid in those taxes should be stored for use during the seven years of famine.

[27 : 49] Joseph, a slave and a prisoner, recommended a long-term strategy for establishing reserves to meet the future need. And he included advice on the quality of the man needed to head up the project.

Famines had ravaged Egypt before, but this time they had divine warning, and that divine warning permitted serious and sustained advanced planning. This brings us back to the main idea of the lesson.

Genesis 41 is the pivotal moment where God's providential purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances comes into focus. Twenty years prior to the famine, God knew that the land would cease to produce.

His people would starve without intervention, and Egypt would have resources sufficient to store grain during the plentiful years prior to the famine. Consequently, he first sent a dream to Joseph foreshadowing what he was going to do.

He then proceeded to use the murderous hatred of Joseph's brothers and the tendencies of Ishmael's descendants to send Joseph to Egypt. In Egypt, God saw to it that Joseph would land in Potiphar's house.

[29 : 00] God preserved Joseph from adultery, and God orchestrated Joseph's imprisonment so that Joseph was there to meet and interpret the dreams of the king's baker and cupbearer. All this occurred so that the cupbearer would remember Joseph when God sent Pharaoh a dream, and that was a dream that Pharaoh couldn't interpret on his own.

Joseph's ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams would lead to the preservation of the seed and the overflow of the granaries. Egypt would become the one place in the world where the covenant people of God could come to buy grain and survive.

Remember how we've talked all along, including tonight, how throughout Genesis, including the account of Joseph, God shows that he is faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people.

And we see here that God has orchestrated things so that Egypt will be the one place where the people can come to and survive. Next week, when we finish chapter 41, we'll see even more clearly that Genesis 41 is a pivotal moment where God's purpose for Joseph's difficult circumstances comes into focus.

In the meantime, we can take a few other things from the verses we covered tonight. First, Joseph shows us how to patiently wait on the Lord.

[30 : 24] Joseph shows us how to patiently wait on the Lord. In the first section, we talked about how long two years can be when we are enduring difficult circumstances.

Waiting is a totally alien idea to a generation taught to expect instant gratification. Yet waiting on the Lord is a thoroughly biblical notion. Isaiah 40:31 says, They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Psalm 40:1 says, I waited patiently for the Lord.

He inclined to me and heard my cry. Psalm 27:14 says, Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage.

Wait for the Lord. Waiting is hardest when we're suffering. And many of the Psalms express that in the prayer, How long, O Lord? Many of the major characters in Scripture had to wait, sometimes a long time, to see the fulfillment of the promises that God had made to them.

[31 : 35] Aside from Joseph, think about Abraham, Moses, and David. I never thought I would quote the Huffington Post in a lesson, but this quote summarizes, well, our society's view of waiting and the benefits associated with learning how to wait patiently.

This excerpt comes from an article published in 2013. It says, In a world full of instant gratification, it can seem like the concept of waiting is on the verge of extinction.

But learning to wait builds character and could even improve decision-making skills, a new study suggests. Researchers from the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business found that the act of waiting increases patience and that patience seems to help people make smarter decisions about money.

When people wait, it makes them place a higher value on what they're waiting for, and that higher value makes them more patient, study researcher Eilat Fishback said in a statement.

She goes on to say, they see more value in what they're waiting for because of a process psychologists call self-perception. We learn what we want and prefer by assessing our own behavior, much the same way we learn about others by observing how they behave.

[32 : 53] Actually, the University of Chicago could have skipped all that fancy research and just read Romans 5, 1-5 instead. Listen to what Paul tells us in Romans 5, 1-5.

He says, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Sounds a lot like what that researcher said about the study, except she just left out God and the Holy Spirit. It takes real character to distinguish between God's no and is not yet.

There's a clear connection between endurance and character and reliance on God that we may legitimately read back into the life of Joseph. The long wait in prison contributed to the depth of character that Joseph would need to cope with the administrative responsibility he was going to have to say nothing of the resources he would need for the process of being reconciled to his brothers.

[34 : 20] The second thing we can take away from this passage, besides the main idea, is that Joseph treated pagans, even pagans responsible for his incarceration, with respect.

Joseph treated pagans, even pagans responsible for his incarceration, with respect. As we mentioned when we looked at verses 14 through 16, Joseph's appearance and demeanor likely made Pharaoh more inclined to believe Joseph's interpretation of the dreams.

Similarly, our witness can be enhanced when we treat unbelievers today with proper respect. We need to remember that if not for the grace of God, we would be just like them, or maybe even worse.

So that's why it's important to treat unbelievers with respect. The third thing is similar to that.

Joseph knew that when witnessing to others, some things are better left unsaid.

When witnessing to others, some things are better left unsaid. When Joseph finally got his audience before Pharaoh, Joseph could have rattled off all the bad and unjust things that had happened to him.

[35 : 29] He would have been correct if he'd done that, but that approach could have been counterproductive. Consider how different the ultimate outcome for Joseph might have been if Joseph had said, we'll talk about your worries in a minute, Pharaoh.

If you think you have it bad, let me tell you about what has happened to me. When he finally got the opportunity to speak to the most powerful person in the world, Joseph turned Pharaoh's focus to the one true God and what that God could do.

We can take a lesson from that when we're talking to others about God, talking less about ourselves and talking more about God are the right things to do. Fourth, Joseph shows that we can honor God anywhere under any circumstances.

Joseph knew that the God of the prison is the same as the God of the palace. Joseph knew that God was responsible for Joseph's ability to interpret dreams.

Joseph gave credit to God in chapter 40 when he was interpreting the two prisoners' dreams. He also gave credit to God in chapter 41 when he was asked to interpret the dreams of the most powerful man in the world at that time.

[36 : 39] Had Joseph looked at the situation from a purely human perspective, taking at least some of the credit, Pharaoh might have respected him more highly. But Joseph was more interested in giving all the credit to God.

For Joseph, to honor God was as natural as breathing. Fifth, Joseph knew that he could accomplish nothing of significance without God's intervention.

Whether in prison or in the palace, Joseph consistently gave God credit for the accurate dream interpretations. Joseph understood the point of Jesus' words in John 15, 5, long before Jesus said them.

John 15, 5 is the verse that says, I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing. Jesus means there that without him, we can accomplish nothing of eternal significance.

[37 : 40] Reverse that, though, and think about what we can do if, like Joseph, we are sensitive to what God wants us to do. Sixth, God is in control of the world's economies.

God is in control of the world's economies. He was in control in ancient Egypt, and God is still in control today. Think of the world of work as an arena as sacred as any other.

Colossians 3, 11 says, Christ is all and in all. He's with us in the pit. He's with us in the palace. He's with us in the sanctuary, on the assembly line, and in the executive suite.

What we do in the business world should be determined by our desire to please God because Christians are on display. We're living, breathing, walking examples of Christianity.

Our pulpits are the everyday environments we find ourselves in, and our congregation is the world. Today we hear people constantly worrying about our economy.

[38 : 46] True believers, though, recognize that God is in control, and true believers should rest in Jesus' promises in Matthew 6, verses 31 through 33.

Here's what Jesus said in Matthew 6, 31 through 33. Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink?

Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Joseph obviously knew these principles long before Jesus said them as well. Today, we have even more evidence than Joseph did that these words of Jesus are true, and our response should be the same as the one Jesus commanded.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the reminder that you are in control.

[39 : 55] To Joseph, it must have seemed for those two years that maybe you really had forgotten him, but in reality, you were waiting for just the right time for Joseph to be remembered. Similarly, you always remember us, and you will remember us at just the right time in our lives.

Help us keep that faith whenever we go through difficult circumstances. Let us be willing to trust in you, and let us be willing to share that faith with others that we come in contact with.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.