

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Struggles with Love**

September 2020

Fall Quarter

**September 12, 2020**

**Lesson #2 – Obedient Love**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Genesis 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52

**ICE BREAKERS -**

1. What should we do to prepare for unexpected opportunities to serve?
2. How should we live our lives so that those around will view us as people in whom the Spirit of God dwells?

***Key Verse: Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.—Genesis 41:39-40***

**LESSON BACKGROUND**

Following the events of last week's lesson, Joseph was sold to an Egyptian official named Potiphar (Genesis 37:36). Joseph quickly found favor in Potiphar's eyes and was promoted to a position of great responsibility within Potiphar's household.

Potiphar's wife, however, constantly pressured Joseph to sleep with her. Joseph refused every time (Genesis 39:9-10). When on one occasion Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife, his cloak was torn from him and left behind; she used it to accuse Joseph falsely of attempted rape. As a result, Potiphar had Joseph thrown in prison (39:11-20).

Here too Joseph proved himself worthy of responsibility (Genesis 39:20-23). Dreams once again enter Joseph's story (compare 37:5-11; see lesson 1) through two fellow prisoners. Joseph's experience had taught him that only God can reveal the true meaning of dreams (40:8; 41:16). The divinely inspired interpretations Joseph provided for each man's dream came true: one man was put to death, and the other man was restored to his position. Joseph requested of the latter that after regaining his position, he would mention Joseph to the Pharaoh. The man, however, forgot about Joseph for two years (40:1-41:1). Pharaoh had his own incomprehensible dreams. Though the content was easily conveyed, neither Pharaoh nor any of his magicians or wise men understood them (Genesis 41:1-8). In the first dream, seven healthy cows had come forth from the Nile River. They were followed by seven cows "ill favoured and leanfleshed" (41:3); Pharaoh described them as "such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness" (41:19). Amazingly, the ugly cows devoured the healthy ones.

Much the same occurred in Pharaoh's second dream, though the details differed. Seven ears of corn appeared on a single stalk. Then there appeared seven withered ears that had been scorched by a hot east wind. The withered ears

proceeded to eat up the fully grown ears.

When Pharaoh spoke of this conundrum, the forgetful former prisoner remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh of Joseph's ability to interpret dreams accurately. Joseph was quickly taken from the prison, made presentable, and brought before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:9-14).

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

**41:14-37.** Significantly when Pharaoh summoned Joseph and asked if he could truly interpret dreams, Joseph's response—his first recorded words in two years—was, **It is not in me** ( v. 16), which may be more literally translated, "[It is] apart from me," that is, "It has nothing to do with me." Joseph had not grown bitter after spending thirteen years (unjustly) as a slave and then prisoner, but his focus was in fact set squarely on God and His glory—a focus that was undoubtedly essential to staving off despair during those years. At the first opportunity Joseph unabashedly emphasized the sovereignty (and hence glory) of God to Pharaoh himself, for he told him **God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer** ( v. 16). This clause, however, should be rendered "God will respond to Pharaoh's situation." The word translated "situation" is the Hebrew word *shalom* (generally signifying "peace" or "completeness"), and is here intended in the sense of "situation" or "welfare." Pharaoh then told Joseph his dreams, which Joseph interpreted as both signifying the same thing: **seven years of great abundance** will come to **Egypt**, and **after them seven years of famine**, which will be **very severe** ( vv. 29-31). Joseph then advised Pharaoh to find a **man discerning and wise** who can implement the specific steps he described to prepare for this famine. In contrast to his successor 400 years later "who did not know Joseph" ( Ex 1:8), the present Pharaoh responded enthusiastically by affirming the truth of what Joseph's God had informed him ( Gn 41:38).

**41:38-57.** Pharaoh realized that Joseph was himself the very **discerning and wise** man needed for the task ( v. 39). Pharaoh then made Joseph second in authority only to himself (anticipating the same redemptive "positioning" of, Esther and Mordecai, among others, at the opposite end of Israel's biblical history; Est 8:2; 10:3) and declared that **without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt** ( v. 44). Joseph prepared for the famine by storing **up grain in great abundance** ( v. 49), and he also took a wife who bore him **two sons** ( v. 50). The names of his sons further reflect Joseph's selfless, *theocentric* perspective in the narrative, focusing not on his 13 years of ignominy and affliction (he was 17 when sold and 30 when promoted by Pharaoh; 37:2; 41:46, see chart, "Joseph's Progression in Status and Age," below), but rather on the grace and blessing that God had shown him according

His own time and plan: **Manasseh**(meaning "He causes to forget"), **for... God has made me forget all my trouble** ( v. 51) and **Ephraim** (meaning either "fruitful land" or "double fruitfulness") **for... God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction** ( v. 52).

Some might consider Joseph's ascendancy to the prime minister's office in Egypt to be the climax of the Joseph narrative. Nevertheless, this part of the story is but a means to an end. The climax will be Joseph's restoration with his brothers and the recognition that all his painful experiences were part of God's plan to deliver the sons of Israel.

**LESSON NUGGET** – God always exalts the humble “in due time” (1 Peter 5:6). Joseph started as a servant, but then God made him a ruler. He experienced suffering before God gave him glory (1 Peter 5:10). God invested thirteen years in making a man out of Joseph; when it comes to building character, God is never in a hurry.

**Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary***