

Homework - Week 4

Day 1

Read Genesis 41

Joseph just can't get away from dreams. Whether his or someone else's, dreams seem to follow him everywhere he goes. In the first few verses of this chapter, we see that Pharaoh has two very unordinary dreams back to back.

Read Genesis 41:1-4 and record the first dream that Pharaoh had:

Read Genesis 41:5-7 and record the second dream that Pharaoh had:

In Genesis 41:8, it tells us that *"his spirit was troubled."* Pharaoh obviously recognized that something was different about these dreams. He didn't just wake up and go on with his day like normal, but instead these dreams invaded his thoughts and emotions leaving him desperate for some answers.

In ancient Egyptian culture, dreams were extremely significant. The belief was that the gods communicated to men through dreams. Dreams were also viewed as tools to predict the future. In fact, multiple ancient papyrus documents regarding dreams and their interpretations have been discovered. They have even discovered "dreambooks," which give a list of possible animals/objects/situations seen in dreams and the corresponding meanings. As I was reading some of the transcripts from these "dreambooks," I was initially entertained at some of the crazy interpretations recorded. How could people really believe this stuff? For example:

- "If a man sees himself in a dream: Eating the flesh of a donkey. Good. It means his promotion."
- The vision of white bread foretells the occurrence of "something [at which his face] will light up."

Ok, so maybe I get the white bread one, because if I'm being honest, a good pastry will make my face light up too. However, what I want you to notice is how desperate these people were for a word from their gods. A lot of time and energy was put into dream interpretation, because they hungered for some direction. They craved communication from the gods that they worshipped. Unfortunately, they did not serve the one true God. Instead, they served gods who were not capable of communicating, much less giving direction.

The beautiful thing is that we serve a God who communicates with us! He doesn't just communicate in one way but in multiple different ways: such as through Scripture, through prayer, through other people, and through circumstances.



Read II Timothy 3:16. Have you experienced a time when God spoke to you through a specific Bible verse? What was the verse and how did it minister to you?

In Isaiah 30:21, it says *"and whenever you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: 'This is the way. Walk in it.'"* **Sometimes God speaks in a still, small voice. Have you ever experienced this? What was the situation?**



Has there ever been a time when you desperately needed direction, and God provided that direction? What did that look like? Is there an area in your life right now where you are looking for some direction?

There might be times in our lives when we wish we had a "dreambook" that would simply interpret our crazy dreams and tell us what the future holds, but that's not how God works! He is alive and active in our lives, and He longs to communicate with us. In order for that communication to happen, it is crucial that we spend time in His Word and in prayer. Our ears must be tuned in and our eyes open to what He is doing all around us.

This whole idea of God speaking to you may be a new concept. If it is, I encourage you to start setting time aside to pray and simply listen for God to speak. It might seem strange and even scary at first, but grab a journal and a pen and simply be quiet and listen. Start writing down what you hear Him saying. Learning to hear and recognize the voice of God is a journey. It takes time to recognize His voice. In John 10:27 Jesus says, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."* If we don't learn to recognize His voice, it will be hard to follow where He is leading. He is longing to communicate and reveal Himself, if we will only listen. There is no better time to start than now!

Spend some time today asking the Lord to reveal Himself to you.

Day 2

Once Pharaoh had his dreams, he woke up the next morning very disturbed.

Read Genesis 41:8. Who did Pharaoh turn to in his distress?

As we learned yesterday, dreams held great significance for the Egyptians. Because of this, they had “professional” dream interpreters who could tell them what their dreams meant. These interpreters could also provide a chant or prayer for the dreamer to recite in order to negate the consequences of a negative dream. They had all their bases covered! Or so they thought.


However, as we see in verse 8, none of the magicians or wise men were able to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams. Suddenly the “experts” didn’t have the answers.

Have you ever had a time when you went to the “experts” looking for answers and direction and didn’t get what you needed?

While God can speak through others and often does, there are also times when He wants to speak directly to us through His Word or through prayer. We have to be careful that we don’t get in the habit of going to others before we go to Him. He should always be the first one we turn to.

 It is at this point in the story that the cupbearer suddenly remembers Joseph. Convenient memory recall wouldn’t you say? **Read Genesis 41:9-13**

Once again, we see God’s hand in the timing of Joseph’s story. God knew that Joseph needed to stay in that prison, because the day was coming when Pharaoh would come looking for him. He needed to be where Pharaoh could find him.

 **Have you ever experienced a season when things didn’t make any sense, you couldn’t figure out what in the world God was doing, and then suddenly something happened that brought some clarity and understanding?**

I don't know where you are today, but I do know that God sees your situation, and He knows what the future holds. He has not forgotten about you. While you may not understand what He is doing and why things are happening the way they are, God asks you to trust that He is good, that He has a plan, and that the plan is good.

Read Proverbs 3:5. Is there an area of your life that you need to speak this verse over today?

Back to the story of Joseph, read Genesis 41:14-16. How does Joseph respond to Pharaoh in verse 16?

I want you to notice that both the cupbearer and Pharaoh refer to Joseph as the one with the ability to interpret (Gen. 41:12,15). However, Joseph doesn't take any credit and immediately points them to God as the interpreter of dreams. He could have viewed this as his opportunity to shine and impress Pharaoh! After all, just hours before he had been locked up in a dungeon, and now suddenly he finds himself face to face with the ruler of Egypt. Talk about a whirlwind of a day! He could have easily let it slide and not corrected Pharaoh, letting him think that he possessed the power of interpretation. After all, he deserved some recognition and appreciation after his years of suffering.

However, if Joseph had not credited God as the one who provided the interpretation, he would have simply become another of Pharaoh's wise men. He would not have proven the superiority of His God! And as we will see later, it was the evidence of God working through his life that resulted in his next big promotion.

The desire for recognition and acknowledgement is a dangerous, slippery slope. It stirs up our pride and clouds our judgement. **Have you ever had a time where your desire for recognition and acknowledgement caused you to let things slide instead of pointing people back to God? Maybe it was a time when you were more concerned with making a name for yourself rather than making a name for God?**

Joseph is a beautiful picture of someone who recognized God's hand on his life every step of the way, in the good times and the bad times. He was quick to point people back to God despite his circumstances. **Can you see God's hand on your life today? If not, pray and ask God to show you where He is working in your life. Ask Him to help you point people back to Him by the way you live your life.**

Day 3

Read Genesis 41:25-32

In these verses, we see Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream. Seven years of great abundance were coming to the land of Egypt, followed by seven years of extreme famine. Both dreams pointed to the same thing, and the significance of two dreams was that it not only solidified the certainty of the dreams but also meant they would come to pass soon.

Also, notice that the seasons of abundance and famine had very specific time periods. Each one would last 7 years. In our lives, things last for a season. While sometimes it can feel like the season will never end, we can have hope that a new season is coming.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1. What encouragement do you find in this verse about seasons?



After giving Pharaoh the interpretations of his dream, Joseph goes on to give him some practical tips. **Read Genesis 41:33-39.** Notice that Pharaoh doesn't ask Joseph what he should do in response to the dream. Yet that doesn't stop Joseph from sharing unsolicited advice. I can't help but be impressed with Joseph's confidence at this point. This was a risky move on his part! Especially when you consider that giving unsolicited advice can often go south very quickly. This is not the first time that we have seen Joseph go above and beyond what he has been asked to do:

- Genesis 37 - Joseph kept searching for his brothers beyond Shechem, and didn't give up until he finally found them.
- Genesis 39 - Joseph did more than just serve his master, he ministered & attended to him.
- Genesis 40 - Joseph didn't just oversee the prisoners, but he noticed their distress, asked them about it, and then went deeper and walked with them through it.

What do you think motivated Joseph to share advice with Pharaoh?

Joseph's advice to Pharaoh was not about making himself look good. After all, Joseph never once recommends himself for the job, or even volunteers for the position. He was not motivated by self ambition, and he refused to promote himself. God had worked humility deep into his soul over the last 13 years, and it is on full display here. Even though he may have been the obvious choice for the position, Joseph had learned to trust God and His timing.

 **What drives us to promote ourselves instead of waiting on God's timing?**

Read Genesis 41:38. What was Pharaoh's response in this verse?

Pharaoh's focus had shifted from Joseph's abilities (verse 15) to a recognition of God's presence and activity in Joseph's life (verse 38-39).

What caused this change in Pharaoh's perspective?

God had gifted Joseph with the ability to interpret dreams. He was also a gifted administrator, as seen by his oversight of Potiphar's house and the prison. Joseph operated confidently yet humbly in both of those roles. As a result, it was evident to others that God was not only with him but that He was the reason for Joseph's success. **What do people see when we are operating in our gifting and callings? Are we functioning in confidence and humility? What does that look like?**

Spend some time asking God to show you what it looks like to walk confidently in the gifting He has given you, while still operating in humility. Ask him to forgive you for any attempts at self promotion and to help you trust Him and wait for His perfect timing.

Day 4

Read Genesis 41:39-46. Make note of the changes that happened to Joseph in this passage.

All of these changes were enough to give Joseph whiplash! I can't even imagine the flood of emotions he must have been dealing with. Yet God had been preparing him for this very day all along. **Thinking back over the story up to this point, what do you think God was working in Joseph to prepare him for this new position?**

In Genesis 41:40, what does it say Joseph will be over?

Look back at Genesis 39:4. What did Joseph oversee in Potiphar's house?

Finally look back at Genesis 40:22. Who does it say was under Joseph's authority in the prison?

In Genesis 41, we see Joseph's ultimate promotion to 2nd in command in Egypt. He was not only over Pharaoh's house and all the land but also all the people. I can't help but read this with a sense of awe as I reflect on how Joseph's life led him to this very place. While a slave in Potiphar's house, he was given authority over his house and fields. What great preparation for the day he would be in charge of another house and fields, just on a much larger scale!

Looking back, can you think of times when God gave you an opportunity to learn or practice something that you would need later, perhaps on a larger scale?

While in prison, Joseph had the opportunity to work on his relational skills. He was given authority over all the prisoners, an assignment that probably wasn't the easiest. Whether they were in prison for good reason or unjustly accused, they would not have made for compliant subjects. Yet, once again, what great preparation for the day he would be given authority over all the people of Egypt. Just imagine the scene with me for a few minutes. A young, 30 year old Hebrew that no one knows is suddenly dragged out of prison and is now wearing royal robes and Pharaoh's signet ring, and everyone is supposed to bow down and obey him! This sounds like a recipe for disaster to me.

Have you ever experienced a time when someone was placed in a position of authority, and you didn't feel they deserved it or were ready for it? What emotions did you or others struggle with?

What the people of Egypt didn't know and couldn't see was that God had been preparing Joseph for years, giving him the necessary skills and character for the role. And don't forget, as we have seen repeatedly throughout the story, every new step in Joseph's journey was accompanied by the Lord's presence. Joseph never asked to be put in charge of Potiphar's household. He didn't go into prison suggesting that he would make a good supervisor. He certainly didn't march into Pharaoh's court and recommend himself for the job of 2nd in command. It was God that went before him, and it was God's obvious presence in Joseph's life that opened the doors of opportunity.

How many times do we question and wrestle with someone's position or authority when we have no idea what God has brought them through to get there? We don't know the struggles, trials, and temptations they have overcome. We haven't seen the faithfulness they have displayed when no one was looking. We aren't aware of the character that God has forged in

them in the secret places. God's path to leadership often looks different than what we think it should. It's time we stop playing God and let Him do what He does best. In Daniel 2:21 it says that God "*..changes the times and seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings...*" Ultimately, God can place whoever He wants in leadership, and He can also remove them. So, let's trust Him with that job!

Joseph's story is a great reminder that God will put us where He wants us, if we will just be faithful where we are. **Ask the Lord today to give you the courage to let Him lead and put you where He wants you. Trust that He is working in you exactly the character and skills that you will need for the next assignment.**

Day 5

Read Genesis 41:47-57. These verses record the dreams of Pharaoh coming to pass. We see Joseph overseeing the abundance in the years of plenty just like he advised Pharaoh. Once the famine hits, Genesis 41:55 says “*extreme hunger came to all the land of Egypt, and the people cried out to Pharaoh for food,*” However, Pharaoh directs them to go to Joseph and do whatever he tells them, demonstrating Pharaoh’s continued confidence in Joseph. Even though his people were desperate and starving, he still believed that Joseph was the best one to handle the situation. **What do you think this says about Joseph’s character and behavior during the 7 years of abundance?**

Seven years is a long time of abundance. In fact, we read in Genesis 41:47 that “...*the land produced outstanding harvests.*” Yet Joseph remained diligent and kept storing up the excess, year after year. He was faithful and did not grow weary, even though it would have been very easy to simply sit back and enjoy the lap of luxury for a year or two. I can’t help but think of our spiritual lives and how often we want to just “coast” when things are going well. During those seasons of blessing and abundance, we can find ourselves spending less time in the Word and in prayer. However, those are the seasons that we should be “storing” up God’s Word.

Read the following verses. What are we supposed to do with the Word of God? What are the results in our life?

Psalm 1


Psalm 119:9-16

John 15:7

God’s word is our weapon, comfort, and strength, and we need to have it hidden in our hearts. If you do not currently memorize Scripture, I would encourage you to start doing it today! In Ephesians 4:17, Paul tells us that the Word of God is our “sword.” How will you fight the enemy if you don’t have Scripture stored up in your heart to pull out and wield in the battle?

Notice that once the famine hit, Joseph opened up the storehouses not only to the nation of Egypt but also to the surrounding nations. God had blessed him with abundance, and he had managed it well. As a result, he was in a place where he could bless many people.

Are you managing well the abundance and blessings that God has given you? Do you view your abundance as an opportunity to bless and reach others?

 Buried in this particular passage are three verses about Joseph's personal life. Genesis 41:50 tells us that Joseph had two sons during the years of plenty. **Read Genesis 41:51. What was the name of his first son and what was the meaning of his name?**

Read Genesis 41:52. What was the name of his second son and the name's meaning?

These names give us a beautiful glimpse into the heart of Joseph. After everything he had been through, Joseph never lost sight of the One who was orchestrating everything behind the scenes. He was quick to give credit where credit was due.

Betrayal and rejection had been a big part of Joseph's story, and yet the name he chose for his firstborn reveals the transformation that had occurred in his heart. "*God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.*" (Genesis 41:51) Forgetting his past was crucial if Joseph was going to move forward. Genesis 39 tells us that Joseph "prospered" because the Lord was with him, and one of the definitions of that word is "*to push forward*". (see page 19) Don't miss the fact that the Lord's presence caused Joseph to prosper, just like God was the one that made him forget. We have to let go of our past if we are going to push forward in what God has for us.

 **Have you experienced a time when holding on to your past has prevented you from moving forward?**

Memories will always be with us, both the good and the bad. Forgetting the past doesn't mean that we literally erase the memories that are etched into our brains. However, we can move past the pain and "sting" of the past. Joseph had not forgotten about his father and brothers, as we will see in future chapters. However, God had done a work in his heart so that the pain and anguish of those years did not cripple him and hold him back.

Is there pain, rejection, betrayal, or other hurtful things from your past that you need to hand over to God? Do you need to have a “Manasseh” encounter with God, and allow Him to remove the “stings” of your past? Take those things to God today and ask Him to empower you to move past your past. He is the only one that can do it!

Joseph named his second son, Ephraim, meaning, *"God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."* (Genesis 41:52) There were two things about this name that immediately stood out to me. The first is that God was the one that made Joseph fruitful. It was not something that Joseph accomplished through mere grit and determination. No matter how hard we try and how disciplined we are, we can not bear godly fruit as a result of our own efforts.

Read Galatians 5:22-23. Where does the fruit in these verses come from?

Notice it is not the “fruit of our own effort,” or the “fruit of following the rules.” It is the fruit of the Spirit. We simply can not bear godly fruit in our lives without the work of the Holy Spirit. Does that mean we just do nothing and wait for the Spirit to miraculously drop the fruit into our lives? Not quite!

Read John 15:4-6. What is our role when it comes to bearing fruit? Where does the fruit come from?


Joseph recognized the source of his fruitfulness, and was quick to acknowledge God as the one who had made him fruitful. The second thing that stood out to me was that God made Joseph fruitful in the land of his affliction. Not after he got through the trials and difficulties, or on the other side of the test. It was in the middle of his affliction, heartache, and anguish, that God made Joseph fruitful. Can we say the same for our lives? Are we even looking for or expecting fruit in the hard seasons? If we are clinging to Jesus and abiding in the vine, then we should expect fruit, because it is the natural byproduct of our relationships with Him.


If you are in a hard season right now, be encouraged that God can still make you fruitful! You don't have to wait until you get to the other side of the trial. You simply need to abide in Him, and He will bring the fruit!


Jeremiah 17:7-8 ...The man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence indeed is the LORD, is blessed. He will be like a tree planted by water: it sends its roots out toward a stream, it doesn't fear when heat comes, and its foliage remains green. It will not worry in a year of drought or cease producing fruit.


Group Discussion - Week 4


These are all the Group Discussion questions from this week's homework compiled onto one page. This page is designed to help facilitate table discussion at the next session. You can record your answers again on this page, or simply look back at your homework...whatever you prefer!


 **Read Genesis 41. Joseph just can't get away from dreams. Whether his or someone else's, dreams seem to follow him everywhere he goes.** What I want you to notice is how desperate the Egyptians were for a word from their gods. A lot of time and energy was put into dream interpretation, because they hungered for some direction, and they craved communication from the gods that they worshipped. Unfortunately, they did not serve the one true God. Instead, they served gods who were not capable of communicating, much less giving direction. The beautiful thing is that we serve a God who communicates with us! He doesn't just communicate in one way but in multiple different ways: such as through Scripture, through prayer, through other people, and through circumstances.


 **Read II Timothy 3:16. Have you experienced a time when God spoke to you through a specific Bible verse? What was the verse and how did it minister to you?** (pg. 44 & 45)

 **Has there ever been a time when you desperately needed direction, and God provided that direction? What did that look like? Is there an area in your life right now where you are looking for some direction?** (pg. 45)

 **Read Genesis 41:9-13.** Once again, we see God's hand in the timing of Joseph's story. God knew that Joseph needed to stay in that prison, because the day was coming when Pharaoh would come looking for him. He needed to be where Pharaoh could find him. **Have you ever experienced a season when things didn't make any sense, and you couldn't figure out**

 **what in the world God was doing, and then suddenly something happened that brought some clarity and understanding?** (pg. 46)

 **Read Genesis 41:33-39.** Joseph's advice to Pharaoh was not about making himself look good. After all, Joseph never once recommends himself for the job, or even volunteers for the position. He was not motivated by self ambition, and he refused to promote himself. God had worked humility deep into his soul over the last 13 years, and it is on full display here. Even though he may have been the obvious choice for the position, Joseph had learned to trust God and His timing. **What drives us to promote ourselves instead of waiting on God's timing?**

 (pg. 48-49)

- 👉 **Read Genesis 41:51.** Betrayal and rejection had been a big part of Joseph's story, and yet the name he chose for his firstborn reveals the transformation that had occurred in his heart. "*God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.*" (Genesis 41:51) Forgetting his past was crucial if Joseph was going to move forward. Genesis 39 tells us that Joseph "prospered" because the Lord was with him, and one of the definitions of that word is "*to push forward.*" (see page 19) Don't miss the fact that the Lord's presence caused Joseph to prosper, just like God was the one that made him forget. We have to let go of our pasts if we are going to push forward in what God has for us. **Have you experienced a time when holding on to your past has prevented you from moving forward?** (pg. 54)