

Joseph – Lesson Three

(Son, Slave, Prisoner and Ruler)

Introduction: The story of Joseph's life is important for us on several different levels. It teaches us about God's love and truth working through a flawed family. We learn the value of trusting a promise over experience by watching his life develop. We learn that God gives only a little light on our future and then expects us to trust him as he unfolds history. And finally, in Joseph's life we see the ongoing fulfillment of the gospel promise that includes us.

In **Lesson One** we met Joseph and his brothers while Joseph was a young seventeen year old. We saw how Jacob favored Joseph and how that caused animosity between him and his brothers. Then Joseph had dreams from God that promised he would one day be a ruler to whom they bowed down. They were so jealous that they plotted to kill him but ultimately decided to sell him to traders headed for Egypt.

In **Lesson Two** we saw Joseph as a slave in Potiphar's home. We saw how God was with him and Potiphar saw it too. He elevated Joseph to be his personal attendant. Then Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph and then lied about him getting him thrown into prison. We noted how God was using injustices to fulfill his plan to make Joseph ruler over Egypt.

In Acts 17 God tells us that he decided the exact time and places we would live. We can easily see this in the life of Joseph. Now in **Lesson Three** Joseph meets two men whose lives serve God in helping Joseph to meet Pharaoh. In turn Joseph is catapulted into authority of all of Egypt. Because of the size of the readings we will have to do a little more summarizing this week. We are working through Genesis 40 and 41. It will help tremendously if you can read these chapters ahead of time.

Read Genesis 40:1-8 – Joseph meets the cupbearer and the baker for Pharaoh.

Digging Deeper With Pastor Patterson

1. Why would God allow these two men to be put into prison right next to Joseph?

2. Who is the captain of the guard over the cup bearer, baker and Joseph?

3. Joseph inquires about his prisoners' sadness. What does this teach you about Joseph?

4. Why did Joseph say that interpretations belong to God?

Applying God's Word

1. Why is it important to focus on our life of service when we are suffering instead of getting justice for ourselves?
2. How might you use 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 to encourage Joseph if you were given the opportunity?
3. What God is doing in other peoples' lives also works into his plan for us. How does this comfort you?

Read Genesis 40:9-15, 23 – Joseph Interprets the dreams of the cupbearer and baker accurately, but is forgotten anyway.

Digging Deeper With Pastor Patterson

1. The cupbearer's dream meant he would be reinstated. How did Joseph see God's hand but not God's timing?
2. Verse 15 is the only place in the story that we see Joseph's feelings about his persecutions. What is he chaffing about?
3. The cupbearer forgot Joseph. How in the world could that happen?

Applying God's Word

1. Give some reasons why God only shows us a little about his providence but keeps the rest a secret?
2. Explain this statement: "You can feel terrible about being mistreated but you cannot act terrible because you have been mistreated."
3. Describe the feelings we get when others forget us. Then tell how staying close to God can help.

Read Genesis 41:1-13, 14-16 – Pharaoh has two dreams that no one can interpret and the cupbearer remembers Joseph.

Digging Deeper With Pastor Patterson

1. Why did God make Joseph wait for two full years to be remembered by the cupbearer?
2. If God spoke to Joseph, the cupbearer and Pharaoh through dreams, does that mean he is speaking to me through my dreams too?
3. Why do you think that the cupbearer had not told his amazing story of his own dreams to Pharaoh before this?

Applying God's Word

1. List other places in the Bible where God used dreams to teach his people something. What percentage do dreams hold when compared to all the other ways God spoke to people? Since our mind is involved in a dream and the devil can use them to, how are we supposed to filter our dreams to learn from them? What did Joseph say to Pharaoh that helps us deal with our dreams? (41:16)
2. In every circumstance Joseph trusted and honored God rather than depend on himself. Name some times in life when we are tempted to quit trusting or honoring God and tell how we might keep ourselves from falling.

Read Genesis 41:25-33, 37-40 – Joseph interprets the dreams and Pharaoh raises him up to second in command.

Digging Deeper With Pastor Patterson

1. What would make the interpretation of these dreams a show stopper for Pharaoh and his officials?
2. Why did God give Pharaoh two dreams instead of one?
3. Joseph's advice about what to do next did not come from the dream. How did all of his past experiences play into his advice?

4. How was Pharaoh's treatment of Joseph the same as Potiphar's and the warden's? So, what is it about Joseph that this blessing keeps happening to him?

Applying God's Word

1. List as many prophecies about coming disaster that appear throughout the Bible. How is it God's mercy that prophecies about the disaster he is bringing?
2. God had prepared Joseph and Pharaoh for this very moment and the job they would do together. How does this remind you of Jesus' life?
3. Pharaoh had no idea of what God was doing for the greater good of all mankind but we do. Name as many rulers in the Bible that experienced God's providence but were unaware of his great plan of salvation.

Summary: In *Lesson Three* Joseph receives partial fulfillment of the promise he was given through dreams at the age of seventeen. He is elevated to ruler over Egypt under Pharaoh. It was through a series of "good and bad" things that he ended up there. We see God's hand in shaping Joseph into a trusting child of God through 20 years of chaotic living while blessing Joseph to be a powerful ruler over people. This is how God develops sinners into benevolent and trustworthy leaders just as he is.

Homework: If you have time read through Genesis 42-47 and 50. If you are pinched for time, then read Genesis 42-45.