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## WALKING THROUGH LIVES, NOT AROUND THEM (Genesis 40:1-23)

*Joseph showed great integrity when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him and it landed him in prison. But even in this dark place, he gives us an example to follow.*

**Genesis 40:1-23** - Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. <sup>2</sup> And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, <sup>3</sup> and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. <sup>4</sup> The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody. <sup>5</sup> And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. <sup>6</sup> When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. <sup>7</sup> So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?" <sup>8</sup> They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me." <sup>9</sup> So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me, <sup>10</sup> and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. <sup>11</sup> Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." <sup>12</sup> Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. <sup>13</sup> In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. <sup>14</sup> Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, <sup>17</sup> and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for

Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head." <sup>18</sup> And Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. <sup>19</sup> In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you." <sup>20</sup> On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. <sup>21</sup> He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. <sup>22</sup> But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. <sup>23</sup> Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

### GOD ORCHESTRATES OUR CIRCLE OF PEOPLE

God frequently places his people in key positions and situations to meet the needs of those around them. In this case, two men who were about to have significant dreams were incarcerated with Joseph, the dream-interpreter.

There may be times when you have no idea why your life takes a certain turn, but rest assured there is a purpose. Unless you are sent to that place of God's choosing, you would never have the chance to meet the people you are meant to serve.

### JOSEPH NOTICED THEIR SADNESS

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*Compassion is the deep feeling of sharing in the suffering of another and the desire to relieve that suffering.*

- Jerry Bridges -

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Joseph had been assigned to this cupbearer and baker and "attended to them." We don't know how long they had known each other, but the text tells us they were in custody together "for some time." So Joseph knew them well by the time he noticed that they were "troubled."

We should be just as sensitive to the signals and needs others we know are displaying and ask often how we can help.

## **JOSEPH SPOKE TO THEIR NEED**

*Proverbs 15:13 - A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by **sorrow of heart** the spirit is crushed.*

*Proverbs 12:25 - **Anxiety** in a man's heart weighs him down, but **a good word** makes him glad.*

We've all seen people whose faces looked like this and have worn this look ourselves. Physical language tells us a lot about the emotional needs of our friends and acquaintances.

So many times we would simply rather not be bothered with the needs of those around us. How easy it is to look the other way, pretend like we don't notice, or hurry by someone we know is hurting. Great positive impact can be made on someone's life when we notice their struggle and speak to the need.

No one forgets the time you entered their struggle and tried to help.

## **GOD IDENTIFIED AS THE ANSWER**

The reason for the despair of the cupbearer and the baker was that they had both had dreams but didn't know what they meant. Joseph wasted no time pointing these men to the only one who holds the answers to any problem we can experience. His reply, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" is an answer we all can agree with when we confidently acknowledge the omniscience of the Creator of the universe.

In the 1970s, Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote a musical for the stage titled *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolored Dreamcoat*. It was a fun retelling of this biblical story of Joseph and the major events in his life with musical numbers from a wide variety of styles. For the most part, the production follows the story accurately but in this section of the story, the writers completely miss this important comment by Joseph. After he hears the dreams and successfully interprets them, the character of Joseph attributes his ability to interpret dreams to chance! He

actually sings, "Anyone from anywhere can make it if he gets a lucky break!"

If we are to stay true to the real story of Joseph, we acknowledge with him that it is God alone who provides the answers we need for each of life's difficulties.

## **JOSEPH SHOWED KINDNESS, REGARDLESS**

Joseph's only request after helping these two men was for them to help him get out of prison. The baker was executed, as Joseph predicted, but the cupbearer forgot all about him. Joseph could have felt like his encounter with them in jail was wasted, but God had other plans.

What if Joseph had demanded a guarantee from them before he helped them out? Many people would have considered that to be wiser, but Joseph's default attitude was to serve.

Do we do the right thing only when we are assured that our kindness will be repaid? Is our faith so small? Do we so soon forget the words of Jesus in Matthew 25 when He said, "*Whatever you do for the least of these brothers of mine, you do for me?*"

The mark of a great person is how he treats people who can do absolutely nothing for him in return.

*I care not where I go, or how I live, or what I endure so that I may save souls. When I sleep I dream of them; when I awake they are first in my thoughts... no amount of scholastic attainment, of able and profound exposition of brilliant and stirring eloquence can atone for the absence of a deep, impassioned, sympathetic love for human souls.*

- David Brainerd -

## **BIBLE STUDY**

Legislators and Staff (During Session)  
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.  
Room 153, House Office Building