

## CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – Genesis 40:1 – 42:38

### Read Genesis 40:1-23

1. For review: How did Joseph come to be in prison? How did he conduct himself in the hardships he faced?
  - his brothers had sold him as a slave, and he had ended up as a slave for Potiphar, captain of the guard for the king of Egypt
  - he had been falsely accused of trying to rape Potiphar's wife, and got thrown in prison as a result
  - Gen. 39 says several times that God was with him (v.2,21,23); he worked hard as one serving the Lord, and had success in all he did
  - so much so, that he was put in charge of Potiphar's entire household, then later, of the prison
  - continued to trust God and lived to please him → seen most clearly in his rejection of Potiphar's wife (39:9)
2. Summarize the dreams that the king's cupbearer and baker had, and their meanings.
  - cupbearer dreamed of a vine with 3 branches, the grapes of which he used to press wine into Pharaoh's cup
  - meant that Pharaoh would restore him to his position (bearing the king's cup) in 3 days
  - baker dreamed of 3 baskets on his head filled with bread & baked goods for Pharaoh, and birds were eating them
  - meant that Pharaoh would kill him and hang him on a tree in 3 days, and birds would eat his flesh
3. What elements of Joseph's character can we learn from in this chapter?
  - humility – willing to serve the king's cupbearer & baker, even though he had been put in charge of the entire prison (39:22)
  - care/compassion – was in charge of everyone in the prison, yet noticed that the cupbearer & baker looked sad and asked about it
  - strong faith– believed God would reveal the meaning of the dreams; continued to believe in God despite all that had happened to him
  - believed strongly enough in what God would do to ask the cupbearer to help get him out of prison
  - wisdom and discernment – understood the dreams; took practical steps to try to get out of his unjust situation when opportunity arose
  - truthfulness – did not conceal the truth from the baker, unpleasant as it was
  - was not bitter – spoke in broad terms of the wrong that had happened to him (v.15) but didn't complain or slander those who wronged him

### Read Genesis 41:1-57

1. Why do you think God left Joseph in prison for 2 more years after the cupbearer was released?
  - perhaps continuing to build maturity into Joseph's life
  - was likely continuing to humble, shape and prepare Jacob for the task at hand; perhaps teaching Joseph to persevere in faith
  - Joseph almost certainly knew the meaning of his dreams in Gen. 37, but didn't know when & how God would fulfill them – had to trust God and persevere
  - God had his own timing for things to unfold; important as Joseph was, the world didn't revolve around him!
  - had Joseph been released shortly after the cupbearer, he likely would have returned to Canaan
  - would likely then have been inaccessible to Pharaoh when Pharaoh had his dreams; thus, no preparations would be made to save Jacob & his family from the famine
  - also, reconciliation with his family might have been that much more difficult
  - speaks to the sovereignty of God over every detail of our lives – He works His purposes in His time, in accordance with His wisdom
2. What were Pharaoh's dreams, and what was God saying through them?
  - Pharaoh dreamed (1) of 7 gaunt cows devouring 7 fat cows but remaining as thin as before; (2) of 7 blighted heads of grain swallowing 7 fat heads → pointed to 7 years of plenty, followed by 7 years of famine that would be so severe that they would make everyone forget the years of plenty
  - dream was given twice because the matter was firmly decided by God, and it would happen soon (v.32)
3. How did Joseph know the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams? What does this chapter tell us about the kind of man Joseph was? (you might also consider Psalm 25:14; 119:97-104; Proverbs 24:16)
  - Joseph knew because God revealed it to him (v.16) through the Spirit of God, who was in him, to make him wise and discerning (v.38-39)
  - this chapter shows Joseph to be a God-fearing man of faith
  - does not shy away from giving glory to God when he appears before Pharaoh (v.16) – believed that God will give the answer
  - as a result, Pharaoh
  - was someone in whom was the Spirit of God; was therefore wise and discerning
  - also wise because as seen previously, he feared God and kept his statutes (cf. Psalm 119:97-104)
  - God confides in those who hear Him (Psalm 25:14)
  - even after he rose to power, his life was still centered on God, as seen in his naming of his sons (v.51-52)
  - this chapter also shows Joseph to be a capable man; planned and executed the huge task of storing up grain across the country
  - Joseph's life illustrates Proverbs 24:16 – that the righteous will rise, though he fall 7 times
4. How long did Joseph spend in slavery/prison in Egypt before being exalted (v.46, with 37:2)? What does his example through those years teach us about dealing with hardship and suffering, even 'unjust' suffering? (cf. Romans 8:28; 1 Peter 4:19)
  - he was in slavery for about 13 years (!) - was around 17 when he was sold (37:2) and 30 when exalted (v.36)
  - his is an example of perseverance and continuing faith (and growth in faith) through suffering
  - Joseph continued to trust God and seek after Him and obey Him; continued to work diligently, as one serving God
  - reminds us that God is sovereign and has a purpose for all things, even evil that might befall us; that in all things, He is working for the good of those who love Him (cf. Rom 8:28)
  - thus, we should press on in faith that He is working for our good and the good of His people – cf. 1 Peter 4:19 –commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good

5. In what ways is Joseph a 'type' of Jesus Christ? (a type is a figure, representation, or symbol of something to come) (you might consider Matthew 21:42; Hebrews 5:7-9; Genesis 3:14-15 with Psalm 105:16-22, esp. v.18)
- both were rejected and persecuted by his brothers, but ultimately vindicated and exalted (cf. Matt 21:42)
  - both suffered that they might learn obedience to God (Heb 5:7-8); once perfected, became the source of salvation for God's people (Heb 5:9)
  - both were tempted, but did not sin (Heb 4:15) – Joseph once with Potiphar's wife, but Christ perfectly at all times
  - Joseph 'had his heel bruised' in the process of bringing about salvation for God's people (Ps. 105:18), as would Christ
  - but Joseph is still just a shadow in comparison to Christ; Christ and His salvation are far greater – unlike Joseph, Christ was completely without sin; Christ achieved an eternal salvation, not just a temporary one; etc.

### Read Genesis 42:1-38

1. What was the dream Joseph had had regarding his brothers? (v.9; cf. 37:5-8)
  - dreamed that they were binding sheaves and that theirs all bowed down to his; i.e. that they would all bow down to him
  
2. Why did Joseph treat his brothers harshly, and why did he keep Simeon in jail? Was he trying to get revenge?
  - was testing them to see if they had repented
  - he knew God had placed him over them (from his dream) and was helping them see their sin, by putting them into what they thought was a very dangerous situation
    - we'll see in later chapters how God uses this situation to shape his brothers
  - was not trying to get revenge, but wanted to see Benjamin & Jacob again → kept Simeon to ensure they would come back with Benjamin
  - aside: may have chosen Simeon because he was the second-oldest after Reuben; may have spared Reuben because he tried to save Joseph's life earlier (v.22-23)
  - that he did not intend to seek revenge is shown in his provision for and generosity towards his family in giving them grain and returning their money; had he been vindictive, he could have sent them away empty handed, or kept 10 in jail and sent 1 for Benjamin
  
3. What was God doing to Joseph's brothers (v.28) through these events?
  - exposing/confronting their sin and leading them to repentance
  
4. How did Jacob react to his sons' report about the trip to Egypt? (v.36-38) What does this say about his faith?
  - responds in fear and dismay; cries out that everything is against him (v.36) and refuses to let them return to Egypt with Benjamin
  - shows that he still has ups and downs in his faith; does not have same trust in God's sovereignty as Joseph
    - would rather sacrifice Simeon than risk Benjamin – still playing favorites, though his other sons now seem more accommodating
  
5. With whom do you identify more, Joseph or Jacob? Why?

### Aliens and Strangers

Joseph's life is typical of a pattern often repeated in Scripture that the leaders of God's people often experience more hardship and suffering in their lives, for it is in the fires of suffering that God forges the perseverance, character, and hope (Romans 5:1-5) that must characterize the leaders of His people. This was certainly true of Joseph, who was persecuted because of his righteousness, and who suffered servitude and bondage for 13 years. Through this time, God was shaping his character and equipping him for greater service. For his part, Joseph submitted to the Lord's discipline in his life and continued to trust in God and to walk in His ways, faithfully working as one serving God, even in the face of the unjust suffering. As a result, when God's time came, Joseph was ready for the task for which he had been raised – the saving of many lives, including those of his own family.

Are you letting hardships and difficulties in your life rob you of joy and keep you from following God faithfully? Take heart, knowing that God uses hardships to discipline us for our good, so that we may share in His holiness, and that we might reap a harvest of righteousness and peace as we submit our lives to Him and are trained by His discipline (Heb. 12:7-11). Through hardship, He shapes us to be more like Him and prepares us for greater service to Him. Thus, as Peter writes, "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." (1 Peter 4:19)

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4)