

Trusting God's Plan in the Waiting

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Waiting. We all experience seasons of life when we are waiting on something - a spouse, a baby, healing, a job, or for what God has next in your life. We'll study the life of Joseph, a man who was betrayed by his brothers, falsely imprisoned and ultimately saved the nation of Israel during a famine. Learn from Joseph how to trust God while you wait on Him!

Day 1: Waiting

Psalm 27:14

Waiting. Ugh!!! Nobody likes to wait, yet we all do it. Every. Single. Day. Let me take a wild guess, you are probably waiting for something to change in your life. Am I right? Could it be a promise to be fulfilled, a dream to come to pass, or your heart's desire to finally become a reality? If so, I feel you!

I know a thing or two about waiting. As I write this, my dream is to one day marry God's best man for me. But I find myself in a seemingly endless season of waiting. Can you relate?

The object of your wait may be very different from mine, but just as important to you. Maybe you or someone you love desperately needs to be healed of cancer or a disease. Or you may be walking through the frustrating valley of infertility, with no hope of a baby in sight. A job, a wayward child, a broken relationship, depression that never seems to end... if we're being honest with ourselves, there's something we're all waiting for, even now.

I've found that when it feels like there are no changes on my horizon, the best way to fight discouragement is to seek the promises of the One who can never fail me! So while seeking encouragement, I started identifying with this one intriguing man in the book of Genesis. His story of years and years of waiting resonated with me.

Without further ado, join me on a journey as we step into the sandals of one of the great biblical heroes of faith – Joseph (of the Old Testament). He's known worldwide for that particular coat of many colors. Take a sneak peek into some of the lessons we'll explore as we learn how to wait well:

- God-given dreams
- When bad things happen to good people
- Run from temptation
- Feeling like your wait is a prison
- Being forgotten
- God's perfect timing
- Living with past hurts

- Forgiving those that hurt you
- Hiding your true self
- Learning from your mistakes
- But God
- A promise fulfilled

Tomorrow we'll meet the dreamer himself! In the meantime, each day we'll have a little bonus material called "A little extra". Check out today's which sets the stage for all the family drama Joseph was born into. It's a doozy!

Questions:

1. What is the dream that you're waiting on?
2. Which topics resonate with you and why?
3. What do you hope to learn from this study?

DAY 2: God-given Dreams

Genesis: 37: 1 - 11

Ever wake up with a dream so vivid you can't shake it? Many times, I've dreamed I lost a tooth. I'd wake up panicked that my tooth was loose only to realize that it was just a dream. Joseph's story starts out with a dream, well actually two dreams, but these weren't any ordinary dreams. They were prophetic glimpses into Joseph's future, but he didn't know it at the time. Let's back up a bit to set the stage.

Joseph, a 17 year old Hebrew, was out in the fields of Canaan tending the flocks with a few of his brothers. Side note, when reading the Bible, I like to ponder every detail. So right up front, we see the brothers are sons of Jacob's wives Bilhah and Zilpah, former handmaidens. Go back to yesterday's "A Little Extra" to learn more about this messed up family dynamic. The point is these wives felt lesser than, and you can bet their sons did, too. Jacob actually played favorites among his sons, going so far as to make a special coat of many colors for Joseph.

Back to the story, while out in the fields with his brothers, Joseph notices them doing something. He gives a bad report about them to his father. We aren't sure why he did this, but it's possible that his dad had asked him to keep tabs on his brothers. Whatever the reason for tattle-telling, the brothers already didn't like him and this just made it worse. So when he had a strange dream about ruling over his brothers, he told them! *"We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."* v7

Um, I'm guessing that's not the best way to win hearts...or popularity contests! Cue the disgust from his brothers as they said, *"Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?"* So what does Joseph do when he has another similar dream? He tells them! *"I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."* v9

And if the brothers didn't hate him after the first dream, they certainly did after this one. All the while, Jacob tucked that dream in the back of his mind. He may have realized those weren't ordinary dreams. But as we will later read, the dreams, and Joseph mouthing off, were the catalysts in his story. He may have seen a vision of his brothers bowing down to him, but it would be a very long and difficult road before that was ever fulfilled. Stay tuned, the story just gets better!

Questions:

1. Have you ever had a dream or possibly a promise you felt was from God?
2. Did you share this with anyone and what was their reaction? Did it come to pass?
3. What do you see in Joseph's character that shows he needs to grow?

DAY 3: When bad things happen to good people

Genesis: 37: 12 - 36

Romans: 8:28

Today's reading has more backstabbing and drama than a daytime soap opera. Jacob sends Joseph out to bring yet another report on his brothers. Hmm,

didn't the last report cause a lot of friction in the family? I guess Jacob didn't notice that.

Joseph eventually finds his brothers in a different place than he was told. To say they aren't thrilled to see him is the understatement of the year. They actually plot to kill their little brother, all because of those crazy dreams he was bragging about. The plan - kill him and blame it on an animal attack. But big brother Reuben suggests throwing Joseph in a cistern or a big well, just so he can come back later and get him out. After all, Joseph *IS* his brother.

So here comes Joseph, wearing that same jealousy inspiring coat painstakingly sewn by his father. His brothers grab that stinkin' coat, strip it off, and throw him into an empty cistern. Ironically, the coat represented the covering of his father's love and protection, but now it was taken from him. I picture that they cold heartedly eat lunch close by, while Joseph screams his head off begging them to let him out. It's really quite a sad picture.

An opportunity arises when a group of Ishmaelites, distant cousins of theirs, pass by heading to Egypt. So the brothers decide instead of killing Joseph, to sell him as a slave. At least his blood would not be on their hands and they'd be rid of him for good. They pull Joseph out of the well and sell him for 20 shekels of silver. There's a neat hidden meaning in the 20 shekels that brings even more spiritual meaning to the story if you check out today's "A Little Extra".

Sin usually involves death or destruction of something. In this case, they cover up this heinous act by killing a goat and spreading its blood all over Joseph's precious coat. But even worse, they later make their dad assume an animal killed Joseph. He's grief stricken beyond comfort. Now they must live with the hidden guilt of this horrible betrayal.

All the while, Joseph ends up being sold as a slave in Egypt to a guy named Potiphar, the captain of the guard for Pharaoh. This guy is like the head of Pharaoh's security detail. He's a big deal with a very important boss. This divine connection will be one of the many ways that Joseph's setback will ultimately be a set up.

Can you relate to Joseph in this part of the story? He was doing what he thought was the right thing, checking in on his brothers, but it went horribly wrong. I doubt he would have gone to see them if he thought this could happen. Be reminded that God can use bad things to grow you and bring you into His ultimate plan for you. Preparing sometimes means pre*PARING*, meaning stripping you of

everything you've come to rely on to do something bigger and better through you. Oh Joseph is about to get a lot of preparing going on!

Questions:

1. Who do you identify with more, Joseph or his brothers? Why?
2. Just like the brothers, have you ever lived with a hidden sin that you knew might really hurt someone if you told the truth?
3. What takeaways did you get from today's reading?

DAY 4: The Lord was with Joseph

Genesis: 39: 1 - 6

Bloom where you are planted. Ever heard that phrase? Simply put, make the most of where God has you RIGHT NOW, even in your season of waiting. That doesn't mean that you have to like your situation, but your attitude in it makes all the difference! Why? Because you have an audience watching how you live your life, as we see in Joseph's story.

Joseph finds himself sold as a slave to a guy named Potiphar, the Egyptian Pharaoh's captain of the guard. This guy is one of Pharaoh's top officials. Immediately we see that: *"The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered."* This teenager is living in the house of his Egyptian master. Who is the one watching him? Potiphar! He notices something different about this young man. Could it be his attitude? His hard work? The fact that everything this kid does turns to gold? You and I know the reason why: *"the Lord gave him success in everything he did."*

This young Hebrew, who probably didn't speak Egyptian when he arrived and knew nothing about their customs and way of life, was promoted to Potiphar's attendant. That would be like becoming the chief of staff to the president or prime minister. God gave Joseph favor with his boss, and with that favor came way more responsibility, but God had that covered, too.

"The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field." v 5

Remember we talked about *preparing* in yesterday's reading? God was using this time of confinement to teach Joseph everything he'd need to know about

the Egyptian culture, how to run a house, oversee farm work and how to manage a team of people. Joseph never asked for this, but God was with him every step of the way. This attendant job was the training ground for what God would later have Joseph do - run an entire nation during a national crisis.

Your wait may be long, tiresome and seemingly endless, but ask yourself this, “Do I believe that God is really with me?” If so, then start examining what you may be learning right now. Think of ways that God has been with you. God is preparing you for something big! He’s not going to waste your wait, so bloom where you are planted right now!

Questions:

1. How is God teaching you during your wait?
2. Do you have friends or family watching how you handle your waiting season?
3. Do you feel adequately *prepared* or do you see this time as a much needed interruption in your life to teach you more than you ever thought possible?

DAY 5: Run Joseph, Run!

Genesis 39: 7 – 20

Tune in today as we watch a true-life dramatic series *The Young and the Relentless*. Our star is handsome, well built Joseph, now the head of Potiphar’s home. The leading lady is Potiphar’s hot and bothered wife. In true soap opera fashion, this married woman takes a keen liking to Joseph. On one particular day, she asks him to come to bed with her, and this ain’t no pillow fight!

Joseph tells her that his master has withheld nothing from him except her. Look closely at the real reason Joseph doesn’t want to sleep with her. “*How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?*” v9 He could have caved in and slept with her. But his true master was not Potiphar nor Mrs. Potiphar, but God. Day after day, she begs him to sleep with her, and day after day he refuses.

One day Joseph is inside the house and no one else is around. Mrs. Relentless sees the opportunity to have Joseph all to herself. When he refuses again, she grabs his cloak. Wouldn’t you know a coat gets Joseph into trouble yet

AGAIN, even though it's not his fault. He runs out the door and she screams. After all, she couldn't be humiliated by this slave.

Potiphar comes home to his wife accusing their servant of sexual assault. He's ANGRY! He may have believed his wife, but here's another point of view to consider. It probably was not much of a secret around the household that Mrs. Potiphar was daily making moves on Joseph. Do you think Potiphar could be angry because he's now forced to get rid of his best employee? Notice for such a heinous crime, Potiphar only throws Joseph into jail, one designated for Pharaoh's officials. He could have executed Joseph but Potiphar chooses not to, and my guess is because deep down inside he knew Joseph's true character.

We can learn several things from how Joseph handled this daily temptation:

- Run from temptation.
- Maintain your purity at all cost
- Set wise boundaries with people
- Please God, not man

When you are waiting, it's so easy to cut corners. You may be tempted to think that no one is watching or will care, or it won't really hurt you or anyone else, or it's no big deal to God. But those are all lies. Sin always has consequences. Although many times, it's hard to do the right thing, especially when no one is looking, God sees everything! He will reward you when you obey. We'll see yet again that this setback in Joseph's life was just another step closer to fulfilling God's purpose in his life.

Questions:

1. What temptations are you facing right now as you are waiting for your dream?
2. Are there compromises you have made in the waiting?
3. Why do you think Joseph declared that he'd be sinning against God and not against Potiphar's wife?

DAY 6: In the Jailhouse now

Genesis 39: 20 - 23

Colossians 3: 23 - 24

Here's the part of the story when you're probably thinking, it can't get any worse for Joseph. But, oh it did! Our guy was trying to do the right thing and not sin against God, but look where it got him, in the jailhouse!

Interesting that verse 20 says, *“Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.”* Potiphar personally took Joseph to jail. I wonder what that chariot ride was like? Potiphar was stuck between a rock and hard place, forced to do something since his wife was accusing Joseph of a terrible crime. However, Potiphar had years of experience seeing Joseph's true character, His devotion to His God, and built a friendship and trust with this man. Could it be that Potiphar was assessing the situation, but at the same time, recalling the faith and righteous behavior that Joseph had displayed over the years? Nevertheless, at the end of that chariot ride, Joseph will end up in a prison cell.

Confined, stuck, not where you want to be and scared for your life, do you relate? Think back to the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic when the entire world went into lockdown mode. You couldn't go where you wanted, see your family or friends, or do what you wanted to do. It was scary and seemed hopeless. That's just the tiniest glimpse into how Joseph must have felt his first few days and weeks in jail. However, Joseph wasn't alone in that prison.

“The Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.” v21

I'm not sure what Joseph did while in confinement that impressed the warden, but he did something! Could he have been praising God during that time? Maybe praying? Maybe he went above and beyond in the prisoner tasks he was given. Whatever the case, he was noticed and later put in charge of all those held in the prison.

Yet again, Joseph has taken lemons and made lemonade due to the Lord's favor. And yet again, he's had someone take notice of him and give him an opportunity to take care of things and people, *“because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did”*.

Friend, the Lord is with you right now in your time of waiting. He knows the discouragement you face, the sleepless nights, the anxiety and the fear of the future. But when you seek Him first in all that you do, even in your wait, He will bring you success. Your wait right now has purpose. You just may not know why at this moment, but I assure you He knows. Please don't waste this time of

waiting. Dig deep in His Word, declare His promises over yourself and invite Him into every single part of your day. He can bring success even in the prison of waiting!

Questions:

1. How did you handle being confined during the coronavirus pandemic?
2. Does waiting feel like prison for you?
3. Do you feel like the Lord is with you right now?

DAY 7: Some Time Later
Genesis 40: 1 - 22

Some time later... what a loaded phrase! We have no idea how long Joseph had been in prison, but it's safe to say that "*some time later*" still seemed like forever for Joseph. Two key people of influence now enter Joseph's care life at the prison, Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and chief baker. These prominent officials personally served the king and knew all the in's and out's of how he ran his kingdom. Talk about a wealth of knowledge, and to think God's purposes and orchestration were all still happening while Joseph was confined. God was preparing him during the wait with responsibilities of leading and caring for people and things.

Can you imagine what these guys must have been like? First of all, they had offended their master, and who knows for what reason. Then, they're held in custody at the house of the captain of the guard. Remember him? That's Potiphar. They must have thought Joseph, this fellow prisoner, was the scum of the earth, after all, they were bigwigs who worked directly for Pharaoh.

"*After they had been in custody for some time...*" Oh here we go again, we have no clue how long it's been, but with Joseph serving them every day, they may have finally broken down their walls of pride and begun talking to him. Why not, he's their caregiver. Attentive Joseph notices they both seem bummed out with discouraging and depressing looks on their faces.

To quickly summarize, they both have prophetic dreams the same night, but they have no idea what they mean. Joseph says, "*Do not interpretations belong to God?*" And so they tell their crazy dreams to him. God gives Joseph the meaning of the dreams: In three days, the cupbearer will be serving drinks to his boss and the baker, let's just say he's baked his last cake for Pharaoh.

Here's the heart of where we "waiters" can really identify with Joseph when he says to them, "*But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.*"

The Bible doesn't underline the "nothing to deserve" phrase, but don't you feel Joseph's frustration!?! Joseph is doing the best he possibly can with the

lemons given him, but he's tired of making lemonade. Joseph sees the cupbearer as his "get out of jail free" card. Tomorrow we'll see what the cupbearer does.

Questions:

1. Do you feel you deserve to be in the wait you're in? Why or why not?
2. How do you feel about Joseph stepping up and urging them to say something to Pharaoh on his behalf?
3. Are there people, family members, friends or a community in your life that you can serve as you wait on God? If so, how can you take that next step of service?

DAY 8: Forgotten

Genesis 40:23

Psalm 27:14

Isaiah 49:15

“The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.” It just hurts reading that verse. Oh, how we can relate!

- God, why am I still single while everybody else has gotten married?
- God, nobody likes me. I have no real friends.
- God, please take this pain away. I can't live like this any more.
- God I need a job. No one wants to hire me.
- God would you please heal me of this cancer?
- God do you even hear me? I feel like you don't care about me.

Nobody wants to be forgotten. We want to be seen, heard and loved. It's why many use social media because deep down inside, we like the attention or likes that we get when we post something. We seek affirmation in texts, tweets, emails and calls to friends and family. And it's the reason we want to leave a legacy when we're gone, so that we aren't forgotten.

Poor Joseph WAS forgotten by the cupbearer. And this was after he flat out pleaded for the guy to remember him. He knew that the cupbearer was his “get out of jail free” card. Do you have a person or thing that you've made your key to being jailbroken? It's the person or thing that you've elevated above God as the means out of your wait. Many times we think, if I could just be married, just have a kid, just get a job, just be healed, I'll be good then.

Friend, although Joseph didn't feel it at the time, God had not left him. He was right there with him in the jail. He heard every prayer, saw every tear, and orchestrated events to fulfill Joseph's purpose in life, it just took some time. God does not work on our timetable or at our beck and call. He is strategic with precision timing and as we see tomorrow, God can take our long wait, and quickly make something happen in His timing. After all, His timing is perfect!

Question:

1. Have you ever felt forgotten? What were the circumstances?

2. Who or what is your “get out of jail free” card?
3. Do you think there was a purpose in the cupbearer forgetting Joseph?

DAY 9: Jailbroken

Genesis 41: 1 - 14

Isaiah 60:22

Psalm 40:2

“*When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream...*” Let that sink in for a minute. Two FULL years. We aren’t talking one Christmas to the next, but two FULL calendar years. That’s a long time for Joseph to be forgotten and left working in that dungeon. To really hammer in this point, look at your photo library on your phone or computer. Now scroll past the months to all the things you did in the past two years. That’s a lot of life happening there in the form of birthdays, parties, events, trips, you name it. Now do you see how long that must have felt for Joseph? But as we’ll see, things will go from stagnant to warp speed all in one day.

One night, Pharaoh had two dreams. Sound familiar? We started off Joseph’s story with his two dreams. Later the cupbearer and the baker both had prophetic dreams the same night. Pharaoh knew something was different with these dreams about fat cows and skinny cows (and he’s not dreaming of the yummy ice cream bars)! He called in all his magicians and wise men, but these guys had no clue.

Cue the lightbulb going off over the cupbearer’s head. His boss needs something and NOW he remembers what Joseph did for him by interpreting the dreams two years ago. At least the guy spoke up and said something, after all, Joseph’s interpretations came true.

Here’s where the story gets exciting for all of us that are waiting! Picture Joseph in the prison, long scruffy beard, tattered clothes, dirty skin, and who knows how bad he stank. The king of Egypt now sends for Joseph, “*and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.*” v14

Just like in Psalm 40:2, God lifted Joseph out of that miry pit of a dungeon in an instant. Oh, I know it didn’t feel like an instant for all the years Joseph

suffered, but when God puts His plan into motion for you and me, He reserves the right to change things slowly over time or quickly in an instant. The point is to see God's hand in this story.

Joseph is sold into slavery ->

Pharaoh's captain of the guard buys him ->

Joseph is falsely accused of rape ->

Joseph goes to Pharaoh's prison ->

The cupbearer and baker get imprisoned ->

Joseph interprets their dreams ->

Cupbearer gets out ->

Pharaoh has dreams ->

Cupbearer remembers Joseph ->

Joseph is brought before Pharaoh. So, the cupbearer, actually was Joseph's "get out of jail free" card, just not WHEN Joseph was expecting.

Soon we'll see that God allowed Pharaoh to have the prophetic dreams and reminded the cupbearer of Joseph to interpret those dreams. This all happened at the perfect time when Joseph was needed for the big mission God had been preparing him for all along! Y'all, it's getting good!

Questions:

1. Why do you think God allowed two more years to pass for Joseph in the prison?
2. Have you ever been catapulted out of a wait? What happened?
3. Have you ever taken the time to truly be honest with God in voicing your frustrations about your situation? If so, do that today. Ask Him to help you see anything you've learned or ways He has used you in this time of waiting.

DAY 10: Promoted
Genesis 41:15 - 45

Previously in Joseph's story, he was brought before Pharaoh to interpret some dreams.

"I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." v16

You've gotta love Joseph's boldness. He knows this guy has the authority to hang him, just like he did the baker. However, Joseph puts his ultimate trust in God. In a land of many little false gods, Joseph points Pharaoh to the one true God who can provide the interpretation of his dreams.

Take a minute to think about all the wise guys and magicians in Pharaoh's court. They heard the description of the dreams. Is it possible they were afraid to tell Pharaoh some bad news of the upcoming famine? After all, if he didn't like what they had to say, it could be "off with their heads!"

God elevated Joseph to the presence of Pharaoh for such a time as this! Joseph was a man of integrity and truth, so he was going to tell the truth even if it wasn't great news.

"The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms, is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon." v32

Prepared in the waiting by learning the business of administration, Joseph lays out some recommendations to Pharaoh of how to handle the upcoming famine. His God-given gift was about to be utilized. Even Pharaoh sees God's wisdom in the plan. Pharaoh says, *"Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."*

Now we see this slave boy and prisoner get a new robe, one of honor and prestige. He's surpassed his boss Potiphar, the prison warden, and his buddy the cupbearer to become the 2nd most powerful person in Egypt. This all happened in one day! Talk about zero to hero, or pit to palace!

Joseph rides in a royal chariot to tour the land of which he'd now be in charge. He also gets a new Egyptian name of Zaphenath-Paneah and an Egyptian wife. On the surface, it seems Joseph is beginning to have everything he could want in life, but as we'll soon see, that brotherly betrayal has left a nasty soul wound that still needs to be healed.

Questions:

1. How have you handled telling someone the truth when you know it will be hard to accept? Do you tell people what they want to hear, or the truth?
2. When given the chance, via work, home, school or with those you meet, do you take credit or give God the glory?
3. Have you ever gotten what you wanted to later not feel fulfilled? Why do you think that was?

DAY 11: Beyond Measure

Genesis 41: 46 - 49

Ephesians 3:20

Thirteen years have passed since Joseph had those crazy dreams and was betrayed by his brothers. That's a really long time. Do you think he still carries the pain now that he's living in the lap of luxury? Does coming into your harvest make those tough years any easier in your mind? God used every day of those thirteen years to prepare Joseph for what He had in mind for him - the saving of a nation.

Organizing food, crops, servants, harvesting, these were all skills he learned when working at Potiphar's house. Preparing meals, clean-up, and prisoner welfare are additional skills he learned while working for the prison warden. God won't waste one bit of your wait if you use those experiences to grow you in the knowledge of God and His purpose for you.

Just like God foretold in Pharaoh's dreams, the years of plenty were to be plentiful. Joseph implements his "Operation Storehouse" plan to save Egypt's grain during the years of God's favor. *"Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain,*

like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.” v 49

Joseph was a willing, obedient vessel and he was thoroughly and painstakingly prepared for such a huge mission. This is no small task. This required organizing the reserve food sources for an entire nation. Joseph and those working for him had to create a network of storage facilities in each city in Egypt. This massive undertaking propelled Joseph into his calling, right into the center of God’s will for his life.

The seven years of plenty fly by and now the predicted famine is here. But thanks to God for giving Joseph the “know how” to save the nation during this famine.

Questions:

1. Have you ever experienced being in the center of God’s will doing the purpose He has for you? How did that feel?
2. When things are going well for you, do you continue to give God the glory, or do you get distracted by the abundance?
3. What can you learn from Joseph when in the center of your harvest?

DAY 12: Soul Wounds

Genesis 41: 50 - 52

Psalms 139: 23 - 24

There’s an old phrase, don’t judge a book by its cover. If you saw Joseph’s book at this point, it would look like a regal, hardback leather-bound book with beautiful gold leaf inscribed on it. But if you cracked it open, the pages would be ripped up, torn, dirty and smudged. What clues us into this? Let’s take a look at Joseph’s sons and what he names them.

Both boys were born to him and his wife Asenath during the years of plentiful harvest. Joseph was 2nd in command of the most powerful nation in the world. Things were going great! So why do you think Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh a name that means “to forget”? Listen to what Joseph says after he names his son, *“It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my*

father's household." v 51 Umm.... I'm thinking if you have forgiven those mean brothers of yours, then you wouldn't be naming your son "to forget". Every time you call out his name you're literally saying "to forget". Kinda seems like a big reminder to me!

Joseph does it again with the birth of his second son Ephraim. He says, "*It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.*" v 52. Again, if he's free of his hurts then he could say, "*Because God has made me fruitful in the land.*" Period. Done. Finito. No need to add the "*in the land of my suffering.*"

Joseph shows us that he still has some very deep and unhealed soul wounds which he's never truly given over to God. He's buried these bitter roots deep down in his heart, only to hide behind a facade of a successful life. But those soul wounds, when left untreated, were infecting him even if he didn't know it.

I recently heard of a lady that had a tooth infection that she didn't know about because her tooth never hurt. One day, the infection seeped into her bloodstream and caused her to have a heart attack. Thankfully she survived, but what a shock that an undetected infection wreaked major havok later on in her life.

While you are waiting, you have a great opportunity to begin allowing God to help you dig out those hidden hurts and soul wounds that could be keeping you from His best. They may secretly be sabotaging the very thing you're hoping for: healing, a child, a job, a spouse and more. It takes a very courageous person to ask God to shine the light on those wounds and do the hard work to receive the ultimate healing you need. Forgiveness is more than a second chance, it's an opportunity to love again.

Questions:

1. Who has hurt you in the past that you just can't seem to forgive?
2. Can you take time to ask God to show you the wounds in your life that need forgiveness, then begin to take steps towards reconciliation and forgiveness?
3. Do you need help with the process of forgiving? Please [go to our website](#) to find free resources.

A Little Extra:
Soul Wounds

DAY 13: The Famine

Genesis 41: 53 - 57; 42: 1 - 9

Seven years have passed and the predicted famine is here just as Joseph said. This drought wasn't localized to Egypt, other nations in the region were suffering as well. Word got out that Egypt had grain, so everyone was clamoring to buy from them.

Back in the land of Canaan, Jacob and his sons are hungry and getting desperate. Most likely their crops had suffered as well. Jacob tells his sons to go buy some food from the Egyptians before it's too late. The famine must have been pretty bad because he sent 10 of the brothers to get the grain. Notice however that he didn't allow Benjamin to go. Jacob seems to still be playing favorites, even 20 years later.

Don't you love that God directs Joseph's brothers right to him? What are the odds that this small group of Hebrew shepherds would be sent to buy food from their long-lost brother whom they betrayed?

Friend, when it's time for your wait to end, God will be the one that orchestrates it in His perfect timing, not a day beforehand. After all, you don't want to get ahead of God and miss His very best. When God accomplishes it, He will receive all of the glory, not you! And isn't that how you want it to be?

"So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground." v6

Joseph is now the governor of Egypt. Twenty years have passed since this scrawny Hebrew teenager was sold into slavery. Before their very eyes appears to be an Egyptian in his late 30's, so his brothers don't recognize him. Oh, but Joseph can't forget them! The memory of their faces is etched in his mind!

He remembers something else too, that crazy dream all those years ago, a dream about stalks of grain bowing down before him. Funny that the dream involved grain, the same thing that brought the brothers to Egypt. Even the symbolic grain in Joseph's dream had a purpose. Remember this, God is in EVERY detail!

While you are waiting and seeking the Lord, keep an eye out and ask the Lord to give you spiritual eyes as you wait. You don't want to miss any detail of what He may be doing to lead you to your destiny. A phone call, a tweet, a

perfectly timed introduction could very well involve the Master's hand. You'll want to remember these details when you are telling your amazing story of God's deliverance one day!

Questions:

1. Are there some things that you've written off as coincidences that may have divine origins?
2. How do you think Joseph might have felt when he first recognized his brothers?
3. Have you asked God to open your eyes lately to what He's doing in your circumstances right now?

DAY 14: Just Desserts

Genesis 42: 9 - 38

Today, we see a dream coming to fruition in front of Joseph's eyes as his brothers kneel before him. How many times must he have thought of that dream to later dismiss it when it never seemed possible. How could a slave ever have his family bow down to him? Things don't always go as we expect, but one thing is for certain, if God gives you a promise, He will keep it!

Joseph has no reason to trust what his brothers are saying when he accuses them of being spies. These guys lied to his father and planned to kill him. They could be lying about his brother Benjamin, so he throws them all into prison with the idea that he'll let one leave to get Benjamin. Three days go by and then Joseph has a change of mind. *"Do this and you will live, for I fear God..."* Maybe Joseph was feeling guilty because he believes his father and their families are starving. He forces them all to leave except for Simeon who is to stay until they bring Benjamin back. And now the real truth comes out!

They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." v 21

They have no clue Joseph knows exactly what they are saying. How could they? They thought Joseph was an Egyptian, and he would not have known the

Hebrew language. Put yourself in Joseph's sandals. What he knew to be true, he's actually hearing again. The feelings of abandonment, fear and deep hurt come rushing back to his mind. The painful wound he's been hiding for so long is now being ripped wide open. It's so painful, he has to turn away to secretly weep. Unfortunately, this soul wound won't be healed today.

Joseph has Simeon bound before their eyes and taken away when he dismisses the men to go back to their land. He secretly has their silver returned to them in the bags of grain they purchased. This little trick will later create great fear in them when they discover the silver. They're afraid they'll be accused of stealing from the Egyptians. When they tell Jacob they need to take Benjamin to Egypt as the governor requested in order to free up Simeon, he won't allow it. They are in a no-win situation. Joseph's actions just may have deeper roots than we can imagine.

Questions:

1. What clues do you see in Joseph's behavior to demonstrate he hasn't dealt with his hurts?
2. What contrasts do you see from when Joseph first had his dream to now seeing it fulfilled?
3. Why do you think Joseph hid his identity from his brothers?

DAY 15: Playing a Part

Genesis 43: 1 - 34

It has been some time since the brothers came home with sacks full of grain, silver, and no brother Simeon. It's all because Jacob doesn't want to chance losing Benjamin, his last tie to his beloved Rachel. But day after day, the food is dwindling and the family could all die off. Judah says to Jacob, "*As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.*" I guess Judah doesn't like waiting either.

The deafening sound of rumbling tummies is too much for Jacob so he tells them to go, but he fills their bags with goods, and makes them take the silver back. They head off to Egypt and immediately are presented before Joseph. When he

takes one look at Benjamin, he tells his servants to prepare a big dinner for them all.

The brothers don't know Joseph's motives. Instead, they are unsettled and overcome with fear, thinking Joseph is going to "*attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.*" Their guilt has created a false narrative that's poisoning their perspective. That's what fear will do to you. When we are waiting, how often do we create a scenario in our minds that simply isn't true because we don't have all the facts. Is it our way of trying to maintain control? These fear-based *what if's* can really steal our joy.

Now Joseph is back with his brothers who are again bowing before him. It's like his prophetic dream is on repeat! Only this time, instead of testing his brothers, his response to seeing his younger brother, Benjamin, is different. "*Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.*" Gen 43:30 Joseph couldn't compose himself anymore. It's not too much longer that the whole truth and nothing but the truth finally comes out.

Have you found yourself playing "a part" lately and hiding your feelings? You hide your true self because it's too painful or embarrassing to be authentic with people. There's a fake smile on your face when deep inside your soul hurts over your situation. The questions from friends, family and co-workers don't help either:

When are you going to find yourself a boyfriend?

Isn't it about time you all had a baby?

Any luck on the job hunt?

Have you tried counseling for your depression?

What about trying a different treatment for your cancer?

Oh, people mean well, but it can be hard when it seems like no one truly understands! Sometimes it's easier to play a part and deny your hurts so you won't make a scene. This is what Joseph does at the dinner. He's so good that he should have won an Oscar. I'm betting you've performed some award winning acting too. We all have, but we'll soon see that playing the part is too exhausting for Joseph. It's time to get real!

Questions:

1. Why do you think the brothers waited so long to return to their father?
2. How do you think the dinner atmosphere would have been if the brothers had put their faith ahead of fear?
3. What “*what if’s*” have you battled during your wait?
4. Do you feel that you are being your authentic self?

DAY 16: Learning From Your Mistakes

Genesis 44

Think about a big mistake you made, one in which you are truly embarrassed that it happened or that you acted that way. Did you learn something from that mistake? Repenting means not only learning from it, but doing a 180 degree turn and changing your ways permanently. We get to see a great example of repentance through Judah in today’s passage.

After a night of great dinner and drinks, Joseph tells his servant to send the brothers home with sacks full of grain, their silver, and one critical addition - Joseph’s own silver cup in Benjamin’s sack. Joseph isn’t perfect. He has amazing traits but he is also a hurt individual who is testing those that hurt him. Even with his pain, it doesn’t make it right. It’s possible that Joseph also needed a reason to see his father again, so why not retain Benjamin as a slave? When he hatched this plan, he had no idea how his brothers would react.

After the brothers deceived their dad, they had to live with the guilt of their lies and pain they had caused their father. Day after day, they saw their father lamenting the loss of his son. Jacob had become a shell of the patriarch he had been in the past, and all due to his sons and their horrible lie. I don’t believe they had any idea the consequences of their actions.

Thirteen years of watching Jacob lament the loss of Joseph had changed the brothers. Judah knows that if they don’t go home with Benjamin, it will literally kill their dad. That is a fate worse than death for Judah so he steps up to the plate and offers himself and his freedom to prove it. Talk about a change from the man who years ago went along with such a terrible plan to get rid of his brother. Judah is now a broken man and has learned from the pain he has cost others. Stay tuned for tomorrow, the big reveal is about to happen!

Questions:

1. Have you carried forward behaviors you witnessed from your past that have hurt you or others in your life?
2. What can you learn from Judah and his change of heart?
3. Is there someone in your past that you have hurt that you need to ask for forgiveness?

DAY 17: But God

Genesis 45

I love watching home makeover shows. I typically fast forward to the end to see the big reveal because I love to see the broken and worn down become something beautiful for all to see. Isn't that the Christian life in a nutshell?

This is the moment we've been waiting for as Joseph no longer is able to play the part of an Egyptian around his brothers. The weight of 13 years of betrayal and hurt are about to be released as he weeps so loudly that the entire household hears his cries. Alone with his brothers, he says, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But they can't answer him because they are frightened to death. They're confronting the brother they betrayed, face to face.

Joseph begs them to come closer to reassure them. *"I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you."*

This is a huge principle to learn while waiting on God. No matter how bad your circumstances, if you can ask to see God's perspective, your wait will have purpose because you will grow. Joseph goes on to say, *"But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance."*

Two key words that if you can learn anything from today's lesson it is this... But God! *"So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all of Egypt."* If you insert

that “But God” into your circumstances, it will change your perspective. You may even see God’s preparation in the waiting.

But God gave me a platform to share my faith when I was battling cancer...

But God allowed my divorce to draw me closer in my dependence on Him...

But God used my time in jail to help troubled youth avoid that path in life...

But God provided for my family during the pandemic...

But God allowed me to be single to encourage other singles...

But God used my layoff to create a deeper dependence on Him.....

Joseph sends his brothers home with carts full of gifts and a new home awaiting them in Egypt. They have the joy, and trepidation, of telling their father that Joseph is alive and now ruler of Egypt. I’m sure it wasn’t fun telling them why he was alive and not eaten by an animal, but let’s focus on the happy part! Jacob is stunned and realizes they are telling the truth due to all the carts full of Egyptian gifts. At that point his spirit revives. And Jacob (also known as Israel) said, *“I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”*

Questions:

1. What do you think was going on in the brothers’ minds when Joseph revealed who he was?
2. Why do you think God disallowed Jacob from knowing his son was alive this entire time?
3. Have you ever considered the “But God” in your current circumstances? If so, how would you finish this sentence? But God...
4. How does having God’s perspective change what you are currently experiencing?

Day 18 A Promise Fulfilled

Genesis 46: 1 – 7; 26 – 34

Galatians 6:9

The wait is finally over for Joseph! The day he has been dreaming of and his heart's desire are finally being met. Sure Joseph has become the 2nd most powerful person in Egypt. He's rich beyond measure, and God has reconciled and restored his life with his brothers, but everything pales in comparison to being reunited with his father. It's been almost 20 years since he last saw him.

Believing that Joseph is alive, Jacob and his entire extended family pack up everything and move to Egypt. Pharaoh's moving service rolls out the red carpet with carts from Egypt. Pharaoh sets aside an area in Egypt that happens to be the most fertile in all the land, called Goshen to be their new home. Let it sink in what it must have felt like when Joseph rolls up in his chariot to see his father. What would he look like? Would he remember him? Who were all these other people with him? His mind must have been racing!

“As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.”

That must have been the longest hug in history! Joseph was making up for a lifetime of lost hugs. His wait was finally over! What a moment of praise! His wait, and all of the pain that went with it, had great purpose! God had a plan and Joseph was receiving the blessing of seeing it from His perspective. Jacob left Canaan as Jacob, but he arrived in Egypt as Israel, the Jewish nation. Joseph didn't just save Egypt from the famine, he saved the nation of Israel as well, and we can still thank him for that today!

My friend, one day your wait will be over. Your heart's desire will be met in God's perfect timing. It most likely will not happen the way that you expect and certainly not at the time you expect, but it will happen!

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Galatians 6:9

Questions:

1. What does your harvest look like for you?
2. How can you build a safe-guard around you so that you will not give up in the waiting?
3. How can Joseph's account encourage you on those days you may become weary?

Day 19 The best
Genesis 47: 1-27

Have you ever introduced your family members to your boss? The boss only knows what you've told him or her about them. Joseph's family is now living in Goshen during the severe famine and it's time to have an audience with Pharaoh. Joseph instructs his brothers to tell Pharaoh they are shepherds because Egyptians think shepherds are detestable. This may have been to put Pharaoh and his officials at ease that Joseph wasn't bringing in an invading army of Hebrews.

Here's where you see how much Pharaoh truly respects Joseph when he says to his brothers, "*And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock.*" In other words, if they are half as good as you Joseph, let them care for my stuff, too! What a compliment!

The now 130 year-old Jacob has a chance to meet Pharaoh as well. He is bold enough to bless Pharaoh twice in his presence! But again we see how much Pharaoh likes Joseph as he "*gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Ramses.*" Isn't it wonderful to witness God's faithfulness to save His people? God's favor and blessing on Joseph, even in a foreign nation, has given Jacob's family the best of their land. And remember, this is during a severe famine.

The famine continues to ravage Egypt and Canaan, so much so that people start running out of money to pay for all the grain that Joseph has stored up. They begin selling their land and later themselves in the form of servitude. Lest we forget, this was a devastating drought. People were desperate. With Joseph's administration skills, he made Egypt and Pharaoh, very, very rich. Never would we condone making people slaves, however this shows how desperate people were during this famine. It also might explain why Pharaoh didn't kick the Israelites out when the famine was over. Pharaoh was too indebted to Joseph for all he did for Egypt. Why get rid of your prize employee when he's done so much for the nation?

Questions:

1. In what ways was God blessing the Israelites during the famine?

2. Do you believe your faith has a place in your workplace? Why or why not?
3. What are your thoughts on how Joseph handled the Egyptians and other nations when their money ran out?

Day 20 Jacob Dies

Genesis 47: 28 – 31; 48: 1 – 22; 49: 29-33

When we dig deep into the Bible, it's really fun to see hidden treasures if you stop to ask questions along the way. When I see a number, a name, or a phrase that sticks out to me, I try to find the importance of it because every word in the Bible was God-inspired and has purpose.

Today's reading starts out with the fact that Jacob lived 17 years after arriving in Egypt. So this 130 year-old man who kept saying "I'm about to die", managed to live another 17 years. Be encouraged friend! You haven't seen your last days! You may feel like there's nothing left to live for based on how you feel today, but you don't know God's ultimate plan for you. You can get a second wind! Knowing Joseph was alive breathed new life into that old man. Don't miss that Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold off into slavery and God gave Jacob 17 more years with him in his old age. The grace of God and his goodness never ceases to amaze me!

One day Jacob falls ill and Joseph takes his now 20-something year old sons Manasseh and Ephraim to say goodbye. Fatherly blessings are a big deal in Hebrew traditions with the oldest son getting the biggest blessing. In this instance, Jacob purposely blesses the youngest with the bigger blessing. This should remind you of the story of Jacob stealing his own brother Esau's birthright blessing, but Jacob did it with purpose here. He also makes these two young men officially his children, and they now become part of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Right at the overly ripe age of 147, Jacob breathes his last in the presence of his sons. Joseph keeps his promise to bury him in Canaan, in the land God had promised Jacob.

Questions:

1. How do you see your days? Your best days are behind you, you are living your best days, or your best days are yet to come?
2. Does it give you encouragement that even when Jacob said he was about to die, He was given 17 more years of LIFE?
3. What have you learned about Jacob from Joseph's story?

Day 21 God Intended It For Good

Genesis 50: 1 – 21

Romans 8:28

We begin today's reading with the death of Jacob. Due to Joseph's favor with Pharaoh, his father Jacob is embalmed in the Egyptian traditions and given the funeral fan-fare of a king. All of Pharaoh's court and dignitaries accompany Jacob's family from Egypt to his homeland in Canaan to bury him with his forefathers.

Once the family returns from the funeral, the brothers start convincing themselves that Joseph still has a grudge against them. They haven't truly forgiven themselves for what they did to Joseph, so they think he's out to get them now that their father is dead. They send word to Joseph saying their dad told him to forgive them all. When Joseph hears this, it breaks his heart and he weeps.

Have you ever forgiven someone only to sense they haven't forgiven themselves? Maybe they act differently around you now. Maybe they avoid you. It's an awful position to be in because it means you haven't been truly heard or understood. because that person is operating from his/ her own soul wound.] If the brothers really believed Joseph, they would have never sent forth those instructions on forgiveness.

The brothers come and throw themselves down before Joseph, again the image of the prophetic dream on repeat! They go so far as to say, "*We are your slaves.*" What a change of heart from guys that actually made him a slave in the past.

Let's learn from Joseph by how he handles such a delicate situation. He points them to God.

“But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” v19 -21

Joseph spoke the truth in love. Yes, he understood that they intended to kill him, but God gave him a greater perspective. Joseph could now see the big picture. God took that awful act and used it for His good.

In the middle of your wait, you may only be seeing one small puzzle piece of a much greater puzzle. Your puzzle piece or situation may literally make you feel puzzled, wondering how this will ever fit or be fixed. But if you step back, take your hands off and trust God with your situation, He will bring good out of the darkest problems.

Questions:

1. Do you identify with the brothers being fearful of Joseph’s intentions?
2. What did you learn from Joseph’s perspective on the harm intended for him?
3. Do you feel like God can bring something good out of your situation?

Day 22 God keeps His promises

Genesis 50: 22 – 26

Exodus: 13:19

John 3:16

Romans 6:23

The last time we saw Joseph, he was reassuring his brothers that he would take care of them. He kept his promise and the Israelites flourished in Goshen. Joseph lived to be 110 years old, even seeing the third generation of his son Ephraim’s children.

Joseph understood God’s promises and that they arrive on God’s timetable and not our own. He saw them fulfilled in his lifetime, but one big promise made to his grandfather Abraham, was yet to be fulfilled – the promise of the Israelites living in their promised land. Lest we forget, the Israelites were happily living in

Egypt at this point in history, but God had made a promise and it would come to be. So believing that the Israelites would be living in their promised land one day, Joseph made his brothers swear that they would carry his bones up from Egypt when that time came.

That promise would be fulfilled by another great biblical hero more than 400 years later.

“Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.” Exodus 13:19

Friend, as we finish up our study of the life of Joseph, I hope you’ve been encouraged as you wait on God. Remember this:

- God is never late
- God keeps his promises
- God’s timing is perfect
- God is with you and will never leave you
- God is preparing you for His great purpose
- God will work all things for your good if you are his child and called to his purpose

Finally, we don’t want to ever end a HealingStrong study without giving you the chance to repent and ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins and to help you forgive others. You see, each of us is a sinner and there’s nothing we can do to earn salvation on our own. But Jesus Christ, God’s perfect Son, took your sin and mine and He died on a cross for us so that we can have eternal life. If you haven’t asked Jesus to be the Lord of your life and to forgive your sins, we want to invite you to do that now. Pray this prayer out loud:

“Dear Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. I trust you as my Lord and Savior. Please help me to daily surrender to your will. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

If you prayed that prayer, please tell someone. You can email our prayer team at: prayerrequest@healingstrong.org and they will be praying for you!

Prepared in the Waiting was written by Cheryl Collins, a volunteer with HealingStrong, a non-profit organization of community groups designed to help those battling cancer and other diseases to rebuild the body, restore the soul and refresh the spirit. We're here to walk with you on any healing journey! Find us online at Healingstrong.org.