INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND APPROACH TO LESSON

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM (GEN 41:25-32)

Which Pharaoh (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Interpretation requires revelation from God (25)

Revelation through Jesus (John 14:9-10)
Revelation of God's will (Eph 1:9)
Revelation through the prophets (Rom 16:25-26)
Revelation through the Church (Eph 3:10)
Revelation of righteousness through faith (Rom 3:21-22)
Revelation of God's wrath (Rom 1:18-20)

Interpretation of good times (26)

Good times are promised for those who trust in God (Prov 28:25)
Good times are promised for those who abide in God (John 15:7)
Good times through well-being (Ps 35:27)
Good times through righteousness (Ps 92:12-14)
Good times through delighting in God's word (Ps 1:1-3)
Good times through remaining in Jesus (John 15:3-5)
Good times into old age (Isa 46:4)
Good times through the fear of the Lord (Ps 128:1-2)

Interpretation of bad times (27)

Bad times are to purify (Job 23:10)
Bad times are to influence obedience (Ps 119:67)
Bad times are to aid in achieving eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17)
Bad times are to be expected in this life (1 Peter 4:12)
Bad times refine (Ps 66:10)
Bad times prove faith genuine (1 Peter 1:7)
Bad times to show what's in the heart (Deut 8:2)

ACTIONS NEEDED BASED ON THE DREAM (GEN 41:33-36)

Wisdom is needed for good interpretation (33)

Wisdom is needed because God gives it generously (James 1:5)
Wisdom is needed because God's word contains it and through obedience it will provide wisdom (Deut 4:5-6)
Wisdom is needed because God can fill with all knowledge, wisdom and understanding (Col 1:9)
Wisdom is needed because God's wisdom is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17)
Wisdom is needed because God teaches it to those seek it (Ps 90:12)
Wisdom is needed because it is a blessing (Prov 3:13)

Helpers are needed to carry out the good interpretation (34)

Helpers to share the load (Ex 18:13-23)
Helpers to share the responsibility (Acts 6:3)
Helpers to ensure everywhere is reached (Acts 1:21-26)
Helpers called out by God (Acts 13:2-3)
Helpers because two are better than one (Eccl 4:9-12)
Helpers because sometimes the burden is too heavy for one (Num 11:14-17)
Preparation is needed for good interpretation (35-36)
Preparation by pressing on toward the goal (Phil 3:12-14)
Preparation by not losing heart, but focusing on the eternal (2 Cor 4:16-18)
Preparation by depending on the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 5:1-5)
Preparation by keeping the faith (2 Tim 4:7-8)

JOSEPH'S EXALTATION BASED THE DREAM (GEN 41:37-40)

Exaltation based on the goodness of the plan (37)
- Plans are good when they seek those whom God has given an instructed tongue (Isa 50:4-5)
- Plans are good when they seek advice at the right time (Prov 15:23)
- Plans are good when they are careful from whom they get advice (Ps 1:1)
- Plans are good when they don't depend on just one person's advice (Prov 15:22)
- Plans are good when they have many godly advisers (Prov 15:22)
- Plans are good when we commit ourselves to God (Prov 16:3)

Exaltation based on the guidance of the Holy Spirit (38-39)
- Relying on the Holy Spirit through having the Mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:12-16)
- Guidance that is part of God's plan for one's life (Jer 29:11)
- Guidance into truth (John 16:13-15)
- Guidance that is not under the law (Gal 5:18)
- Guidance that represents one is a child of God (Rom 8:14)

Exaltation into leadership (40)
- Leaders must focus on God's Word in order not to error (Matt 22:29)
- Leaders must focus on God's Word so that they can be confirmed by the followers (Acts 17:11)
- Leadership means being entrusted with God's work (Titus 1:7)
- Leadership means being blameless so as to encourage godliness (1 Thess 2:10-12)
- Leadership means being faithful because of being given a trust (1 Cor 4:2)
- Leadership means having integrity (Titus 2:7-8)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR
PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR
HEART OF THE LESSON FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR
- God's wisdom revealed (Gen. 41:25-28)
- God's wisdom in action (Gen. 41:29-32)
- God's wisdom proven successful (Gen. 41:33-37)
- God's wisdom endures (Gen. 41:38-40)
Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The concept of the outline of the lesson came from NIV Standard Lesson Commentary. The lesson examines Interpretation and how God works in it. The study’s aim is to learn that when we are faithful to God, He will show us His mind and bless us. The study’s application is to seek and depend on knowing the Mind of God and how we must stay close to God and wait His timing.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When betrayed, injured, or overlooked, we can become bitter or depressed. We need to realize that God never wastes our pain. As the biblical record of Joseph’s life continues, we see God using Joseph’s trials to mature him and to bring about a plan of provision through this faithful servant. On the other hand, it’s easy to feel proud or deserving of our blessings when things go well. In those cases, we need to learn not to confuse God’s achievements with our own. We know that humility is a trait that makes us useful in the kingdom of God. It keeps us from becoming self-important. It keeps us close to our source of strength. In good times and bad, it’s easy to forget God’s behind-the-scenes work. Joseph, though confident of God’s ability to work through him, remained clear about his own inability: “I cannot do it” (Genesis 41:16). The challenge is to remain humble and encouraged through all circumstances, realizing that God is shaping us through each frustration and success. When we last saw Joseph, he was on his way to Egypt and into slavery. His chances for a good life appeared to be very bleak. Joseph probably thought he would never see his family again. Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. Joseph proved to be an excellent worker. Soon he was appointed to be manager over all the administrative affairs of Potiphar’s household. This situation lasted as long as Joseph was able to keep his master’s wife away from him. Potiphar’s wife lusted after Joseph, creating a major temptation for him. One day she waited for the appropriate moment to try once more. Joseph rebuffed her, but in revenge she accused him of attempted rape (Genesis 39). Joseph wound up in prison. There he demonstrated his skills as an administrator, and he was soon running the prison. This position lasted for several years. During that time, Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker were thrown into prison. Both had dreams. Joseph interpreted their dreams, and the interpretations proved to be accurate: the butler was restored to his position, and the baker was hanged. Then Pharaoh had dreams that no one could explain. The cupbearer told Pharaoh about Joseph. Joseph was cleaned up, appropriately dressed, and brought before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:14). The Egyptians believed that revelation from “the gods” could come through dreams. The dreams of Pharaoh thus provided the avenue for Joseph to be released from prison. Joseph himself had had two dreams (Genesis 37:5–7, 9) and two of his fellow prisoners had dreams as well (40:5–23). Then Joseph found himself confronted with two dreams of Pharaoh to interpret.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Researchers have concluded that about one-fourth of our time sleeping is spent dreaming. Upon awakening, we may wonder why we had such strange dreams. Some believe dreams have special meaning and attempt to interpret them, though there is usually little agreement among the interpreters. Dreams recorded in the Bible often did have special meaning, though. God even used dreams to communicate with those not directly serving Him, as with Abimelech (Gen. 20:3) and Pilate's wife (Matt. 27:19). While God did speak in many and various ways (Heb. 1:1), dreams were frequently used to communicate His will in the Old Testament. There are also some notable examples of dreams and visions after Pentecost (Acts 9:10; 10:9-10; 16:9; 18:9). Joseph's brothers had already tagged him with the nickname "dreamer" (Gen. 37:19). Sharing his dreams with them had only aroused their hatred of him. Now, however, his ability to interpret dreams led to his release from prison and catapulted him into prominence in Pharaoh's court. Sometimes we ask ourselves, is it worth it to continue trying to serve God? We become discouraged when we face...
difficulties, and we may begin to fall away in our commitment to Him. But our lesson this week shows us how Joseph stood firm despite many setbacks in his life and held on to his faith in God. God then used him to bless the land, for Joseph had the wisdom of God in everything that he did.

Major Theme Analysis

(SCRIPTURAL TEXT FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION; CROSS-REFERENCES FROM THE NIV)

Interpretation of the Dream (Gen 41:25-32)

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: 26 "The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 "And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. 28 "This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29 "Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; 30 "but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. 31 "So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. 32 "And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Which Pharaoh (FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY)

We are not able to identify with certainty the Pharaoh under whom Joseph serves, but we can make an educated guess. Using biblical chronology, we can date Joseph’s life to between 1916 and 1806 B.C. Joseph enters Pharaoh’s service at age 30 (Genesis 41:46). That is about the year 1886 B.C. This dating points to Sesostris (also spelled Senusret) II as the Pharaoh in question. His reign occurs during Egypt’s Middle Kingdom Twelfth Dynasty (a dynasty that lasts from approximately 1937 to 1759 B.C.).

Interpretation requires revelation from God (25)

Revelation through Jesus (John 14:9-10)

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?

Revelation of God's will (Eph 1:9)

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

Revelation through the prophets (Rom 16:25-26)

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him

Revelation through the Church (Eph 3:10)

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,
Revelation of righteousness through faith (Rom 3:21-22)
21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Revelation of God’s wrath (Rom 1:18-20)
18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Interpretation of good times (26)

Good times are promised for those who trust in God (Prov 28:25)
25 A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.

Good times are promised for those who abide in God (John 15:7)
7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

Good times through well-being (Ps 35:27)
27 May those who delight in my vindication shout for joy and gladness; may they always say, "The LORD be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant."

Good times through righteousness (Ps 92:12-14)
12 The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; 13 planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green,

Good times through delighting in God’s word (Ps 1:1-3)
Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Good times through remaining in Jesus (John 15:3-5)
4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Good times into old age (Isa 46:4)
4 Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

Good times through the fear of the Lord (Ps 128:1-2)
Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways. 2 You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.
Interpretation of bad times (27)

**Bad times are to purified (Job 23:10)**
10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.

**Bad times are to influence obedience (Ps 119:67)**
67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

**Bad times are to aid in achieving eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17)**
17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

**Bad times are to be expected in this life (1 Peter 4:12)**
12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

**Bad times refine (Ps 66:10)**
10 For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

**Bad times prove faith genuine (1 Peter 1:7)**
7 These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

**Bad times to show what's in the heart (Deut 8:2)**
2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

**Actions Needed Based on the Dream (Gen 41:33-36)**
33 "Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.
34 "Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years.
35 "And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.
36 "Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine."

**Wisdom is needed for good interpretation (33)**

*Wisdom is needed because God gives it generously (James 1:5)*
5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

*Wisdom is needed because God's word contains it and through obedience it will provide wisdom (Deut 4:5-6)*
5 See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. 6 Observe them carefully, for this
will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

*Wisdom is needed because God can fill with all knowledge, wisdom and understanding (Col 1:9)*

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

*Wisdom is needed because God's wisdom is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17)*

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

*Wisdom is needed because God teaches it to those seek it (Ps 90:12)*

12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

*Wisdom is needed because it is a blessing (Prov 3:13)*

13 Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding,

**Helpers are needed to carry out the good interpretation (34)**

*Helpers to share the load (Ex 18:13-23)*

13 The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 14 When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, 'What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?' 15 Moses answered him, 'Because the people come to me to seek God's will. 16 Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws.' 17 Moses' father-in-law replied, 'What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. 19 Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. 20 Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. 21 But select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.'

*Helpers to share the responsibility (Acts 6:3)*

3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.

*Helpers to ensure everywhere is reached (Acts 1:21-26)*

21 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." 23 So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. 24 Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." 26 Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.
Helpers called out by God (Acts 13:2-3)

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Helpers because two are better than one (Eccl 4:9-12)

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! 11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Helpers because sometimes the burden is too heavy for one (Num 11:14-17)

I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. 15 If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now--if I have found favor in your eyes--and do not let me face my own ruin." 16 The LORD said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you.

Preparation is needed for good interpretation (35-36)

Preparation by pressing on toward the goal (Phil 3:12-14)

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Preparation by not losing heart, but focusing on the eternal (2 Cor 4:16-18)

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Preparation by depending on the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 5:1-5)

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Preparation by keeping the faith (2 Tim 4:7-8)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Joseph's Exaltation Based the Dream (Gen 41:37-40)

So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"
Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. "You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you."

Exaltation based on the goodness of the plan (37)

*Plans are good when they seek those whom God has given an instructed tongue (Isa 50:4-5)*

4 The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. 5 The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.

*Plans are good when they seek advice at the right time (Prov 15:23)*

23 A man finds joy in giving an apt reply--and how good is a timely word!

*Plans are good when they are careful from whom they get advice (Ps 1:1)*

1:1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

*Plans are good when they don't depend on just one person's advice (Prov 15:22)*

22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

*Plans are good when they have many godly advisers (Prov 15:22)*

22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

*Plans are good when we commit ourselves to God (Prov 16:3)*

3 Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

Exaltation based on the guidance of the Holy Spirit (38-39)

*Relying on the Holy Spirit through having the Mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:12-16)*

12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

*Guidance that is part of God's plan for one's life (Jer 29:11)*

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

*Guidance into truth (John 16:13-15)*

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.
Guidance that is not under the law (Gal 5:18)
18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Guidance that represents one is a child of God (Rom 8:14)
14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Exaltation into leadership (40)

Leaders must focus on God's Word in order not to error (Matt 22:29)
29 Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.

Leaders must focus on God's Word so that they can be confirmed by the followers (Acts 17:11)
11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Leadership means being entrusted with God's work (Titus 1:7)
7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless-not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

Leadership means being blameless so as to encourage godliness (1 Thess 2:10-12)
10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Leadership means being faithful because of being given a trust (1 Cor 4:2)
2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Leadership means having integrity (Titus 2:7-8)
7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When Joseph left prison to meet Pharaoh, he had no idea what direction his life was going to take. A meeting with Pharaoh! This could have meant either the end of his life, freedom, or merely being thrown right back in prison. It is highly unlikely that the thought of receiving a lifetime appointment to a high government position ever crosses Joseph’s mind. But now he is being made the second most important man in all of Egypt (compare Daniel 2:48; 5:29; 6:1–3). Egypt is one of the most powerful nations in the world at the time. Now Joseph is in charge of all of Pharaoh’s people. Joseph’s word is to be the final word in all matters. He is answerable to no one except Pharaoh. In the text that follows, we find Pharaoh affirming Joseph’s high status (Genesis 41:41). Pharaoh does this by giving his personal signet ring to Joseph (Genesis 41:42). This kind of ring is used to make wax-seal impressions on official decrees. That seal impression will be as if Pharaoh himself is issuing the decree. Joseph is also given linen robes and a gold neck chain. He will also ride in a chariot—the limousine of the day. He is given a bodyguard who is to run before him (Genesis 41:43). People will bow down as his chariot passes by. But that’s not all. Joseph also is given a wife from the family of one of the most important religious figures in the country (Genesis
41:45). We cannot resist speculating at this point that Joseph must recall his early dreams, wondering how they will come to pass. He certainly will recall those dreams a few years later (Genesis 42:9). Joseph is one of the greatest men of the Old Testament. He started out as the special child of his father, but was hated by his brothers. He was sold into slavery by these brothers. Then he was indicted by a vindictive woman for refusing to be unfaithful to God. He was forgotten in prison for a time by a person whom he befriended and for whom he predicted a return to his former position. Any one of these events could have been enough to send a person into a permanent depression. Joseph had frequent opportunities to sin. Who would care if he did? Potiphar’s wife certainly wouldn’t have cared! His father thought he was dead. His brothers were far away and didn’t know or care where he was. His peers in Egypt were accustomed to sin and degradation. They would not seek to lead Joseph in the right direction morally. Through exile, slavery, and abuse, Joseph remained faithful to God. After 13 years (from age 17 to age 30), God honored Joseph’s faithfulness.

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Life for Joseph was not easy. But God took the twists and turns in his life to work out all things for his good. Joseph was a godly influence in a foreign nation, and he held the second highest position in the land. God had elevated him because of his faithfulness in times of trial and trouble. Today we too are called to be faithful wherever we have been planted, and then God will see that we are promoted to do greater and better things. It is He who sees that we will be found in the right place at the right time. Nothing happens to the Christian without God's knowledge. God had His hand on Joseph. Joseph had been languishing in an Egyptian prison. Now, all of a sudden, he was the second most powerful person in Egypt. Joseph had suffered much and had been imprisoned for unjust reasons. Even his being in Egypt was the result of an injustice, for his brothers had sold him as a slave. Joseph had also helped out a fellow prisoner, but it seemed that prisoner had forgotten all about him. It seemed hopeless for Joseph—and strange, too, for he is shown earlier as being a very good and faithful man. Joseph remained that way throughout his life. Even when offered the opportunity of adultery, he declined. When threatened by the woman, he said he would rather suffer for doing right than for doing wrong. He proved his words by going to prison without having committed a single punishable offense. Joseph is certainly an example to follow and a person to be admired for his refusal to let his circumstances rule his life. We might even feel compassion and understand if he had become depressed or even angry with God. Instead, we see a picture of faith that we all can take as an example. The biggest lesson in this account is the sovereignty of God. God knows what will happen tomorrow, and we do not. It is so easy to look at all the things going on in our lives and get depressed or angry because they do not seem to be going well. We may also have great injustices done against us, and it may appear that evil people are winning. Still, we need to realize that God is in control and that He knows what is going to happen. Even though he suffered terrible injustice, Joseph was also blessed because God was with him. Even in the Egyptian prison, he won the favor of the guards. Surely Joseph was not happy about his condition. Even in bad conditions, though, he did what he could do and was blessed. It is the same with us. As children of God, we are blessed. We may also suffer hardship or even injustice, but we should try to recognize the blessings we do have. We do not know the things God has in store for us or what His plans are. Joseph might have been content to just get out of jail, but God had in mind making him second-in-command of the entire nation of Egypt. In order for that to happen, Joseph had to be in the right place. The elevation to leadership might not have happened if he had been released from jail earlier, and God knew that. God was working behind the scenes to bring about a much larger purpose than Joseph had ever dreamed of. Like Joseph, we should remember that God is in heaven and is watching out for us. He may have to let some bad things happen in order to bring about His overall plan, but we still can know that God cares for us just as He did for Joseph. God has a plan and controls all things. We can rest in that knowledge and have peace.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. A wise man gives God the glory due Him (Gen. 41:25)
2. In His grace, God provides for men both great and small, righteous and unrighteous (Gen. 41:26-28; Matt. 5:45)
3. Only God can reveal the future, and when He does, you can believe Him (Gen. 41:29-32)
4. Revealed truth requires responsible action (vs. 33-34)
5. True faith does not exclude thoughtful preparation (vs. 35-37)
6. God usually entrusts His servant with a little before entrusting him with a lot (Gen. 41:38-40; Matt. 25:14-30)

**Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

This week's lesson gives us an opportunity to see how God will work for His people. Joseph had been badly mistreated by his brothers. He was also put in jail because of a false accusation made by his master's wife. How do you respond when you are mistreated? God turned Joseph's negative situation into something positive. He can do the same for us. It is not necessary to complain when we encounter difficult situations. Let us trust God for strength and wait on Him to bring deliverance. He is well able to do so.

**God's wisdom revealed (Gen. 41:25-28)**

Wisdom is a gift from God. God is willing to liberally give wisdom to those who ask Him for it (Jas. 1:5). God blessed Joseph and gave him wisdom. His wisdom and discretion saved the Jewish nation. God is mindful of us. Pharaoh needed someone to interpret the dream that greatly troubled him. No one he knew was able to interpret his dream. Joseph was in prison when someone who had been in prison with him remembered his ability to interpret dreams. God gave Joseph the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. He also helped Joseph understand the significance of Pharaoh's dream. The meaning of his dream was not to be taken lightly. Action needed to be taken.

**God's wisdom in action (Gen. 41:29-32)**

The interpretation of Pharaoh's dream revealed that the land of Egypt would experience seven years of having plenty of food. Following the seven years of plentiful harvests, a seven-year famine would occur. The famine would be devastating. It would cause the people to forget about the plentiful years, God graciously forewarned Pharaoh, through Joseph, to prepare for the forthcoming famine. It is important to follow God's directions. Joseph recommended that Pharaoh have someone with prudence store food during the plentiful years in order to have food during the famine. Taking heed to God's warning can be very beneficial to us. On the other hand, ignoring His warning can be harmful.

**God's wisdom proven successful (Gen. 41:33-37)**

God gave Joseph a plan. God helped him use wisdom and discretion during the season of prosperity. Careful planning can make the difference between having enough and not having enough. Pharaoh believed that there was no other person more discreet or wiser than Joseph. It is truly amazing how God made it possible for Joseph to have favor with Pharaoh.

**God's wisdom endures (Gen. 41:38-40)**

Joseph had experienced many harsh situations. He had been brought down very low by his brothers. They wanted to kill him. Instead, they cast him into a pit and later sold him as a slave. He was also put in prison falsely. God brought deliverance to him and elevated him. Joseph became the second-in-command over Egypt. It is easy to be kind to those who are kind to us, but it is usually difficult to be kind to those who mistreat us. Joseph was kind to his brothers even though they had mistreated him. He realized God's purpose in the matter. God was with Joseph throughout his entire ordeal. His grace helped Joseph endure. We have to rely on God's strength to endure difficult circumstances. God will strengthen us and give us grace to endure.