

# Obedient Love

Genesis 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52

SS Lesson for 09/13/2020

**Devotional Scripture:** 1 Peter 5:5-11

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Gen 41:39-40*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### OBEDIENCE IN INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM (GEN 41:25-33)

*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, 29, 30)*

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, 31, 32)*

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)

*Wisdom is needed for good leadership (33)*

Wisdom is needed because God gives it generously (James 1:5)

Wisdom is needed because God's word contains it and through obedience (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 and full of mercy (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)

#### OBEDIENCE LED TO PHARAOH'S FAVOR (GEN 41:37-40)

*Favor based on the goodness of the plan (37)*

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

Plans are good when sought through advice at the right time (Prov 15:23)

Plans are good when there is care from whom advice is provided (Ps 1:1)

Plans are good when there is dependence on more than one person's advice (Prov 15:22)

Plans are good when there are many godly advisers (Prov 15:22)

Plans are good when there is commitment to God (Prov 16:3)

*Favor 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)

*Favor led to 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)

#### LOVE LEADS TO A FAMILY (GEN 41:50-52)

##### *Family that relieves troubles (50-51)*

Relieves troubles through the favor of God (Prov 18:22)  
Relieves troubles through answered prayer (1 Sam 1:20)  
Relieves troubles because families are a reward (Ps 127:3)  
Relieves troubles through the family bringing joy (Prov 27:11)  
Relieves troubles through rejoicing in the wife and family (Prov 5:18)

##### *Family that provides fruitfulness (52)*

Fruitfulness through the blessings of God (Gen 28:3)  
Fruitfulness through a large family (Ps 128:3)  
Fruitfulness through obedience to God (Deut 28:2-4)  
Fruitfulness through righteousness (Isa 3:10)  
Fruitfulness through faithfulness of service (1 Cor 15:58)

### CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

#### COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

*Pharaoh's Problem and Joseph's Plan (41:14-36)*

*A Promotion by Pharaoh (41:37-45)*

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#### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Immigrants face a host of difficulties when settling into new countries. Cultural differences can be the biggest hurdles to being accepted in a community, a neighborhood, or by coworkers. Some immigrants do not invest the time or resources necessary to adopt the cultural mores of their new country. Sometimes it's not about lack of time or resources but about lack of desire; fitting in with cultural expectations of the new country may threaten the identity that a person has come to cherish. Fear of losing that identity can be isolating. One way self-identity is threatened is by rejecting the religion of the immigrant's country of origin. When a particular religion or faith expression has been integral to personal identity for decades, then challenges to that religion or expression may result in an identity crisis. Today's lesson features a man who faced a similar challenge: Joseph, sold into slavery in Egypt, adopted various facets of Egyptian culture as his own while being most resistant to changing his "one God" worldview, known as monotheism. Joseph looked, acted, and spoke like an Egyptian most of the time. But he did not lose his sense of dependence on God in a pagan culture. Whether in prison or in power, Joseph remained God's man—obedient, faithful, and willing to give God the credit.

Joseph was sold to an Egyptian official named Potiphar (Genesis 37:36). Joseph quickly found favor in Potiphar's eyes and was promoted to a position of great responsibility within Potiphar's household. Potiphar's wife, however, constantly pressured Joseph to sleep with her. Joseph refused every time (Genesis 39:9-10). When on one occasion Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife, his cloak was torn from him and left behind; she used it to accuse Joseph falsely of attempted rape. As a result, Potiphar had Joseph thrown in prison (39:11-20). Here too Joseph proved himself worthy of responsibility (Genesis 39:20-23). Dreams once again enter Joseph's story (compare 37:5-11) through two fellow prisoners. Joseph's experience had taught him that only God can reveal the true meaning of dreams (40:8; 41:16). The divinely inspired interpretations Joseph provided for each man's dream came true: one man was put to death, and the other man was restored to his position. Joseph requested of the latter that after regaining his position, he would mention Joseph to the Pharaoh. The man, however, forgot about Joseph for two years (40:1-41:1). Pharaoh had his own incomprehensible dreams. Though the content was easily conveyed, neither Pharaoh nor any of his magicians or wise men understood them (Genesis 41:1-8). In the first dream, seven healthy cows had come forth from the Nile River. They were followed by seven cows "ugly and gaunt" (41:3); Pharaoh said of these cows, "I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt" (41:19). Amazingly, the ugly cows devoured the healthy ones. Much the same occurred in Pharaoh's second

dream, though the details differed. Seven heads of grain appeared on a single stalk. Then there appeared seven withered heads of grain that had been scorched by a hot east wind. The thin heads of grain proceeded to eat up the fully grown heads of grain. When Pharaoh spoke of this conundrum, the forgetful former prisoner remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh of Joseph's ability to interpret dreams accurately. Joseph was quickly taken from the prison, made presentable, and brought before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:9-14).

### Key Verse: Gen 41:39-40

*39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. 40 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."*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

That Joseph did not lose faith in God's promise is proved by his willingness to interpret dreams. He was still convinced that God's revelation in his two previous dreams (37:5-7, 9) would be fulfilled.

**40:1-8.** In **prison** two servants of **Pharaoh**—his **chief cupbearer** and his **chief baker**—each **had a** troubling **dream the same night**. **Joseph** noticed their sadness and agreed to **interpret their dreams**. He understood their **dreams** to be from **God** and realized that God was beginning to work His will through two more dreams.

**40:9-15.** **Joseph** interpreted the dreams of the two servants of Pharaoh. **The chief** cupbearer's **dream** had a favorable interpretation. His dream reflected his profession, but with accelerated activity. The dream of the **three vine branches** of ripening **grapes** signified that **Pharaoh** would **lift up** the **head** of this man, that is, **restore** him to service **within three days**. To this, **Joseph** added the request that the man **remember** him and seek his release from **prison**.

**40:16-19.** The **dream** of the **baker** was not favorable. His dream also reflected his profession, but in it **birds were eating the bread** he was carrying in **three baskets** on his **head**. To the disappointment of the baker, **Joseph** explained that **Pharaoh** would also **lift** up his head within **three days**, but it would be execution by hanging after which **birds** would **eat his flesh**.

**40:20-23.** The interpretations proved to be true, for in three days Pharaoh on his **birthday... restored the... cupbearer** but executed the **baker**. **Joseph**, however, was forgotten in prison. Yet the significant fact for Joseph was that he was correctly interpreting dreams. He did not misunderstand God's revelations to him by dreams. He might not have understood his imprisonment, but he was encouraged in his faith. The **cupbearer... forgot him**, but God did not. In this hope Joseph had a persistent faith. His faith was not destroyed by his circumstances

God then used two dreams to elevate Joseph from the misery of prison to the splendor of the court. Joseph had proven himself faithful to God and therefore fit for service.

**41:1-8.** Pharaoh's two dreams caused him great distress, especially since none of the **wise men of Egypt** could explain them (v. 8). God used an Israelite slave to confound the wisdom of Egypt. Later in the days of Moses another Pharaoh would be at the mercy of God's power. Egyptian coloring is evident in these dreams. **Cows** like to stand half-submerged in the Nile **among its reeds** in refuge from the heat and the flies. They then come **up out of** the water for pasture. The troubling part of the first dream was that seven **ugly and gaunt** cows came up and devoured the **seven... fat cows**. The **second dream** carried a similar message: **seven plump ears of grain... on a single stalk** were swallowed up by seven **thin and scorched** ears of **grain** that sprouted **after them**. **The magicians** belonged to a guild expert in handling the ritual books of magic and priestcraft. However, they could not **interpret Pharaoh's dreams**. A later guild of wise men in Babylon also would be unable to interpret a king's dream, and God would use another Hebrew slave, Daniel, to show that no matter how powerful a nation might be, it is still not beyond God's sovereign control (Dan. 2).

**41:9-27.** **Joseph** was summoned from prison when the **cupbearer** remembered that **Joseph** was gifted in interpreting **dreams**. Yet when Joseph stood before Pharaoh (**shaved**, as was the Egyptian custom, and in a fresh change of **clothes**) he declared that the interpretation was with **God** alone (cf. 40:8). After **Pharaoh** recounted both dreams (41:17-24; cf. vv. 1-8), Joseph reiterated this conviction as he explained that **God** was making known **to Pharaoh what He** was **about to do** (vv. 25-27).

**41:28-32.** Both dreams predicted that **seven years** of plenty would be followed by **seven years** of severe **famine**. Furthermore, Joseph explained that because **the dream** came in **two** versions it signified that it was of **God**, and would be carried out **soon**. During God's dealings with him several things must have been on Joseph's mind: his own two dreams (37:5-7, 9), his two imprisonments (37:36; 39:20), the two dreamers in prison (40:5-23), and now Pharaoh's two dreams.

**41:33-36.** God's revelation demanded a response. So Joseph advised **Pharaoh** to choose a **wise man** who would oversee storing 20 percent of **the grain** during each of the **years** of plenty for the coming **years of famine**. Wisdom literature teaches that wisely planning ahead is a basic principle of practical living.

**41:37-40.** The **man** whom **Pharaoh** recognized as capable for such a task was **Joseph** in whom was **the Spirit of God**. Centuries later Daniel was chosen to be the third highest ruler in Babylon for the same reason (Dan. 5:7, 16). Joseph had been faithful over all the little things God sent him; now he would become ruler over all the land of Egypt under **Pharaoh**.

**41:41-46.** The **signet ring** Pharaoh gave **Joseph** was a ring with a seal used for signing documents. When the seal was impressed on a soft clay document which then hardened, it left an indelible impression of the ruler's seal and so carried his authority. Pharaoh also **dressed** Joseph in **linen** clothes and a **gold neck chain**, made him **second in command** to Pharaoh, and **had him ride** in the second **chariot** so all the people could do homage to him. As a token of Joseph's new status, **Pharaoh** gave him a wife, **Asenath**, from the priestly family of **On** (a city which was a center of sun worship seven miles north of Cairo and also known as Heliopolis). He also gave Joseph an Egyptian name, **Zaphenath-Paneah** (the meaning of which is unknown). **Joseph was 30** at the time of his installment, 13 years after he was sold by his brothers (cf. 37:2). Joseph's position gave him opportunity to travel extensively across **Egypt**. (Ps. 105:16-22 speaks of Joseph's imprisonment, release, and rise to power.)

**41:47-52.** Pharaoh's dreams were then fulfilled. **The land produced** abundant, even immeasurable crops for **seven years**, and **Joseph** gathered them into storage **in the** Egyptian **cities**, exercising absolute authority throughout the land. In spite of his success, he did not abandon his Israelite heritage. He gave his two sons characteristically Hebrew names. **Manasseh (forget)** signified that **God** had **made** him forget the misery of his separation from his family. **Ephraim (fruitful)** signified that **God** had **made** him fruitful **in the land** of Egypt.

**41:53-57.** Joseph's wisdom bore fruit, for **the seven** good **years** were indeed followed by **seven years** of severe **famine**, and **the Egyptians** and people in other **countries** as well went to **buy grain** from the storehouses throughout Egypt. At last **Joseph** was in power in **Egypt**. God's revelation to him by dreams was being fulfilled.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### ***Obedience in Interpretation of the Dream (Gen 41:25-33)***

- 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.  
33 "Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.

## **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, 29, 30)**

### *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, 31, 32)**

*Bad times are to purify (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.

### **Wisdom is needed for good leadership (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 (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 and full of mercy (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,

### **Obedience Led to Pharaoh's Favor (Gen 41:37-40)**

37 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?"

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.

40 "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."

### **Favor based on the goodness of the plan (37)**

*Plans are good when sought through 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 sought through 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 there is care from whom advice is provided (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 there is dependence on more than one person's advice (Prov 15:22)*

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

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

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

*Plans are good when there is commitment to God (Prov 16:3)*

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

### **Favor 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.

### **Favor led to 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 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.

### **Love Leads to a Family (Gen 41:50-52)**

50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.

51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."

52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

## **Family that relieves troubles (50-51)**

*Relieves troubles through the favor of God (Prov 18:22)*

22 He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.

*Relieves troubles through answered prayer (1 Sam 1:20)*

20 So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

*Relieves troubles because families are a reward (Ps 127:3)*

3 Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him.

*Relieves troubles through the family bringing joy (Prov 27:11)*

11 Be wise, my son, and bring joy to my heart; then I can answer anyone who treats me with contempt.

*Relieves troubles through rejoicing in the wife and family (Prov 5:18)*

18 May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

## **Family that provides fruitfulness (52)**

*Fruitfulness through the blessings of God (Gen 28:3)*

3 May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.

*Fruitfulness through a large family (Ps 128:3)*

3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table.

*Fruitfulness through obedience to God (Deut 28:2-4)*

2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: 3 You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. 4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock — the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

*Fruitfulness through righteousness (Isa 3:10)*

10 Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.

*Fruitfulness through faithfulness of service (1 Cor 15:58)*

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### **Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

#### **Pharaoh's Problem and Joseph's Plan (41:14-36)**

Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it. Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, "In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile; and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile; and they grazed in the marsh grass. And lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt; and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows. Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them; for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke. I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk; and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east

wind, sprouted up after them; and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me” (Genesis 41:14-24).

Joseph was hurriedly brought out of Potiphar’s dungeon, but he did not face Pharaoh until he had shaved and changed his clothes. This was not just “cleaning up,” which surely was needed; it was a cultural concession. To the Hebrews, a beard was a mark of dignity (cf. II Samuel 10:4-5; Ezra 9:3), but for the Egyptian it was an offensive thing. Joseph took the time to shave himself so as not to unnecessarily offend the king of Egypt. When Joseph came before Pharaoh, the distressing dreams of the previous night were immediately brought up. Pharaoh had heard that Joseph could interpret them.

What an opportune moment for Joseph to capitalize upon! If Jacob had been in his son’s sandals, things would have gone very differently, I believe. He would likely have used the occasion to make a bargain with the king—his freedom for Pharaoh’s request. Jacob would have had a special on interpretations that week. At the very least he would have made certain that Pharaoh understood the injustice of his present circumstances. “You see, Pharaoh, I would really like to help you with your problem, but my mind is so troubled with my circumstances just now that I can’t think ...”

As much as Joseph desired to be released from his captivity, he never brought up the subject. His first concern was not with his own comfort, but with God’s glory. The ability to interpret dreams, which Pharaoh had credited to Joseph, was not his at all. Only God can interpret dreams, Joseph quickly corrected. The young Hebrew slave’s words not only clarified the source of his ability, but they also seemed to give Pharaoh hope that the outcome of Joseph’s ministry to him would bring him comfort in his distress (verse 16). With these words, Pharaoh eagerly repeated his dreams to Joseph, closing by confessing the inability of his most able counselors to give him any word of explanation (verse 24).

Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same. And the seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind shall be seven years of famine. It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will ravage the land. So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe. Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about. And now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh’s authority, and let them guard it. And let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish during the famine” (Genesis 41:25-36).

Joseph skillfully interpreted the two dreams. His interpretation closely followed the two dreams in many particulars, a fact which could hardly have been unnoticed by Pharaoh and which added credibility to Joseph’s explanation. The two dreams, while different in some details, were one in their meaning (verse 25). Both dreams were given in order to indicate the certainty of what was to occur (verse 32). In each instance “seven” was the time involved—seven years. The fat cows and the plump heads of grain were indicative of the seven years of abundance which were to commence soon in Egypt. The seven gaunt cows and the seven scorched and withered heads of grain foretold the famine which was to follow the years of plenty. The bottom line was that Egypt was to have seven years of plenty followed by a famine so severe that all of the previous abundance would be consumed.

How easy it would have been to stop here. There was good news and bad news for Pharaoh—abundance followed by famine. But Joseph was more than a prophet; he was an administrator. Not only was he able to foretell “things to come,” but he was also competent to analyze the situation and determine the best course of action in order to minimize its detrimental effects. And so a decisive plan of action was proposed to Pharaoh along with the predictions that were given.

A capable administrator was required. He should be instructed to take command of the situation and to gather up a double portion of the bumper crops that would be produced by the land in the years of prosperity. Under him, men should be appointed to make collections and supervise the storage of the land’s produce. These surpluses should be brought into the cities for safe-keeping and later distribution. By these means the effects of the famine could be minimized.

I have become more convinced than ever, having gained a deeper appreciation for the character and humble spirit of Joseph, that it never entered into his mind that he should be the one appointed over this project. Self-interest had never been manifest in his character or conduct prior to this. He did not even mention his unjust imprisonment. Furthermore, who could ever have conceived of a Hebrew slave being elevated to the second highest office in the land? Regardless of the person in charge, the plan would have to be followed in order to deal with the famine which was predicted.

### **A Promotion by Pharaoh (41:37-45)**

Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put the gold necklace around his neck. And he had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:37-45).

While there was a certain amount of relief resulting from Joseph's interpretation, the greatest comfort came from his proposed plan of action and the evidence of his competence to oversee the matter. Even the magicians unanimously concurred (But then, who among them would have dared to disagree!) that Joseph was the man for the job.

While Pharaoh's statement gives testimony to his conviction that Joseph had divine enablement, I do not think that his understanding was such as to equip him to write a theology of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. I believe that Pharaoh was willing to grant Joseph's assertion that God was with him and that he had spiritual enablement. He was thus willing to acknowledge that there was a god who, through a divine spirit, worked through Joseph. At this point his conception of Joseph's religion was extremely elementary. More time with Joseph likely changed this.

The best that Joseph could have dared to hope for was a release from his imprisonment. How far beyond this was his elevation to a position of power and prestige! Tokens of his new authority were the signet ring, fine garments, a gold necklace, and the royal chariot, preceded by those who proclaimed the fame and position of Joseph (verses 42, 43). That chariot may not have been the Rolls Royce of Pharaoh's fleet, but it was at least a Mercedes Benz. Just as Joseph was second only to Potiphar, now he was to answer only to Pharaoh (verses 40, 44).

Pharaoh took two other highly symbolic actions which helped to cement Joseph's new position with the people of the land. First, Joseph was given an Egyptian name. There are numerous conjectures as to what this name meant. Frankly, I do not have the slightest idea what that name meant, nor do I care. An Egyptian name, whatever it meant, signified that in Pharaoh's mind Joseph was not a "mere Hebrew" (which were despised by the people of Egypt (43:32, 46:34), but an Egyptian. Among the American Indians the counterpart to this would have been to make Joseph a blood-brother of the tribe.

This is further confirmed by the gift of an Egyptian wife, Asenath (verse 45). Many Christians are troubled by the fact that Joseph took a wife from among the Egyptians. Let me ask you a very practical question. Had you been Joseph, where would you have gone to find a godly wife? Would you have gone to Judah, who was willing to sleep with a Canaanite cult prostitute? Would you have gone to your brothers, who tried to kill you? Would you go to a man like Laban? Where could a man find a godly wife in those days?

God had not yet given any commandments regarding marriage, but what was later laid down in the law did not forbid a marriage such as that of Joseph:

When you go out to battle against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands, and you take them away captive, and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and have a desire for her and would take her as a wife for yourself, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. She shall also remove the clothes of her captivity and shall remain in your house, and mourn her father and mother a full month; and after that you may go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife (Deuteronomy 21:10-13).

Only marriage to a Canaanite woman was forbidden by God:

But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you, in order that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God (Deuteronomy 20:17-18).

We must, therefore, conclude that Joseph did not sin by taking this Egyptian woman to be his wife. The fact that she was the daughter of an Egyptian priest (verse 45) does not necessarily indicate otherwise. I doubt very much that Pharaoh would have given Joseph a wife who would have been an offense to him or a contradiction to his beliefs. I further doubt that Joseph would have taken her as his wife if she would have been a detriment to his spiritual life. The kind of man who could say “no” to Potiphar’s wife would surely have declined Potiphara’s daughter if she would hinder his faith.

### **A Program Implemented (41:46-57)**

The final section serves several purposes. First, it reveals the accuracy of Joseph’s interpretation. Second, it evidences the administrative astuteness of Joseph in handling the affairs of state in preparation for the famine to come. Finally, it reveals to us Joseph’s continued spiritual commitment to the God of his fathers.

Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt. And during the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt, and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure. Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore to him. And Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.” And he named the second Ephraim, “For,” he said, “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.” When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do.” When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. And the people of all the earth come to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth (Genesis 41:46-57).

Just as Joseph had indicated, the next seven years were marked by great abundance. The land produced in such quantity that the grain held in reserve for the future was beyond measure (verse 49). Joseph skillfully carried out the plan which he had proposed to Pharaoh, storing up a fifth of the grain in the cities for later use. At the end of the seven years of plenty, the famine hit Egypt with severity. The people came to Pharaoh requesting bread, and he sent them to Joseph, telling them to do whatever he said (verse 55). Joseph opened the storehouses and began to sell grain to the Egyptians and to those from other lands, some of whom would be his own brothers.

During the years of Egypt’s great prosperity Joseph was blessed with two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The names which they were given give us further indication of Joseph’s spiritual condition during these exhilarating years in Pharaoh’s palace. Manasseh, which means “making to forget” (margin, NASV), was Joseph’s expression of his gratitude toward God, Who had enabled him to forget “all my trouble and all my father’s household” (verse 51). I do not think that this should be understood in a negative way as though Joseph had no more interest or concern for them. Certainly God’s rich blessings had enabled him to blot out the painful memories of the past, especially the hurt and bitterness which could only harbor a grudge against his brothers and seek an opportunity to get revenge.

Nor should we get the impression that Joseph had no more longings to see his father or his brothers I understand Joseph to mean that he was not overwhelmed with a compulsion to return home out of loneliness, but he was content to remain in the land where God had brought him. Had he returned to his home in Canaan, he could not be the deliverer of his family as God had purposed, and the nation would not be strangers in this foreign land as God had indicated to Abraham many years before:

And God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions” (Genesis 15:13-14).

While I do not wish to offer a new translation, this paraphrase may help to express the meaning which I think Joseph was trying to convey in the naming of Manasseh: “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my

trouble with my father's household." The bitterness was gone. Joseph was able, even now, to see that while his brothers were wrong in their actions, God had meant it for good (cf. 50:20). With this attitude Joseph could exercise sufficient self-control to keep from revealing his identity too quickly, and thus bring his brothers to genuine repentance by a careful program of instruction unimpeded by feelings of anger and vengeance.

The name Ephraim, that is "fruitfulness" (margin, NASV), conveyed the assurance of Joseph that it was God who had given him prosperity and blessing in the land of his affliction. To Joseph, affliction and blessing were not contradictory, for God was able to turn sorrow into joy.

*(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/41-pit-palace-genesis-411-57>)*

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

The God whom Joseph served and honored is the God we serve and honor today. No matter the circumstance, he does not change (Malachi 3:6). He remains in control. Whether we find ourselves in a pit or a palace, he is there. Joseph demonstrated radical faith in his God. Even though God might have seemed far away during the 13 years of slavery, God continued to give Joseph evidence that he had not forgotten the imprisoned man. How does your life witness to the same truth?

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary***

Pharaoh's Dreams - Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt had two perplexing dreams. By the sovereign grace and providence of God, Joseph found himself in a position to interpret the ruler's dreams. Through Pharaoh's dreams, God warned this wayward nation that they were on the brink of total disaster. Pharaoh's dream revealed that Egypt would enjoy seven prosperous, abundant years followed by seven years of a severe famine. God spoke through Joseph warning the Pharaoh to take immediate action to save his people.

Choosing a Leader - Joseph's warnings generated fear and worry among the Pharaoh and his servants. He asked for Joseph's advice. He instructed Pharaoh to appoint a knowledgeable person with practical wisdom to collect food in the time of plenty and store it up for the season of famine. However, what individual in Egypt could organize such a massive undertaking? Pharaoh could see Joseph's God was working through him. Joseph demonstrated abilities that far exceeded the local magicians. Pharaoh consulted with his servants, and they agreed—they needed Joseph to be the leader to carry out this plan. Pharaoh appointed Joseph second in command. He would speak as the Pharaoh's mouthpiece; the people under Pharaoh now were required to respect Joseph and follow his orders.

Obedience - Before the years of famine, Joseph married one of the Egyptian priest's daughters, Asenath, and she bore him two sons. Joseph named his oldest son Manasseh, which means "forgetfulness," showing that God was no longer allowing Joseph to recall his previous misfortunes. Joseph's other son's name, Ephraim (meaning "fruitful"), meant that God arranged for Joseph to be fruitful or prosperous in this foreign land. The names were Hebrew, not Egyptian, indicating Joseph had not put aside his heritage or God. Though at one point Joseph was in a pit, sold away by his brothers, and unjustly accused and imprisoned, God still controlled Joseph's life—preserving him for this season. He paved the way as Joseph obediently followed.