

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 Through Joseph's life, what insights have you gained about God's sovereignty? In what ways does God's sovereignty bring comfort to those experiencing hardships?
- 2 Is there a particular personal experience in your life where reflecting on the sovereignty of God brings you a sense of comfort? In what way did that experience change your perception of God?

WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.

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SUNDAY WORD

JULY 9, 2023

FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY! PART 3 WHO'S IN CHARGE?

No Bible doctrine is more obvious than the sovereignty of God. You can find it on every page of the Bible. Job 23:13 says, "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases".

Sovereignty means that God is in charge of all things, at all times, and in every situation. To call God sovereign means that he is the undisputed Boss of the Universe. He knows what He is doing, and He is doing it. If God is not sovereign, then he is not God. So, if God is not sovereign, then who is? God's sovereignty is the answer to the biggest question of all: "Who is in charge here?" God knows what He's doing even when we don't. He's never clueless even when we don't have a clue.

Genesis 41 reveals The Sovereignty of God in Joseph's Life:

1. God Gave Pharaoh Two Dreams

The world has no answer for the things that matter most. Genesis 41:8 - "In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him (NIV)." Though Pharaoh was the mightiest man on earth, he was helpless to understand his own dream. Money and power and worldly success may gain many things, but they benefit nothing in the spiritual realm. The magicians couldn't figure it out. A thousand years of pagan religion could not produce what the king wanted. Thus, a crisis exposes the uselessness of this world in the things that matter most. It reveals the true condition of the human heart apart from God. Without divine revelation, human wisdom and power can never discover the way to salvation. That must "come down" from above.

2. God Reminded the Cupbearer about Joseph

At that moment the cupbearer remembered Joseph from his time in prison two years earlier (Genesis 41:12-13). At just the right moment, God made the cupbearer remember how Joseph had correctly interpreted his dream and the baker's dream. This "coincidence" is an amazing link in the chain of God's providence. If he had remembered Joseph earlier, Joseph might have been set free earlier. Perhaps he wouldn't have been anywhere near the palace when the king had his dreams. As far as Joseph was concerned, he was just being faithful to God when he interpreted those dreams two years earlier. Now, his faithfulness will be rewarded in an amazing way.

3. God Gave Joseph the Interpretation of the Dreams

After changing his clothes, Joseph is brought before Pharaoh. An unknown Hebrew slave stands before the mightiest man in the world at that time. Twenty-four hours earlier no one could have predicted this, least of all Joseph. Genesis 41:15-16 - "15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

Joseph refuses to take any credit. This is the reason why we must acknowledge and praise God for all that we have and possess, including our knowledge, wisdom, wealth, and talents. Joseph knows that only God can give a true interpretation. The interpretation is a good news and bad news situation. First, there will be seven years of abundance in the land. The rains will come, crops will be great, and everyone will have more than enough to eat. But the seven years of abundance will be followed by seven years of famine. And the seven bad years will be worse than the seven good years. Then Joseph adds this: Genesis 41:32 - "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."

4. God Gave Joseph a Wise Plan

Having explained the dream and its meaning, Joseph goes on to suggest that Pharaoh find a "discerning and wise man" to administer the economic affairs of the nation during the seven good years so that one-fifth of the grain is stored in granaries in all the cities of Egypt. The four-fifths left will still be more than enough to feed the whole nation. That way there will be grain for the people when the seven years of famine hit.

This was a simple and clear plan, but its success depended on finding a man of exactly the right character. Pharaoh needed a man who was gifted in administration, loyal to him, and honest in all his dealings. Obviously, with that much grain being stored, there would be many opportunities for cheating. Therefore, Pharaoh must choose carefully or this whole plan will fail. God prepared Joseph when he became the right-hand man of Potiphar. And God prepared Joseph when he became a leader in the prison. God allows His children to go through challenges and difficulties in order to prepare them for His big plans for them. We should not detest trials and problems in life.

5. God Moved Pharaoh to Choose Joseph

Not surprisingly, Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was the man he needed (Genesis 41:38-40). Though he was a pagan ruler, Pharaoh recognized the work of God's Spirit when he saw it. He made Joseph the second-in-command, which made him the second most powerful man in the world. Then, he sealed the deal in a kingly fashion: He gave Joseph his signet ring, like having the King's credit card. He gave him linen clothing, a sign of high honor. He gave him a gold chain, another sign of royal authority. He gave him a chariot for transportation, so he could go wherever he wished. He had the soldiers call out "Bow down!" when Joseph passed by, so everyone got the message.

Genesis 41:43 - "Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt." God can turn a prisoner into a leader. God has the power to transform your DISAPPOINTMENT into an opportunity for His APPOINTMENT. All of this happened when he was only 30 years old. Thirteen years before, he was tending the flocks with his brothers. Now he is the Prime Minister of Egypt. How much of this did Joseph see in advance? None. How much of it happened by chance? None of it. Who was behind it all? God.

6. God Caused the Years of Plenty and Famine to Come

It all happened as Joseph had predicted. First, came the seven years of abundance when there was more than enough food. Even with one-fifth of the grain put into storage, everyone in Egypt had plenty to eat. But eventually, the seven years of famine came. As crops dried up and hunger spread, this is what happened: Genesis 41:55 - "When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."" (NIV)

It all happened exactly as Joseph had said it would. It all happened exactly as God had planned. Joseph still could not yet see the big picture of what God intended. As far as he knew, he was doing God's will as the prime minister of Egypt. Nothing more, nothing less. But God had bigger plans in mind.

7. God Gave Joseph Two Sons

Finally, there is a wonderful note of hope in this story: Genesis 41:50-52 - "50 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On. 51 Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." 52 The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." (NIV)

Manasseh and Ephraim are Hebrew names. Even though Joseph was living in Egypt and married an Egyptian woman, Joseph gave his two sons names that would remind them forever of their true heritage. It tells us that though Joseph appeared to be Egyptian on the outside, on the inside he still worshiped the God of his fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He named his firstborn son Manasseh, which sounds like the Hebrew word "forget." He even spelled out the meaning so no one could mistake it. "God has made me forget all my hardship and my father's house." He didn't mean he had forgotten his family. They still remained close to his heart. But, God had enabled him to forget the pain of the rejection and betrayal by his brothers.

The second child he called Ephraim, which means made fruitful. The Hebrew is a form that means something like "super-fruitful." The "land of my affliction" refers to all that he suffered in Egypt - the false accusation, the unjust imprisonment, and the years of total abandonment. Yet, in that place where he had suffered so much, he now experiences untold blessings.

The order of these names is important. Manasseh must come before Ephraim. First, we are set free from bitterness, then we experience God's blessing. That too was because of God's sovereignty. When a man believes in a sovereign God, he can let go and move on. There was no going back for Joseph, no way to undo what his brothers had done to him, no way to undo the lies of Potiphar's wife. Likewise, there is no going back for any of us. We can't stay where we are and get stuck in bitterness and pain because life is a river that flows onward. The only thing left is to go forward with God's help and by God's grace.