



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of June 18, 2023

Weekly Prayer

Great Protector, in the midst of life's pits, you are right beside me. In the darkness and terror, you are with me. So why am I so afraid? Help me to remember that through you, I am safe and loved. Thanks be to you, God, who cares deeply for me. Amen.

Monday, June 19

Scripture: Genesis 37:2-5, 17b-24, 28

This is the account of Jacob's descendants. Joseph was 17 years old and tended the flock with his brothers. While he was helping the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, Joseph told their father unflattering things about them. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born when Jacob was old. Jacob had made for him a long^[a] robe. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him and couldn't even talk nicely to him. Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers, which made them hate him even more.

The man said, "They left here. I heard them saying, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan. They saw Joseph in the distance before he got close to them, and they plotted to kill him. The brothers said to each other, "Here comes the big dreamer. Come on now, let's kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns, and we'll say a wild animal devoured him. Then we will see what becomes of his dreams!" When Reuben heard what they said, he saved him from them, telling them, "Let's not take his life." Reuben said to them, "Don't spill his blood! Throw him into this desert cistern, but don't lay a hand on him." He intended to save Joseph from them and take him back to his father. When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped off Joseph's long robe, took him, and threw him into the cistern, an empty cistern with no water in it.

When some Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the cistern. They sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and they brought Joseph to Egypt.

Observation

Genesis 37 seemed to blend perhaps three different stories about Joseph, each giving a slightly different reason for why his brothers hated him. But the reasons weren't mutually

exclusive. Family therapists know that being a “chosen child” like Joseph often skews relationships and emotional growth. The oldest brother Reuben could only think of an idea that was hardly less than leaving Joseph to die in the empty cistern. Slavery in Egypt seemed like little more than a drawn-out death sentence.

Application

Reuben and Judah had just enough moral courage to stand up to their brothers and say, “No, don’t kill Joseph. We don’t want blood on our hands.” On the other hand, they didn’t have the courage to tell Jacob, “Dad, Joseph isn’t dead. We sold him to traders going to Egypt.” How morally courageous are you? In what areas do you want to become braver?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, people betrayed you, but you did not allow that to knock you off course. Help me find in your love the source of strength to move beyond any pain I experience from others. Amen.

Tuesday, June 20

Scripture: Genesis 39:1-3, 6-20

When Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, Potiphar, Pharaoh’s chief officer, the commander of the royal guard and an Egyptian, purchased him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man and served in his Egyptian master’s household. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful.

So he handed over everything he had to Joseph and didn’t pay attention to anything except the food he ate. Some time later, his master’s wife became attracted to Joseph and said, “Sleep with me.” He refused and said to his master’s wife, “With me here, my master doesn’t pay attention to anything in his household; he’s put everything he has under my supervision. No one is greater than I am in this household, and he hasn’t denied me anything except you, since you are his wife. How could I do this terrible thing and sin against God?” Every single day she tried to convince him, but he wouldn’t agree to sleep with her or even to be with her. One day when Joseph arrived at the house to do his work, none of the household’s men were there. She grabbed his garment, saying, “Lie down with me.” But he left his garment in her hands and ran outside. When she realized that he had left his garment in her hands and run outside, she summoned the men of her house and said to them, “Look, my husband brought us a Hebrew to ridicule us. He came to me to lie down with me, but I screamed. When he heard me raise my voice and scream, he left his garment with me and ran outside.” She kept his garment with her until Joseph’s master came home, and she told him the same thing: “The Hebrew slave whom you brought to us, to ridicule me, came to me; but when I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment with me and ran outside.” When Joseph’s master heard the thing that his wife told him, “This is what your servant did to me,” he was incensed. Joseph’s master took him and threw him in jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were held.

Observation

Instead of nurturing depression and bitterness, Joseph showed such capable integrity that Potiphar, his Egyptian master, “put everything he had under Joseph’s supervision.” Yet Genesis didn’t say, “Joseph was amazing,” but rather “The LORD was with Joseph.” Alas, Joseph also greatly impressed Potiphar’s wife. He refused to betray his master’s trust and rebuffed her advances. Potiphar had no choice but to believe his wife (even if he *didn’t* believe her) and sent Joseph to prison.

Application

Joseph, knowing how much Potiphar trusted him, might well have gotten some personal pleasure and kept his position at the head of the household. But he refused to betray Potiphar’s trust, and it cost him—outwardly, at least. Have you ever chosen not to do something wrong, even though you could “get away with it”? As you look back, are you glad you preserved your integrity or not? For what reasons?

Prayer

O God, free me from the desire for revenge on others. Instead, give me the moral courage to stand for what is right, especially on behalf of those who are powerless. Amen.

Wednesday, June 21

Scripture: Genesis 39:21-23, 41:9-16, 37-41

the LORD was with Joseph and remained loyal to him. He caused the jail’s commander to think highly of Joseph. The jail’s commander put all of the prisoners in the jail under Joseph’s supervision, and he was the one who determined everything that happened there. The jail’s commander paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s supervision, because the LORD was with him and made everything he did successful.

Then the chief wine steward spoke to Pharaoh: “Today I’ve just remembered my mistake. Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker under arrest with the commander of the royal guard. We both dreamed one night, he and I, and each of our dreams had its own interpretation. A young Hebrew man, a servant of the commander of the royal guard, was with us. We described our dreams to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us, giving us an interpretation for each dream. His interpretations came true exactly: Pharaoh restored me to my position but hanged him.” So Pharaoh summoned Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon. He shaved, changed clothes, and appeared before Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, but no one could interpret it. Then I heard that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it.” Joseph answered Pharaoh, “It’s not me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable response.”

This advice seemed wise to Pharaoh and all his servants, and Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man with more God-given gifts than this one?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, no one is as intelligent and wise as

you are. You will be in charge of my kingdom, and all my people will obey^[c] your command. Only as the enthroned king will I be greater than you.” Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Know this: I’ve given you authority over the entire land of Egypt.”

Observation

A Hebrew slave unfairly jailed by a rich Egyptian owner—how could Joseph escape that fix? God helped Joseph explain dreams for two fellow prisoners. After two years, Pharaoh’s restored steward finally remembered Joseph (still in jail) when the king had baffling dreams. Pharaoh, impressed by Joseph’s discernment, made an unexpected (no doubt shocking to ambitious Egyptian officers) choice. He freed the Hebrew and made him his chief deputy, with power over all of Egypt!

Application

Egypt’s ruler said to Joseph, “I heard that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it.” Joseph’s answer was prompt and clear: “It’s not me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable response” (41:16). Joseph could have easily taken the credit Pharaoh offered him, but his day-by-day choices before this moment had formed an honest character. What choices are you making each day to build the character God desires you to have?

Prayer

Merciful God, how powerfully Joseph exemplified the spirit of your kingdom as he saved his brothers and his Egyptian captors. Keep growing in me a capacity to embody and act out your mercy. Amen.

Thursday, June 22

Scripture: Psalm 105:16-22, 34:4-6

When God called for a famine in the land,
destroying every source of food,
he sent a man ahead of them,
who was sold as a slave: it was Joseph.
Joseph’s feet hurt in his shackles;
his neck was in an iron collar,
until what he predicted actually happened,
until what the LORD had said proved him true.

The king sent for Joseph and set him free;
the ruler of many people released him.
The king made Joseph master of his house and ruler over everything he owned,
to make sure his princes acted according to his will,
and to teach wisdom to his advisors.

I sought the LORD and he answered me.
He delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to God will shine;

their faces are never ashamed.
This suffering person cried out:
the LORD listened and saved him from every trouble.

Observation

Psalm 105 poetically recounted Israel's early history, including portions of Joseph's story as Genesis told it. Psalm 34 probably grew from a time when David, though already anointed king, still had to use all his wiles to keep jealous King Saul from killing him. Its language harked back to Joseph. It's someone who has had to cry out, a different word, used elsewhere of the Israelites crying out in Egypt. Both Psalms praised, not human ingenuity, but God's guiding providence.

Application

In "[Stone the Crows](#)" in the musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, Joseph sings, "Anyone from anywhere can make it/If they get a lucky break." Neither Genesis nor Psalms said Joseph got a "lucky break." The Hebrew writers said the real story was that God's people, like Joseph, needed patience to trust God's work, which is sometimes done unseen in the background of life. Which perspective do you find more persuasive to guide your life?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, especially when things get tough, I find it hard to think beyond the current week or month. Teach me to trust in the long sweep of your work with and for your human servants, from Joseph all the way to now. Amen.

Friday, June 23

Scripture: Acts 7:9-18, 10:38

"Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him into slavery in Egypt. God was with him, however, and rescued him from all his troubles. The grace and wisdom he gave Joseph were recognized by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over his whole palace. A famine came upon all Egypt and Canaan, and great hardship came with it. Our ancestors had nothing to eat. When Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there for the first time. During their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. Joseph sent for his father Jacob and all his relatives—seventy-five in all—and invited them to live with him. So Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our ancestors died. Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had purchased for a certain sum of money from Hamor's children, who lived in Shechem. "When it was time for God to keep the promise he made to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly expanded. But then *another king rose to power over Egypt who didn't know anything about Joseph.*

You know about Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and endowed with power. Jesus traveled around doing good and healing everyone oppressed by the devil because God was with him.

Observation

Acts 7 tells of an energetic early Christian named Stephen on trial for his life, charged with serious religious offenses (Acts 6:13-14). His response was very much like Psalm 105 (which we read part of yesterday)—reciting the history of God and God's people, including Joseph. "God was with him" echoed Genesis 39:2, 21, yet Joseph's brothers rejected him (as the leaders rejected Jesus). In Acts 10, Peter shared Jesus with Roman soldiers, using that same phrase from Joseph's story.

Application

Stephen's defense wasn't a set of random Bible stories. Joseph was rejected by his brothers, but God used him to become the ruler of all Pharaoh's household. When his brothers needed food, the man they had to go to was the man they rejected. He was gracious to them and gave them what they needed. Were there already some in Stephen's audience who saw where this was going? How did Joseph's story point to Jesus, who fully lived out God's presence with us?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Daniel, David, now Joseph—all their stories were chapters of the story that led to and continues with you. Let me weave my life, too, into your great saving story. Amen

Saturday, June 24

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, 2 Timothy 2:22, 1 Timothy 6:11

Avoid sexual immorality! Every sin that a person can do is committed outside the body, except those who engage in sexual immorality commit sin against their own bodies. Or don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? Don't you know that you have the Holy Spirit from God, and you don't belong to yourselves? You have been bought and paid for, so honor God with your body.

Run away from adolescent cravings. Instead, pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace together with those who confess the Lord with a clean heart.

But as for you, man of God, run away from all these things. Instead, pursue righteousness, holy living, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness.

Observation

The apostle Paul used one aspect of Joseph's story to shape his counsel to new Christians living in the rampantly immoral city of Corinth. "Avoid" in 1 Corinthians 6:18 was the Greek verb *pheugō*. With his extensive rabbinic Bible knowledge, Paul no doubt knew that Joseph's story used that verb. Genesis 39:12 uses *pheugō* to describe Joseph's successful

escape from Potiphar's wife: "He fled out of her house" (Gen. 39:13, 15, 18). The same Greek verb occurred twice in the letters to guide the young pastor Timothy in leading his churches. In 1 Timothy 6 it did not relate to specifically sexual morality at all, but to avoiding the trap of trusting in material wealth rather than God's caring provision for our needs.

Application

Sometimes we feel as though Christian living is nothing but negative commands, a long series of "don'ts." It's important to recognize that the apostle's guidance "contains both negative and positive aspects." "Pursue" translates another strong but positive Greek verb, sometimes rendered as "strive for" or "try your best to." As you reflect on Joseph's story, how do you see his life reflecting the positive qualities in 1 Timothy 6:11, which grew from the same character that enabled him to flee from the temptation offered by his master's wife? How can you keep your life open to pursue all the good qualities God wishes to build into you?

Prayer

King Jesus, I give myself to you. Use who I am to flee from evil, but more to positively bless my circle of influence. Fulfill your promise to keep growing me as I walk with you. Amen.