

God and the Ancients: Joseph

1. Dysfunction often produces immaturity

Genesis 37:3–8 (CSB)

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than his other sons because Joseph was a son born to him in his old age, and he made a long-sleeved robe for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not bring themselves to speak peaceably to him. 5 Then Joseph had a dream. When he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: 7 There we were, binding sheaves of grain in the field. Suddenly my sheaf stood up, and your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.” 8 “Are you really going to reign over us?” his brothers asked him. “Are you really going to rule us?” So they hated him even more because of his dream and what he had said.

2. Immaturity produces bad outcomes

Genesis 37:14, 18-28 (CSB)

14 Then Israel said to him, “Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are doing, and bring word back to me.” So he sent him from the Hebron Valley, and he went to Shechem.

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18 They saw him in the distance, and before he had reached them, they plotted to kill him. 19 They said to one another, “Oh, look, here comes that dream expert! 20 So now, come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of the pits. We can say that a vicious animal ate him. Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!” 21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to save him from them. He said, “Let’s not take his life.” 22 Reuben also said to them, “Don’t shed blood. Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him”—intending to rescue him from them and return him to his father. 23 When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped off Joseph’s robe, the long-sleeved robe that he had on. 24 Then they took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty, without water. 25 They sat down to eat a meal, and when they looked up, there was a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were carrying aromatic gum, balsam, and resin, going down to Egypt. 26 Judah said to his brothers, “What do we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 Come on, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay a hand on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh,” and his brothers agreed. 28 When Midianite traders passed by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took Joseph to Egypt.

3. You don’t have to play the victim

Genesis 39:1–6a (CSB)

39 Now Joseph had been taken to Egypt. An Egyptian named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guards, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, serving in the household of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful, 4 Joseph found favor with his master and became his personal attendant. Potiphar also put him in charge of his household and placed all that he owned under his authority. 5 From the time that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house because of Joseph. The LORD’s blessing was on all that he owned, in his house and in his fields. 6 He left all that he owned under Joseph’s authority; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

4. Character is who you are when you think no one is looking.

Genesis 39:6–12 (CSB)

6b...Now Joseph was well-built and handsome. 7 After some time his master’s wife looked longingly at Joseph and said, “Sleep with me.” 8 But he refused. “Look,” he said to his master’s wife, “with me here my master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has put all that he owns under my authority. 9 No one in this house is greater than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife.

So how could I do this immense evil, and how could I sin against God?" 10 Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her. 11 Now one day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were there. 12 She grabbed him by his garment and said, "Sleep with me!" But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran outside.

5. Character is costly

Genesis 39:16–20 (CSB)

16 She put Joseph's garment beside her until his master came home. 17 Then she told him the same story: "The Hebrew slave you brought to us came to make a fool of me, 18 but when I screamed for help, he left his garment beside me and ran outside." 19 When his master heard the story his wife told him—"These are the things your slave did to me"—he was furious 20 and had him thrown into prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. So Joseph was there in prison.

6. Progress does not mean you are finished

Genesis 40:5–8 (CSB)

⁵The king of Egypt's cupbearer and baker, who were confined in the prison, each had a dream. Both had a dream on the same night, and each dream had its own meaning. ⁶When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they looked distraught. ⁷So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?" ⁸"We had dreams," they said to him, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

7. Maturity is a deep view of God and a clear view of self.

Genesis 41:1–16 (CSB)

41 At the end of two years Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing beside the Nile, 2 when seven healthy-looking, well-fed cows came up from the Nile and began to graze among the reeds. 3 After them, seven other cows, sickly and thin, came up from the Nile and stood beside those cows along the bank of the Nile. 4 The sickly, thin cows ate the healthy, well-fed cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. 5 He fell asleep and dreamed a second time: Seven heads of grain, plump and good, came up on one stalk. 6 After them, seven heads of grain, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up. 7 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven plump, full ones. Then Pharaoh woke up, and it was only a dream. 8 When morning came, he was troubled, so he summoned all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. 9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I remember my faults. 10 Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and he put me and the chief baker in the custody of the captain of the guards. 11 He and I had dreams on the same night; each dream had its own meaning. 12 Now a young Hebrew, a slave of the captain of the guards, was with us there. We told him our dreams, he interpreted our dreams for us, and each had its own interpretation. 13 It turned out just the way he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged." 14 Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon. He shaved, changed his clothes, and went to Pharaoh. 15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said about you that you can hear a dream and interpret it." 16 **"I am not able to,"** Joseph answered Pharaoh. **"It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."**...

Pastor's Challenge:

What needs to be stripped away so that you can take your next step in Christian maturity?