WEEK 5 — JOSEPH

Faith When the Dream Doesn't Match Reality

'Big Idea'

Faith keeps us on the path God has called us to even when our circumstances look nothing like what God promised.

> Joseph's story may be one of Scripture's clearest pictures of faith through setbacks, injustice, waiting and eventual fulfillment.

1. Faith Can Carry a Dream

Genesis 37:5-11 (NIV)

[5]Joseph had a dream, and <u>when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.</u> [6]He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: [7]We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

[8]His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And <u>they hated him all the more because of his dream</u> and what he had said.

[9]Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

[10]When he told his father as well as his brothers, <u>his father rebuked him</u> and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers

actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" [11]<u>His brothers were jealous of him</u>, but his father kept the matter in mind.

God showed Joseph something about his future.

But Joseph had no idea what the journey toward that future would involve.

What do we do when God shows us something for our lives?

Do we embrace it and trust God to lead us in it?

Does it seem too far-fetched, too impossible to be true?

Do we discount it or believe for less?

Do we listen to the detractors more than God's voice?

Faith holds onto God's plans for our lives, no matter how impossible they may seem!

Have you dreamt of something God has for your life and been met with opposition? Are you still holding onto the dream or have you let it go?

2. Faith Survives Setbacks

Genesis 37:23-28 (NIV)

[23]So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— [24]and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

[25]As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

[26]Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? [27]Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

[28]So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, <u>who took him to Egypt</u>.

Dream → rejection → pit → slavery.

- Everything looked as though it were moving in the opposite direction.
- But God hadn't lost control of Joseph's story
- God was actually in the process of fulfilling that very dream as things seemed to go sideways!

Have you faced setbacks in those dreams, in that calling of God, seeming to go the very opposite direction of what He said? Has it caused you to give up?

3. Faith Remains Faithful Through Injustice

Our culture wants us to stand and fight every injustice, to be a victim who is owed something.

But we're called to keep our eyes on Jesus

To let Him fight the battles

To remain faithful when we are treated wrongly!

Genesis 39:6-23 (NIV)

[6]So <u>Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything</u> except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, [7]and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

[8]But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. [9]No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" [10]And <u>though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her</u>.

[11]One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. [12]She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But <u>he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house</u>.

[13]When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, [14]she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. [15]When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

[16]She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. [17]Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. [18]But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

[19]When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. [20]Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, <u>the place where the king's prisoners were confined</u>. (God's placement)

But while Joseph was there in the prison, [21]<u>the LORD was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden</u>. [22]So <u>the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there</u>. [23]The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because <u>the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did</u>.

Joseph does what is right—and ends up in prison.

Faithfulness doesn't always produce immediately favorable circumstances.

We can feel like we're owed something because we did what was right- we're owed nothing, but He is pleased with our obedience

But God will use circumstance to equip us and train us for what's to come

We see only the aim of the dream, while God sees all that is needed to actually fulfill His plan for our lives and get us ready.

Romans 8:28-33 (NIV)

[28]And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. [29]For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. [30]And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

[31]What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32]He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?

These ‘all things’ are often the very things we need to be ready to handle all that God has planned, so we have to learn to trust Him in the midst of struggles and confusion, so His work can be accomplished in us!

“Training ground!”

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

[2]Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, [3]because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. [4]Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Have you given up on God’s plan for your life because of circumstances and disappointments? Have those things caused you to doubt God, that you’d failed God or that God was ever in it?

4. Faith Is Faithful Where It Is

We often think of certain times in our lives as ‘the in between’, between where I was when God called me and where I want to be for God to use me, but there’s purpose to where we are right now!

Genesis 39:20-23 (NIV)

[20]Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, [21]the LORD was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. [22]So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. [23]The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

> Joseph served faithfully where he was while trusting God with where he was going.

One of the greatest displays of faith is through our fruitfulness when we're in a place that we know isn't what we've dreamt of!

> *'I'll bear fruit where you put me and be prepared for where I'm going'*

Are we still waiting for God to put us where we think we should be, rather than learning, growing and bearing fruit right where He has us now?

5. Faith Learns While It Waits

> We often have an expectation of the 'perfect' time and place for God's purpose for our lives, but He is committed to His will and getting us ready to fulfill it His way!

Psalms 105:17-21 (NIV)

[17]and He sent a man before them—

Joseph, sold as a slave.

[18]They bruised his feet with shackles,

his neck was put in irons,

[19]till what He foretold came to pass,

till the word of the LORD proved Him true.

[20]The king sent and released him,

the ruler of peoples set him free.

[21]He made him master of his household,

ruler over all he possessed,

God wasn't merely preparing a position for Joseph.

> God was preparing **Joseph for the position!**
>
> "*When I'm ready God will use me*." God will use you every day so that YOU ARE ready for the next season!

Are we resisting God's work on us?

> We cannot say, 'I'm not changing for anyone!' or 'I'm fine the way I am,' if we're going to fulfill God's will.
>
> The process of preparing us for His plans is something we have to recognize and yield to, so it can do its work in us.
>
> Our attitudes, abilities, the way we interact with others, our understanding of circumstances- all these things have to be surrendered to God's shaping and molding, otherwise the process has to continue!

Do we see the work God is doing in us, even in the waiting? He is working on us while He's working through us!

6. Faith Steps Up When the Moment Finally Comes

Genesis 41:14-41 (NIV)

[14]So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

[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."

(That youthful arrogance was gone!)

[17]Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, [18]when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. [19]After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. [20]The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. [21]But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.

[22]"In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. [23]After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. [24]The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none of them could explain it to me."

[25]Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. [26]The seven good cows are

seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. [27]The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

[28]"It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. [29]Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, [30]but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. [31]The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. [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.

[33]"And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. [34]Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. [35]They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. [36]This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

[37]The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. [38]So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

[39]Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. [40]You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

[41]So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."

Suddenly the waiting was over.

- Joseph went from prisoner to Pharaoh's second-in-command.
- Years of hidden preparation became apparent in one defining moment.
- Joseph was not ready or equipped for the role he was to fulfill when he was an unwise young man, but his character, honesty, humility and trustworthiness were shaped in the suffering and waiting.

What is and has God been working on in you to prepare you for His will? Have you allowed Him to do the work or have you fought Him?

Closing Challenge

Has God put something in your heart for His Kingdom that you've abandoned because it seemed impossible or met opposition?

Have you faced setbacks that have caused you to give up on God's plan for you?

Have you faced injustices along the way that you've stopped to fight, but God has called you to carry on?

What if the place you are asking God to get you out of is also the place He is using to prepare you?

Have you allowed God to transform you into what He wants you to become or are you stubbornly holding onto the way you are?

Are you truly ready for God to use you when the time comes, ready for the 'moments' He's planned for His will through your life?

Faith in Him, in His purpose, in His faithfulness to finish what He has started, to fulfill what He has promised, must begin to be the kind of faith we walk in!

Do we have that kind of faith?