

# Joseph: From Slave to Deputy Pharaoh

## The Story—part 3

September 25, 2016

### **DAY 1: 2 dreams; attempted murder; sold into slavery; Jacob distraught**

1. We meet Joseph, the eleventh son (there will be a twelfth) of Jacob. Joseph, at age seventeen is quite naïve. God gives him two dreams of his ten brothers bowing down to him. Unfortunately, he shares the dreams with them. Their foolishness, pettiness and pride take over, and seizing a time when the brothers were out to pasture, away from their father, they decide to kill him. He is only spared when he is sold to a roaming band of Ishmaelites where he is later sold into slavery to Potiphar, a captain of the guard in Egypt.

2. In spite of this terrible betrayal, Joseph serves in Potiphar's household faithfully.

*Genesis 39:5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.*

3. However, Potiphar's wife makes a "play" for Joseph to go to bed with her. Joseph righteously refuses, seeing her efforts wickedness. The scorned woman falsely accuses Joseph of rape. Potiphar rashly has Joseph thrown in prison.

4. Think about the awful, life-shattering betrayals Joseph experienced. If you had been Joseph, how would you have responded?

a. How might you be tempted to think about God?

b. How might you be tempted to think about God's Story?

5. While God's Grand Story rolls along, our Lower Story can look quite chaotic, confusing, and leave us wondering if God has a story at all!

*Genesis 39:20 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, <sup>21</sup> the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.*

6. If you *knew* God was with you in both instances would that have helped you? How?

## **DAY 2: 2 dreamers in prison; forgotten; a future?**

1. Joseph meets Pharaoh's head baker and cupbearer in prison. Each has an unusual dream. Joseph is given the interpretation of both dreams which turn out to be accurate. The cup bearer is restored to his former position, while the baker is executed! The cup bearer had an opportunity to return the kindness of Joseph but he "forgot Joseph."

2. Two years pass.

3. Pharaoh has two dreams that disturb him. They seem important, but not one of his "wise men" can come up an interpretation that makes sense. The cup bearer finally remembers Joseph! Perhaps Joseph could provide the proper interpretation!

4. Joseph is brought to Pharaoh. Notice his response when asked to interpret dreams:

*Genesis 41:16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."*

5. Which story is primary in Joseph's mind? God's Grand Story or Joseph's little story?

6. Joseph interprets the two dreams correctly. There will be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine.

7. Pharaoh recognizes the wisdom of Joseph and not only releases him from prison, but makes him second in command in all of Egypt. From the prison to the West Wing!

8. During the first seven years of feast, the Egyptians save as much of their bountiful harvest as they can. During the next seven years they have enough food saved, not only to feed Egypt but to provide much-needed food for surrounding nations. (Hint, hint)

9. Joseph was sold by his brothers at age seventeen. He is made second in command of Egypt at age thirty.

10. From today's study,

a. What strikes you the most about God and The Grand Story?

b. What strikes you most about how you interpret The Story and your little story?

### **DAY 3: Brothers ask for help; Joseph discloses who he is; father and son reunited.**

1. Meanwhile back in the Promised Land, famine strikes there, too! Jacob's sons are desperate for food. Jacob sends them to Egypt. None of them believe Joseph is alive.
2. When the brothers arrive hoping to buy grain, Joseph is now thirty-nine years old. He is completely unrecognizable to his brothers because of twenty-two years of aging, Joseph speaking fluent Egyptian, being Pharaoh's second in command.
3. Instead of just selling grain, Joseph cleverly tests the integrity and fidelity of his brothers to see if they had genuinely repented of their former sins. Would they report money found in their sacks of grain? Would they bring back the twelfth brother?
4. After a second trip back to Egypt, this time with Benjamin, Joseph's only brother by the same mother, Joseph reveals who he is.
5. The ten brothers are astounded, and then terrified! In the world in which *they* live, powerful men extract revenge. Joseph assures them he will not!
6. He sends his brothers back home to bring their father to see him. Would Joseph sell them out to their father? He doesn't. Instead, a wonderful reunion occurs between Jacob and his son Joseph.  
*Genesis 46:29 Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.*
7. What factors kept Joseph from becoming bitter at God?
8. What factors kept Joseph from becoming bitter at his brothers?
9. What factors would help you "process" or "see" (believe) God's Grand Story even in the midst of what seems like a devastating little story?

#### **DAY 4: Lesson #1: Seeing God's Story. Save people.**

*Isaiah 46:10 I made known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, "My purpose will stand, and I will do all I please."*

1. Its thing to recognize God's Grand Story thousands of years ago as a "Monday morning quarterback." It's quite another thing to recognize God's larger story when you seem to be immersed and blinded in your own little story.

2. Joseph does not take revenge and my question is "Why?"

3. He doesn't even give them a stern lecture.

*Genesis 45:3 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.*

*<sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!*

*<sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.*

*<sup>6</sup> For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping.*

*<sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*

*<sup>8</sup> "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.*

*<sup>9</sup> Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.*

*<sup>10</sup> You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me--you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have.*

*<sup>11</sup> I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'*

4. From a lower story perspective the brothers sold Joseph into slavery, which landed him in Egypt as a slave. But the Upper Story sees an additional layer to the story, yea, even a primary layer to the story!

5. What strikes you about how saw the historical events of his past?

6. Joseph is more captured by his role in God's story than his little story. His real hope is that there is not only a point to his lower story but that it will help tell God's Larger Story.

7. How do you see your little story? God's Larger Story?

## **DAY 5: Lesson #2. Save the line of Judah; building the nation**

1. The story of Joseph is a crystal clear example of the intertwining of the two story lines in the Bible. While it is easy to see our little story, sometimes it is very difficult to recognize God's Larger Story when our small story is a mess.
2. It's during those times of confusion and blindness that we hold onto God's Larger Story as an anchor of the soul.
3. Joseph was anchored in the Larger Story, which kept him moving forward even through betrayals, the unfairness of life, and man's cruelty.
4. Amazingly, it was while he was in prison, prime position from which to tell the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. As God gave him the interpretation, he was reminded of God's Larger Story.
5. God was at work in the new nation and God would reveal Himself through it. God made provision through Joseph to sustain the new nation during severe famine.
6. Why did God arrange to move Jacob's entire family to Egypt? A few thoughts...
  - a. When the Israelites arrived and settled in the land, the Egyptians looked down on them as lowly "shepherds." They were an abomination to the Egyptians. Why is that important? There was NO possibility of intermarriage with the Egyptians, which as history would show, intermarriage for the Jewish people with the surrounding nations was destructive to the nation's existence! God's protected the little "nation" of seventy people, in its infant stages from blowing itself up!
  - b. If the nation was to survive among other nations, it had to have a larger population. That could have only happened in Egypt! From seventy, the nation would grow to an estimated two million by the time of the Exodus!
7. Once Jacob died, the remaining brothers feared that the axe would finally fall on them from Joseph.

*Genesis 50:19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?  
<sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.  
<sup>21</sup> So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.*
8. How did God's Larger Story anchor Joseph?
9. How did God's Larger Story move Joseph to treat his cruel brothers with kindness?