

Day 1

MORNING DEVOTIONS

My Story, Your Glory

Do you like puzzles? My wife (Sarah) grew up in a family where they would often purchase a 1,000 or 2,000-piece puzzle over Christmas vacation and set up a table in the living room where they could all work on it. Sometimes they would work on it together, and other times a single person would be passing by the half-completed puzzle on their way to grab some coffee, sit down for a few minutes, and put a few pieces in place. She has passed on that love for puzzles to our kids, and most of our kids enjoy it a lot.

But me? Not so much. If I was a soldier and captured behind enemy lines and they were trying to break me for information, all they would have to do is set a 2,000-piece puzzle in front of me and I would tell them everything. For me, putting together a puzzle (especially the very difficult ones) is one of the worst forms of torture that a person should have to endure. For Sarah and most of my children, doing a puzzle is part of family vacations. For me, it would ruin my vacation!

Why do I hate puzzles so much? I don't really know. I guess part of the problem is that I don't have the patience for something that tedious. Another issue is that I don't see the purpose of spending all that time on something just to take it all apart and put it back in the box when it is finished! And if I would get to the end of a 1,000-piece puzzle only to find that a piece is missing, I think I would flip my lid! All that time invested and not even being able to finish? That would drive me crazy!

A Sovereign God Writing a Glorious Story

I assume that those of you who actually enjoy puzzles love to see the whole thing come together into one big masterpiece. It is similar to a mosaic—where lots of individual pictures, when put together just right, form one large picture when you step back and look at it. The single events of our lives are like small puzzle pieces or individual pictures in a mosaic. We can't see how each individual event fits into the grand story of our lives, much less the grand story of human history. What is something you are going through right now (one piece of the puzzle of your life) where you are anxiously awaiting to see how it will fit in the larger picture of your life?

Even though we can't see how each individual event fits into the grand story of our lives, God can! And not only can He see it, He is the puzzle master who is placing each piece in its perfect place. Few statements in all of Scripture are as breathtaking—and as challenging—as Romans 8:28–29 (NIV), the first verse being our theme verse for Camp this year:

“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. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...”

Paul does not say *some* things. He says God uses *all* things for our good. Triumph and tragedy. Faithfulness and failure. Obedience and injustice. God is never passive. He is always active, always purposeful, always sovereignly loving His people toward a definite end: our own good and the display of His glory.

The life of Joseph is one of the clearest narrative illustrations of Romans 8:28 in the entire Bible, so this week we are going to be taking a closer look at the puzzle pieces of Joseph’s life to see how they fit into the greater story of His life, and the story of redemptive human history. Joseph’s story is a long, painful, winding story—marked by betrayal, slavery, false accusation, being forgotten, and delayed deliverance. And yet, at every step, God is not absent. He is authoring. He is arranging. He is *working all things together* for His glory and our good.

God’s Definition of “Good”

What is something hard going on in your life right now (or in the recent past) where you don’t see any “good” at all coming from it? _____

Romans 8:29 tells us what “good” means—it defines the “good” for us. It is not comfort. It is not wealth. It is not earthly success. The ultimate good God is working toward is this: *that we would be conformed to the image of His Son.*

God’s highest aim is not your happiness, but your holiness. And that is good news—because joy rooted in God’s glory cannot be shaken by circumstances. The puzzle pieces of our lives will include hard things that do not feel “good” in the moment. But we need to learn to trust that God intends those things for the ultimate good...making us look more like Jesus every day.

Introducing Joseph: A Loved Son with a Long Road Ahead

Joseph’s life will show us again and again that God’s good purposes often run through deep valleys. The pit in Genesis 37, the prison in Genesis 39–40, and the palace in Genesis 41 are all part of the same sovereign design. Joseph is introduced in Genesis 37 as a favored son, deeply loved by his father Jacob. He is given a richly ornamented robe, a visible symbol of favor. He also receives dreams from God—dreams of future exaltation, of brothers bowing down.

But notice something crucial: God gives Joseph *dreams* long before He gives him *understanding*. The vision comes early. The fulfillment comes much later. In between lies suffering. This is often God’s way. He gives promises that are true, but He doesn’t give us a timeline. He gives assurance, but not always explanation.

God Is at Work Even When He Feels Absent

One of the striking features of Joseph's story is how often God seems silent. There are long stretches where God does not speak, intervene, or explain Himself. And yet, later reflection reveals that God was guiding every detail. He was in complete control of even the smallest details of Joseph's life, just as He is with the details of your life.

Romans 8:28 begins with, "And we *know*..." This is not intellectual certainty. It is theological confidence. "We know" because God has revealed His character. "We know" because He has proven Himself faithful.

Joseph could not see Romans 8:28 written on a page because it was written thousands of years after he lived. But he LIVED Romans 8:28. And we, on this side of the cross, have even greater reason to trust. I don't want to provide too many spoiler alerts for our study over the next week, but here are some encouragements for you to hold onto today that we will spend more time uncovering throughout the week.

1. Interpret your life through God's promises, not your pain. Pain is real, but it is not ultimate.
2. God is never wasting your suffering. Every tear has purpose.
3. Trust the Author, even when the chapter makes no sense. We don't often know what is best for us, but we need to trust that our loving Father does.

The graphic for this year's Camp Life theme is a mosaic—did you notice that? Lots of little bitty pieces that make one amazing picture. The story of Joseph invites us to lift our eyes and see that God is at work. He always has been, and He always will be.

My story is for His glory.

Day 2

MORNING DEVOTIONS

Favored Son to Fallen Slave

Genesis 37 opens one of the most astonishing accounts of God's sovereign grace in all of Scripture. It is not the story of a flawless hero. It is the story of a deeply flawed family, marked by favoritism, pride, jealousy, hatred, betrayal, and deception. And over it all stands a sovereign God who is never reacting, never surprised, never wringing His hands—but steadily, wisely, lovingly working His purposes to completion. Let's dig into Joseph's story.

Open your Bible, and read Genesis 37:1-11, then answer this question. If you were one of Joseph's siblings, how would you have felt about him? _____

Joseph's story begins with tension. The dysfunction in Joseph's family is impossible to miss. Jacob loved Joseph "more than any of his other sons" (v. 3), and he displayed that love openly by giving him a richly ornamented robe. This favoritism was not a small misstep. It was a sin with consequences. Parents are called to reflect the impartial love of God, but Jacob repeated the failures of his own upbringing (his mother favored him while his father favored Jacob's brother, Esau), sowing seeds of division in his home.

The brothers' response was predictable: "They hated him and could not speak a kind word to him" (v. 4). Hatred grows where love is unevenly distributed. Sin rarely travels alone; it multiplies. Jacob's favoritism feeds the brothers' jealousy, and jealousy ripens into hatred.

And yet—this is crucial—God is not absent here. He does not endorse sin, but He is not thwarted by it. This is one of the great comforts of the Christian life: God's purposes are not fragile. They do not depend on perfect parenting, flawless decisions, or sinless obedience. God remains sovereign even when His people are sinful. Here is today's takeaway: **God uses our mistakes and our sin for His glory and our good.**

Joseph's Immaturity and God's Purposes

Joseph himself is not portrayed as sinless or wise beyond his years. He receives dreams from God—dreams in which his brothers' sheaves bow down to his, and even the sun, moon, and stars bow before him (vv. 5–9). These dreams are from God; Scripture gives us no reason to doubt that. But Joseph's handling of them reveals immaturity. He shares them without discernment, without humility, without love. The result? "They hated him all the more" (v. 8).

Here is a sobering truth: God may give you genuine gifts, real insight, true calling—and you may still handle them poorly. Having God-given gifts and talents does not equal spiritual maturity. God can speak truth through us even while He is still working to shape our character.

When I was in Bible College, I received the opportunity to preach to the whole student body in a chapel service. I preached a sermon that was spot-on theologically (confirmed by my preaching professor), but my tone came across less than loving in how I delivered it. It came across more condemning than grace-filled. My preaching professor was fortunately very honest with me when he gave me feedback, because I still remember his wisdom 27 years later. He said to me, “Danny, I have learned in my preaching career that I need to make my words sweet, because I may have to eat them someday.”

I never forgot that, and that statement usually goes through my mind every time I am preparing a sermon, a Sunday School lesson, or writing these devotionals. God used the mistake that I made as a 20-year-old wet-behind-the-ears preacher for my own good (making me a better preacher) and for His glory (reflecting His character by my creation of more grace-filled lessons and sermons in the future.)

What about you? How has God used a mistake or misstep that you have made for your good or His glory?

Here is the good news: Joseph’s future does not depend on his flawless wisdom. God will use even Joseph’s youthful pride to move him toward the very place where God intends to bless him and bless the world through him.

Let’s continue with Joseph’s story by reading Genesis 37:12-36. Go ahead and read that now before continuing in this devotional.

Betrayal, Violence, and Evil

The story darkens quickly. When Joseph is sent to check on his brothers, they see him from a distance and conspire to kill him. “Here comes that dreamer!” they say (v. 19). Their violence is fueled not merely by jealousy, but by rebellion against God’s revealed purposes. They want to kill the dreams themselves.

Though Reuben intervenes to spare Joseph’s life, the brothers throw Joseph into a cistern and later sell him to Midianite traders for twenty shekels of silver (v. 28). Joseph is stripped of his robe, his identity, his safety, and his family.

This is real evil. Scripture does not minimize it. The brothers are morally responsible for their sin. God does not call evil good. And yet—and here we must tread carefully but confidently—God is sovereign even over this moment. The brothers mean it for harm. God means it for good. Remember today’s takeaway? **God uses our mistakes and our sin for His glory and our good.** God is using Jacob’s sin of favoritism, Joseph’s sin of pride and mistakes of immaturity, and the brothers’ sins of jealousy and hatred to accomplish His purposes.

God is not merely *responding* to evil but He is *reigning* over it without becoming its author. God ordains all that comes to pass, and yet human beings are fully accountable for their sin. These truths do not contradict each other; they magnify the wisdom and sovereignty of God.

God's Hidden Hand in Ordinary Suffering

At the end of Genesis 37, Joseph is gone, Jacob is deceived, and grief fills the household. Jacob mourns inconsolably. The brothers live with secret guilt. Joseph is carried off to Egypt—a place of pagan power and human trafficking.

And God is silent. There is no miracle. No angel. No explanation. Just loss.

This is where many of us live. Between promise and fulfillment. Between calling and clarity. Between faith and visible fruit. God's purposes often advance silently, invisibly, beneath the surface of pain and confusion. But make no mistake: God is working.

Joseph's descent into Egypt is not a detour. It is the main road. God is positioning Joseph to preserve His covenant people, to fulfill His promises to Abraham, and ultimately to prepare the way for redemption history that will culminate in Jesus Christ.

Christ, the Greater Joseph

Joseph points us beyond himself. Like Joseph, Jesus was the beloved Son, rejected by His own, betrayed for silver, stripped, humiliated, and handed over to Gentiles. What looked like defeat was God's design for salvation.

Acts 2:23 tells us that Jesus was handed over "by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge," and yet those who crucified Him were guilty. The cross is the ultimate proof that God uses human sin to accomplish divine glory and eternal good. **God uses our mistakes and our sin for His glory and our good.**

Living This Truth

What does this mean for us?

First, **know that your past sins and failures do not disqualify you from God's purposes.** If God could use Jacob's favoritism, Joseph's pride, and the brothers' betrayal, He can redeem your story.

Second, **your suffering is not wasted when God is sovereign.** The cistern, the slavery, the silence—all are tools in God's hands.

Genesis 37 invites us to trust a God who is doing ten thousand things we cannot yet see. It calls us to bow—not to our circumstances—but to the sovereign wisdom of God. And one day, like Joseph, we will look back and say with wonder: *God meant it for good.*

What most encouraged you or challenged your thinking from this part of Joseph's story?

Day 3

MORNING DEVOTIONS

Faithfulness in the Dark: God's Glory in Joseph's Integrity

Have you ever gotten in trouble for doing the right thing, or for something you didn't do? Write about it briefly below.

When I was serving as a youth pastor in New Hampshire, I was intentionally trying to get kids in public schools who were not Christians to attend our church's youth group so they could hear the gospel and give their lives to Christ. I encouraged the students in our youth group to invite their non-Christian friends. I was intentionally planning fun activities that kids would feel safe inviting their friends to. And it was working! We started having more and more kids who needed Jesus showing up in youth group. I expected praise from the parents of the students in our youth group for this initiative—"Wow, so many non-Christian teens are coming to our youth group, hearing the gospel, and getting saved, that is awesome!"

But I didn't get the "that is awesome!" comments. Instead, I ended up having meetings with parents who were upset that their Christian kids were now being influenced by unbelievers at youth group. I was following what I believed (and still do) to be the right thing—sharing Jesus with people who desperately need him, and modeling that for the teens in the youth group. But instead, that faithfulness to God was met with less than favorable responses from parents.

Genesis 39 is one of the most clarifying chapters in Scripture for understanding what it means to live faithfully when obedience does not lead to immediate blessing, when righteousness is met with injustice, and when God seems silent yet is profoundly active. It teaches us how God works *not around* suffering, but *through* it—shaping hearts that treasure Him above comfort, reputation, and success.

Joseph is not merely a moral example; he is a testimony to the sovereignty and steadfast love of God. And ultimately, Joseph points beyond himself to a greater righteous sufferer whose faithfulness would bring salvation to the world.

Let's dig into this event in Joseph's life by reading Genesis 39:1-6. Go ahead and read that now before continuing in this devotional.

The Lord's Presence Does Not Remove Hardship

Joseph begins this chapter as a slave. Let us not rush past that. He has been betrayed by his brothers, sold for profit, and transported to a foreign land. Yet the repeated refrain of the chapter is striking: "The Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2, 21).

God's presence did not prevent Joseph's suffering—but it *defined* it. The Lord was not merely watching Joseph from afar; He was actively prospering his work, granting him favor, and establishing him as trustworthy.

This is deeply instructive for our lives. Many of us assume that God's blessing looks like ease, promotion, or relief from difficulty. There are many "prosperity gospel" preachers who teach this. But Genesis 39 dismantles that assumption. Joseph's success happens *within* suffering, not instead of it. God is glorified not by removing Joseph from hardship but by sustaining his faithfulness in it.

For the believer, the measure of success is not comfort, but obedience. Faithfulness in obscurity is not wasted; it is the very arena where God displays His power. If you are familiar with Joseph's story, you know that God eventually uses Joseph's integrity and faithfulness to exalt him to 2nd in command in all of Egypt—he becomes anything but "obscure". But it is Joseph's faithfulness IN obscurity that God uses to get him there.

Let's continue with Joseph's story by reading Genesis 39:7-10. Go ahead and read that now before continuing in this devotional.

Integrity Is Rooted in God, Not Circumstances

Joseph's greatest test does not come from hardship, but from opportunity. Potiphar's wife repeatedly tempts him, offering secrecy, pleasure, and advancement. From a worldly perspective, Joseph has every excuse. He is young, alone in a foreign land, powerless, and wronged. Yet Joseph refuses. And notice *why*.

"How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

Joseph's integrity is not grounded in fear of consequences, but in reverence for God. This is the heart of true obedience. He does not merely say, "This would be unwise," or "This might cost me." He says, *This would dishonor God.*

This is profoundly relevant for navigating workplaces, relationships, finances, and private temptations. Integrity is often tested not in public moments but in quiet rooms where no one seems to be watching. Joseph shows us that obedience flows from a God-centered vision of life. When God is weighty to us, sin loses its appeal. But as we'll see soon, sometimes integrity costs us. Sometimes doing the right thing costs us. Integrity is costly. But Joseph knows, and we must keep this in mind, that sin is always more costly.

Let's read on in Genesis 39:11-20.

Obedience Does Not Guarantee Immediate Vindication

Joseph does everything right—and everything goes wrong. Falsely accused, slandered, and imprisoned, Joseph suffers injustice precisely because of his righteousness. Scripture does not soften this moment. Potiphar's wife lies. Potiphar believes her. Joseph is punished.

This is a crucial lesson for believers who expect fairness as a reward for faithfulness. Genesis 39 teaches us that obedience does not insulate us from suffering. In fact, it may intensify it. But here we must be clear: unjust suffering is never meaningless. God is not absent when His people are wronged. He is not confused. He is not caught off guard. The same God who was with Joseph in the house is with him in the prison.

If you are walking through betrayal, false accusations, or misunderstood obedience, this chapter speaks hope. God does His deepest work in the places where we feel most powerless. Here is today's takeaway: **God uses our faithfulness, even when life is unfair, for His glory and our good.**

Let's finish this chapter of Joseph's life by reading Genesis 39:21-23.

God's Favor Often Works Invisibly Before It Becomes Visible

Once again, the text declares: *"The Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor" (Genesis 39:21).*

Joseph is still imprisoned. His circumstances have not changed—but his calling has not been thwarted. God continues to shape Joseph into a leader marked by humility, patience, and trust. God's purposes often mature quietly. We want immediate rescue; God often gives enduring character. We want relief; God wants reliance. This is where the doctrine of God's sovereignty comforts the believer. Nothing is wasted. No obedience is forgotten. No suffering is outside His plan. Romans 8:28 is not a slogan—it is a reality being lived out in Joseph's life.

Joseph and the Greater Righteous Sufferer

Joseph ultimately points us to Christ. Like Joseph, Jesus was beloved, betrayed, falsely accused, and unjustly condemned. Like Joseph, He remained faithful. And Jesus' suffering, just like Joseph's, was redemptive in purpose. Jesus bore injustice so that sinners could be forgiven. He trusted His Father fully, even when obedience led Him to the cross. And through that suffering, God was glorified and His people were saved. Joseph's story invites us not only to admire integrity but to cling to Christ—the One who suffered perfectly in our place.

Faithfulness Is Never Forgotten

Genesis 39 calls us to live with holy resolve in ordinary faithfulness. God uses obedience we may never see rewarded in the moment. He uses integrity that costs us deeply. And He uses suffering that feels unfair—to accomplish purposes greater than we can imagine.

For the believer, faithfulness is not about controlling outcomes; it is about trusting God's promises. When we obey in the dark, God is at work for His glory and our good.

What has the Holy Spirit stirred up within you from reading Joseph's story in Genesis 39? What is He calling you to do and/or believe because of reading these truths today?

Day 4

MORNING DEVOTIONS

Purpose in the Prison

When Sarah and I got married, we knew we wanted to wait a few years to have kids. We wanted to enjoy the chapter of our life of just being a newly married couple before we added kids to the mix. But when we both felt it was time to start a family, God had other plans. While we never went through all the pains of infertility and many procedures that some couples go through, we spent a lot of time waiting. We questioned our decision to “wait” a few years to have kids, not knowing that waiting even more time was going to be part of our story. I remember taking a class in Seminary where the professor was talking about “the miracle of life at conception” one day, and I had to walk out of the class to keep from breaking down in the classroom, because we so desperately wanted a child. And then after seven years of being married, Sarah got pregnant with our first child. If you know my family, you might have never guessed that we went through an infertility period because God blessed us with six children! Sarah and I would both tell you that God used the infertility in the early days of our marriage, the waiting, to stretch and strengthen our faith.

Have you ever had a long period of waiting that felt like wasted time? (In your career, physical health, relational issues, spiritual growth, etc.) Write about that experience here:

Genesis 40 is one of those chapters that feels like a holding pattern. Joseph is not rising; he is waiting. No promotion. No escape. No visible reward for faithfulness. And yet—this chapter is not wasted space in Joseph’s life. It is thick with the providence of God. What looks like delay is actually design. What feels like abandonment is divine preparation.

Joseph is in prison, unjustly accused, forgotten by men—but not forgotten by God. And here, in this dark place, God shows us something crucial for life, and it is our takeaway for today: **God uses our faithful waiting for His glory and our good.**

Let’s turn to the next chapter of Joseph’s story and read Genesis 40:1-8.

Faithful Waiting Requires Serving Amidst Suffering

Joseph is in prison because of righteousness. He refused sin and suffered for it. Now, Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker are also imprisoned, and Joseph is assigned to attend them. This detail matters. Joseph does not sulk. He does not withdraw. He serves.

Verse 4 tells us that Joseph “attended them.” The Hebrew implies ongoing care. Joseph’s heart is still outward-facing, even in confinement. And when he notices their distress, he asks a simple, compassionate question: *“Why do you look so sad today?”* (v. 7).

This is remarkable. Joseph is the one who should be sad. He’s the one who has been imprisoned for much longer. But suffering has not turned him inward. God has preserved in Joseph a heart of love and attentiveness. And that attentiveness becomes the doorway for Joseph’s God-given ability to interpret dreams.

When the men explain their troubling dreams, Joseph responds with a theologically loaded sentence: *“Do not interpretations belong to God?”* (v. 8). This is the center of the chapter. Joseph knows his gift is real, but he also knows it is not autonomous. He does not claim personal brilliance. He claims divine dependence. And as we will see, even though there is much waiting involved, the same gift of the interpretation of dreams that got Joseph thrown in the pit will eventually be the same gift that elevates him to power.

Here is a vital lesson for us all to remember: *God’s gifts are not shelved when life goes sideways.* Your God-given abilities—your discernment, leadership, creativity, wisdom—are not nullified by hardship. Often, they are clarified there. God intends that we steward our gifts *where we are*, not where we wish we were. **God uses our faithful waiting for His glory and our good.**

Let’s keep reading in Genesis 40:9-19.

God Uses Faithful Obedience Even When the Results Are Delayed

Joseph interprets both dreams faithfully. He does not manipulate the truth to gain favor. He gives the cupbearer good news and the baker devastating news—because truth belongs to God, not to Joseph’s self-advancement.

This is mature faith. Joseph is not using God’s gift as a ladder; he is using it as a servant. He speaks what God reveals, regardless of outcome. Many of us are tempted to measure obedience by immediate payoff. But obedience is not a vending machine. You do not insert obedience and faithfulness and immediately receive relief from your troubles.

Joseph’s role here is not to control outcomes but to testify to God’s sovereignty. The interpretations come true exactly as Joseph said. God is vindicated, but Joseph is STILL imprisoned, and the waiting continues.

Let’s finish this chapter by reading Genesis 40:20-23

God’s Silence Does Not Mean God’s Absence

Joseph asks one thing of the cupbearer: *“Remember me... show me kindness”* (v. 14). This is not faithlessness. It is humanity. God often works through means, and Joseph rightly seeks justice. But verse 23 lands with quiet cruelty: *“The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.”*

Two years will pass. Two years. This is the ache that we feel when we are in periods of waiting. We pray. We obey. We hope. And nothing happens—at least nothing we can see. But the Bible never equates delay with neglect. God’s timing is not careless; it is careful. He is not slow; He is precise.

Here is the deep truth Genesis 40 presses into our souls: *God is doing ten thousand things you cannot see, and none of them are late.* Joseph is being prepared not just to be released, but to rule. Not just to survive, but to save nations. Not just to be reunited with his family, but to have reconciled relationships.

God is not merely interested in your comfort. He is committed to your Christlikeness and to His glory. And sometimes that requires more time than we think it should take. **God uses our faithful waiting for His glory and our good.**

God Uses Our Faithful Waiting to Shape Our Souls

Joseph’s suffering is not wasted because it is not random. God is training Joseph in humility, patience, compassion, and God-centered confidence. These virtues cannot be microwaved. They are forged in waiting.

Maybe you feel stalled today—in your career, in a relationship, in your ministry, in your physical health, or in your spiritual growth. Genesis 40 reminds us that *the prison (the period of waiting) is often the classroom of God.* Your current season—however disappointing—may be the very context where God is refining your trust, purifying your motives, and aligning your heart with His purposes. The fruit of suffering is not always immediate relief; often it is deeper joy later.

Romans 8:28 is not contradicted by Genesis 40—it is illustrated by it. God is working *all things* together for good, even when those things look like neglect and delay. Joseph does not yet see how this chapter fits into the larger story. But we do. We know that this forgotten moment is the final step before exaltation. The pit, the prison, the waiting—all of it leads to God’s saving purposes.

This is the great hope of the gospel. God is not glorified *despite* our suffering, but *through* it. And our good is not separate from His glory—it is found in it. Genesis 40 teaches us to trust a God who works in prisons, in delays, in forgotten years. He uses our abilities when we feel sidelined. He uses our long-suffering when we feel unseen. And He does all of this for His glory and for our deepest, eternal good.

So be faithful where you are. Steward the gifts God has given you. Trust Him in the waiting. The story is not over. And God is never idle.

If you are currently in a period of waiting, how is the Holy Spirit challenging you today to be faithful in the waiting? _____

Day 5

MORNING DEVOTIONS

From Prison to Promise

God at Work When We Cannot See

Genesis 41 is a turning point in the life of Joseph. Thirteen years have passed since he was sold into slavery—years marked by injustice, temptation, false accusation, and imprisonment. And yet, the chapter opens not with Joseph’s initiative but with God’s timing: “When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream” (Gen. 41:1). The delay is intentional. God is never late, never early. He is precise. What looks like silence is often preparation.

We will see from this chapter that God is sovereign over dreams and dungeons, kings and calendars. And His sovereignty does not cancel human responsibility—it creates it. God places Joseph in a position of influence so that Joseph’s story (his witness) might magnify God’s glory and bring real good to many lives, including his own.

Let’s begin by reading Genesis 41:1-13.

God’s Sovereignty Over Power and Circumstances

Pharaoh is the most powerful man in the known world, yet he is helpless before two troubling dreams. None of Egypt’s wise men can interpret them. This is not an accident. God is humbling human wisdom so that divine wisdom will be unmistakable. The cupbearer finally remembers Joseph—not out of loyalty, but because God stirs his memory at exactly the right moment.

Joseph is summoned from the prison to the palace in a single day. This is how quickly God can change circumstances when His purposes ripen. Genesis 41 reminds us that our security cannot rest in circumstances. The same God who sustained Joseph in prison is the God who exalts him in public. Providence governs both.

As we expect because of his past faithfulness, when Joseph is summoned before Pharaoh, he immediately points Pharaoh to Yahweh. *Let’s keep reading the story in Genesis 41:14-32.*

Joseph’s Witness: God-Centered, Not Self-Promoting

When Pharaoh asks Joseph to interpret the dreams, Joseph responds with remarkable humility: “I cannot do it... but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires” (41:16). This is not false modesty; it is theological clarity. Joseph knows that gifts are entrusted, not owned.

Here is the heart of Christian witness in positions of influence: deflecting glory from self to God. Joseph does not seize the moment to self-brand or negotiate leverage. He speaks plainly about God. Sometimes in our lives—whether at work, in leadership, or in public responsibility—we might be tempted to soften our witness to appear more competent or empathetic. Joseph shows us another way. True competence flows from confidence in God’s sovereignty, not from self-promotion.

Let's continue reading about Joseph's exaltation by reading Genesis 41:33-57.

God's Revelation and Joseph's Wisdom

Joseph interprets the dreams faithfully: seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. But he does not stop with interpretation; he moves to application. He advises Pharaoh to appoint a wise administrator and store grain during the years of plenty.

This is a crucial lesson: God's revelation invites wise action. Faith does not despise planning; it demands it. Joseph's wisdom is practical, strategic, and forward-looking. Faith is not merely believing true things about God; it is acting wisely in light of God's revealed truth. I would argue that if we don't act on what we believe, we might not really believe it in the first place! Christians should be among the most thoughtful planners, not because we trust plans, but because we trust the God who reveals the future.

Exaltation for the Sake of Service

Pharaoh recognizes the Spirit of God in Joseph and elevates him to second-in-command over Egypt. Joseph receives authority, a new name, fine clothes, and public honor. But notice the purpose: "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt" (41:41).

God's pattern is clear: exaltation is for service. Joseph's influence is not a reward for personal comfort but a stewardship for public good. This cuts against much of our ambition. We often view promotion as personal validation. Scripture presents it as increased responsibility. God lifts Joseph up so that many lives may be preserved (41:57).

The main idea of this chapter comes into sharp focus here and serves as today's takeaway: **God uses our witness for His glory and our good.** God uses our testimony and position of influence for His purposes. As Joseph serves faithfully in his role, people are fed, nations are preserved, and Joseph himself experiences restoration and fruitfulness.

Joseph names his sons Manasseh ("God has made me forget all my trouble") and Ephraim ("God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering"). This is not amnesia; it is healing. God does not erase Joseph's past—He redeems it. We often carry wounds, regrets, or long seasons of waiting. Genesis 41 assures us that God can make us fruitful *there*, not just somewhere else.

Below are some practical implications for what we have learned in this chapter. Which one is the Holy Spirit impressing upon your heart in this season of your life?

1. Faithfulness in obscurity matters. Joseph's public usefulness was built in private suffering. Your unseen obedience today may be preparing you for influence tomorrow—or it may simply glorify God where you are.

2. Speak of God plainly when influence comes. When opportunity opens, do not hide the source of your wisdom. God honors God-centered speech.

3. Use authority to serve, not secure comfort. Promotions, platforms, and leadership roles are opportunities for stewardship, not self-exaltation.

4. Trust God's timing. "Two full years" is not wasted time when God is at work. Waiting is often the furnace in which humility and trust are forged.

5. Expect God to bring good from suffering. Fruitfulness may grow from the very soil of affliction. God wastes nothing.

God Uses Our Quiet, Faithful Witness

Edward Kimball was not a pastor, evangelist, or public speaker. He was a quiet, faithful Sunday school teacher in Boston in the mid-1800s. He taught a class of teenage boys, many of whom worked long hours and showed little spiritual interest. Kimball took his responsibility seriously and prayed regularly for each boy by name. One of those boys was Dwight Lyman Moody, a rough, uneducated teenager who worked in a shoe store. Moody was not known for spiritual sensitivity, and Kimball felt deeply burdened for him. After much prayer and inner struggle, Kimball decided to visit Moody at work to speak with him personally about his soul.

Kimball later said he was nervous and unsure of himself. He went into the back of the shoe store, found Moody stocking shelves, and awkwardly but sincerely shared the gospel, urging him to trust Christ. There was no altar call, no dramatic moment. Kimball left unsure whether he had said the right thing. But that quiet, faithful act mattered.

Moody later wrote that on that day, he gave his life to Christ. Over time, Moody grew into one of the most influential evangelists of the 19th century, preaching to millions on both sides of the Atlantic. Through his ministry, countless people came to faith in Jesus. Kimball never preached to crowds. He never wrote books. He never knew the full impact of his obedience in his lifetime. He simply served faithfully, prayed persistently, and acted courageously when God prompted him. God often uses ordinary faithfulness over a long period of time to accomplish extraordinary things.

Bloom Where You are Planted

Genesis 41 is not ultimately about Joseph—it is about God. The God who rules dreams and empires also rules your life. He places His people where they are for reasons often unseen, so that through faithful witness and obedient service, His glory might shine and real good might flow.

The call for us is clear: wherever God places you—seen or unseen, exalted or ignored—bear witness to Him. Trust His sovereignty. Serve for His glory. And believe that in His hands, even your suffering can become a means of blessing for many, including you.

Day 6

MORNING DEVOTIONS

Our Pain, His Purpose

Have you ever been caught doing something you shouldn't be doing, but you saw how "being caught" turned into a good thing in your life? _____

Few biblical stories speak as powerfully to hearts weighed down by regret, family wounds, and unresolved guilt as the story of Joseph. The end of Joseph's story does not merely recount a reunion between estranged brothers; it reveals a sovereign God who orchestrates redemption through suffering, exposes guilt in order to heal it, and pours out grace where shame once ruled.

By the time we reach Genesis 42, Joseph is no longer the seventeen-year-old dreamer betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery. He is the governor of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, the administrator of grain in a world-threatening famine. But the central miracle of this story is not Joseph's rise to power—it is God's relentless commitment to His redemptive purposes, even through human sin.

Take the time now to read Genesis 42:1-24.

Sovereignty Behind the Scenes

Genesis 42 opens with irony thick as maple syrup. The brothers who once stripped Joseph of his robe now bow before him, unknowingly fulfilling the dreams they despised (Genesis 37:5–11). They come to Egypt desperate, hungry, and afraid—men carrying unconfessed guilt for over twenty years.

Joseph recognizes his brothers immediately, but they do not recognize him (vs 8). Why? First of all, Joseph was 13 years older, clean shaven (Egyptian custom), in Egyptian clothing, and he was using an interpreter to speak to them (vs. 23).

Joseph speaks harshly to them, accuses them of being spies, and imprisons them briefly. Joseph is not seeking revenge here, he is creating space for repentance. And repentance begins to stir. For the first time, the brothers say aloud what they have carried silently for decades: *"Surely we are being punished because of our brother... That's why this distress has come on us"* (vs 21). Notice what awakens confession: God uses hardship to surface guilt—not to crush us, but to lead us to grace.

Joseph changes the plan from all of the brothers being imprisoned to just one of them so that they could bring the grain home. And he inquires about the youngest brother (Benjamin) because he wanted to make sure that his brothers didn't harm him like they did to Joseph.

Grace That Meets Shame

In Genesis 43, the brothers return to Egypt with Benjamin, their father's beloved youngest son. Fear dominates the chapter. They expect judgment and they brace for punishment. But Joseph responds not with condemnation, but with unexpected generosity.

Joseph invites them into his home. He feeds them lavishly. He seats them in birth order—a subtle sign that he knows far more than he reveals. And when he sees Benjamin, Joseph is so overwhelmed with compassion that he weeps privately (Genesis 43:30).

This is grace layered upon grace. Joseph's brothers are men who sold him for silver, lied to their father, and hardened their hearts. Yet Joseph does not humiliate them. He does not force confession publicly. He does not shame them into repentance. Instead, he creates a space where grace precedes full understanding.

This is how God often works with us. Romans 2:4 reminds us that *"God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance."* Grace does not minimize sin; it disarms defenses so sin can finally be faced. Here is today's takeaway: **God exposes and heals our guilt for His glory and our good.**

Purpose in the Pain

Now we get to the best part of Joseph's story!!! Here we find out the purpose for all the pain and ups and downs that Joseph endured over the last 13 years.

Read Genesis 45:1-9. What is the main emotion that you feel when you read these verses?

Here, Joseph reveals the reason for his tears. He has understood for a couple years now why God allowed him to endure the suffering, but getting to see his family again just overwhelms him with God's amazing grace. The climax of Joseph's story is found in Genesis 45:5-7,

"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...to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

We again see Joseph's "theology of suffering" in Genesis 50:20 when he says to his brothers after his father's death, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."*

This is not denial of evil. Joseph names it plainly: *you intended harm*. Betrayal was real. Trauma was real. Injustice was real. But Joseph interprets his life through God's sovereignty, not his brothers' sin. God was not absent in the pit, the prison, or the palace. He was actively governing every detail. The same God who allowed betrayal also ordained deliverance. Joseph's suffering preserved nations. His humiliation led to salvation. His forgiveness restored a family and advanced God's covenant promise to Abraham.

Lessons from the Pit, the Prison, and the Palace

If Joseph were here to preach to us today, I think these would be the 5 messages he would deliver, based on his story--his faith journey--and we would do well to learn them ourselves:

1. **God uses our mistakes and our sin for His glory and our good.** Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers' decisions all led to Joseph getting sold into slavery. But God redeemed it all.
2. **God uses our faithfulness, even when life is unfair, for His glory and our good.** God will reward faithful obedience, but that reward doesn't always show up how and when we expect it.
3. **God uses our faithful waiting for His glory and our good.** Even when you are in life's waiting room, allow God to do His work in you. Keep serving, keep obeying, keep trusting.
4. **God uses our witness for His glory and our good.** Keep pointing people to Jesus, even when you don't feel like you have much influence. God might just surprise you with how much influence you can really have!
5. **God exposes and heals our guilt for His glory and our good.** When we are at our lowest, God extends His mercy and grace to us, and it is fully sufficient to save and transform us.

Which of the above five messages do you need to listen to the most right now? Is there someone in your life you know who would benefit from hearing one of the above messages, and how do you think the Lord wants to use you to communicate that message?

If Joseph could tell us one big, overarching main point he wanted us to remember, I think it would sound a lot like Romans 8:28-29:

"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. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son."

Joseph would say to us, "Your suffering is never wasted. God's sovereignty means that all the ups and downs in your life can become instruments of redemption that God uses to transform your life and the lives of others."

The same God who ruled Joseph's story rules ours. He is not improvising. He is not surprised by anything we go through. He is glorifying Himself by redeeming broken people. **Your story, His glory.**