

Sermon Series: Extraordinary Dreams**Sermon Title: Dream Realization: The You Factor****Sermon Text: Genesis 41****Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry****Sermon Summary**

This message is the fourth part of a six part series on one the Old Testament's most colorful characters, Joseph. Joseph had been given a dream from God and it seemed as if the dream would never come to pass. Joseph had been sold into slavery and ended up in prison. However, God was using all of his circumstances to achieve a great dream and purpose for Joseph! During his time of captivity, Joseph learned the importance of trusting God more than self, and realized just how much he needed the discernment and wisdom of God. Others could see the presence of God's Holy Spirit in his life. Joseph never gave up and God blessed him for his faithfulness! You and I may not be in physical captivity, but we all face difficulties in this life. A part of our dream realization is to learn the same lessons Joseph had learned.

Dream Realization: The You Factor**Full Sermon Notes:**

"Sin separated, the breach was far too wide, but from the far side of the chasm You had me in Your sight" Aren't you so glad Jesus had you in His sights? Aren't you so glad He has a dream and a plan for you? Today we're going to discover the fact that God's work in your life is personal and He really does care about you! Let's pray and ask God to open our hearts to His Word and then to teach our hearts His Word! Let's pray!

Introduction:

Over the next three weeks we're going to look at Joseph's dream fulfillment to see how God's dreams for His people include at least three factors: the You factor, the We factor and the They factor. Today is the You Factor. God's extraordinary dreams for you are about you, but not just about you! It always includes others! And it's interesting, when you focus on God and on others, it always benefits You. And when you just focus on You, it's never good for you! I want to remind you of a truth you should never, ever forget. When you allow God to use you to bless someone else, the largest blessing will be yours. It's amazing how that works. I was talking to one of our senior adults just this week and he was telling me how he gets the blessing when he helps someone else who is struggling and has a need! In other words, God's dream for you is better than your dream for you and His dream for you is always bigger than you, and His dream for you is not just about you! Paul reminded us of something Jesus had to say about this:

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

However, His dream does very much include you! This week we're going to talk about the YOU factor. He loves you and is excited about you and the potential He has placed in you and for

you! Recently, I read to you one of my all time favorite passages in God's Word. It's a powerful passage and one that has great relevance for our message today.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:14 I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

A lot of people don't know the background of this passage. God had actually banished the Hebrew people and carried them into exile. They had totally disobeyed God and were being disciplined by God. They were suffering some of the consequences of their bad choices and God had allowed the consequences in hopes they would return to Him and turn from their wicked ways. His hope was that they would call upon Him, seek Him, come to Him, pray to Him and find Him! Why? Because God had good dreams for them, dreams to prosper them and not to harm them. Plans to give them hope and a future.

And it's no different for us! God wants to do good in our lives. This doesn't mean things will always be easy and we'll never have issues, but it does mean God has good dreams for us and if we are suffering because of our own goof ups, if we let Him, he'll forgive us and help us through the consequences. And if we are dealing with things other people have done to trip us up, or Satan's attempts to make us mess up, if we let God, He can make good come from the bad. We know our troubles are sometimes circumstances beyond our control, or they may be consequences of our own poor choices and there are times we may face God's discipline. However, we must be extremely careful with this designation. As I mentioned last week, I can't tell you how many times, when things go wrong or bad things happen, people automatically think God is punishing them. God does discipline, but many people have lived under terrible guilt, thinking everytime something bad happens it's because they messed up so God is punishing them. Remember, Jesus took our punishment on the cross, and if we've asked for forgiveness of sins then we've been forgiven and our condemnation has been taken by Jesus.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
Romans 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Okay, back to our story of Joseph! Joseph may have wondered if he was being punished for bad or immature decisions he had made as a young man. He might have realized that he must have seemed somewhat arrogant with his brothers when telling them his dreams, and he may have been second guessing his decision to even tell them in the first place. But, again, we know that God was using different things in Joseph's life to get Joseph where he needed to be and for a future work which he had no way of knowing about. Over the last few weeks we've followed the story of Joseph. Let's recap with a few questions.

Who threw Joseph into an empty cistern and then sold him into slavery? His brothers!
Who tempted him to get involved in an immoral relationship and then accused him of things he had not done? Potiphar's wife!

Who got angry and had Joseph thrown into prison? Potiphar!

Who forgot to tell Pharaoh about Joseph's plight? The Cupbearer!

Was the answer to any of these questions God? No! Why? Because God didn't do any of these things to Joseph, but He did use them! In Joseph's case, most of these circumstances were brought on by the decisions of others! Maybe Joseph could have handled some things better when he was 17 years old, but I think we would all come to the same conclusion when looking back on our own lives! And not just when we were teenagers, right? Regardless, most of Joseph's problems were out of his control so it would have been easy for Joseph to get angry at God and blame Him for everything or at least be angry at God for allowing the bad things to happen. But we don't see this happen! In fact, we will see in the coming weeks that Joseph came to realize this: While God didn't cause the bad things that happened to Joseph, He sure used them for Joseph's ultimate good! And the same thing can be true for you and me if we'll call upon God, pray to God, and seek God with all our heart. Not only in the good times, but especially in the bad times! With all of this in mind, let's pick up the story of Joseph where we left off last week! We're going to see four things that factored into how God used every circumstance to bring about Dream Realization for Joseph and how these things factor into God's dream for you!

You Factor #1

You must trust God more than self!

Genesis 41:1 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream...

Two years since Joseph had interpreted the dreams for the cupbearer and baker. Two years since Joseph asked the cupbearer to inform the Pharaoh of his plight. However, God jogged his memory. You never know when a kindness done in the past will come back to bless you!

Genesis 41:1 Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile,

Genesis 41:2 when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds.

Genesis 41:3 After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank.

Genesis 41:4 And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

Genesis 41:5 He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk.

Genesis 41:6 After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind.

Genesis 41:7 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

Genesis 41:8 In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

Genesis 41:9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings.

Genesis 41:10 Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard.

Genesis 41:11 Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

Genesis 41:12 Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream.

Genesis 41:13 And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled."

Genesis 41:14 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.

Genesis 41:15 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."

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

Ok, this is big! Joseph again shows us the importance of trusting God and not self! It's not that Joseph is just now trusting God not self, he had been faithful to trust God and not self the whole time. He had trusted God as a slave in Potiphar's house, and as an inmate in prison. On the path to dream fulfillment God had helped Joseph to fully understand this truth: "I cannot do it, but God can!" Again, we don't know exactly when Joseph fully realized this, but it's obvious very early on in our story that Joseph depended on God rather than self. You might remember, Joseph had been the favored son of his father. He was given the coat of many colors or ornaments. Remember how he had given a bad report to his dad about his older brother's work with the sheep? The brothers probably thought, "this young kid thinks he knows everything. He thinks he can do everything better." And then came the dreams of others bowing down to him. All of this could have contributed to a bit of pride in Joseph and it could have caused him to rely on self, but instead we see Joseph work hard as a slave and as a prisoner, and constantly depend on God rather than self! I believe Joseph had come to understand that human effort, without the blessing and help of God will not free you from slavery or prison. Do you think this is a lesson we still need today? How many people out there think if they work harder, earn more money, get more stuff, get more fame, they will find freedom from their spiritual and emotional bondage! "If I achieve this or that or get this or that I'll be happy and finally find what I've been looking for!" But I've said it for years, it's a God shaped hole in our heart and only God fits that shape! Whether you're in prison or the head of a fortune 500 company, if the God-shaped hole in your heart is not filled with God, you're not going to find happiness, meaning or peace of mind. And if you try to fill the emptiness with substances or sinful activity, you'll only find yourself in bondage to things like addiction, anger, bitterness, depression, and extreme disappointment.

Dream killers for sure! And you can't fix these problems without God's help! Let me just sneak over to the New Testament for just a minute. When describing our dependence on God and not self, Jesus told His disciples this...

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Sometimes it takes a few trials and tribulations for us to grow to the point where we understand our need for God's presence, His prudence, His provision, His peace, and His power! A part of God's dream for Joseph was for him to become humble enough and wise enough to realize how much he needed God and boy did that happen!! Joseph's actions illustrated the kind of attitude we should all aspire to: "I'm going to trust God's plans even in my unjust situations: and not hurt others because I've been hurt; Hurt people hurt people. By God's grace I will not do that." How can we come to this kind of attitude? The Psalmist says...

Psalm 91:1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalm 91:2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Psalm 91:3 Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

Psalm 91:4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Which takes us to...

You Factor #2

You need the discernment and wisdom of God!

Genesis 41:17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile,

Genesis 41:18 when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds.

Genesis 41:19 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.

Genesis 41:20 The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first.

Genesis 41:21 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.

Genesis 41:22 "In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk.

Genesis 41:23 After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind.

Genesis 41:24 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."

Genesis 41:25 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.

Genesis 41:26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream.

Genesis 41:27 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.

Genesis 41:28 "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do.

Genesis 41:29 Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt,

Genesis 41:30 but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land.

Genesis 41:31 The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe.

Genesis 41:32 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.

Genesis 41:33 "And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.

It's amazing the leader Joseph had become. Through his leadership as a slave and then as the head trustee in the prison, Joseph had learned a thing or two and God was about to use all of those lessons big-time!! In fact, listen to the advice Joseph gives the Pharaoh...

Genesis 41:34 Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance.

Genesis 41:35 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.

Genesis 41:36 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."

Genesis 41:37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.

If you will depend on God during your trials and tribulations, God will use your trials and tribulations to make you a better person! You will become wiser and will gain discernment. Remember, God's dream for you is not just about accomplishing a goal, it's about becoming the man or woman God wants you to be!!

Listen to these powerful words in the book of James...

James 1:2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

James 1:3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

James 1:4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Paul wrote in Romans 5:3-5...

Romans 5:3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

Romans 5:4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Romans 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

And speaking of The Holy Spirit, watch what happens next in Joseph's dream realization. We find a third concept that must be factored in...

You Factor #3

You are a vessel of God's Holy Spirit!

Genesis 41:38 So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

God was working through Joseph to accomplish some amazing things. And let me point this out to you: Our story is from the Old Testament! The Day of Pentecost had not yet taken place. The day of Pentecost happened after Jesus had ascended back to heaven! His Spirit descended upon the followers of Jesus in the Upper Room! In the Old Testament, The Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out or made available to all people, as He has since the Day of Pentecost! In the Old Testament days God's Spirit was only given to certain individuals, for a certain amount of time, for certain tasks! So what you're seeing with Joseph was not a common occurrence in those days! It is amazing that followers of Christ now have access to The Holy Spirit and His leadership 24/7! God Almighty wants to work through you, by way of His Holy Spirit to impact your world. Joseph was being used as a vessel to carry out God's divine plan and was a vessel of God's Holy Spirit, and His wisdom! Pharaoh saw clearly that God was working in Joseph's life. Listen to how God can use a person led by His Spirit...

Genesis 41:39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.

Genesis 41:40 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."

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

Genesis 41:42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

Genesis 41:43 He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

Genesis 41:44 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt."

Is it not amazing how God took Joseph from slave and prison inmate to second in command of an entire country? God's dream for you is to work in and through you by way of His Holy Spirit! And remember, we have 24/7 access to His Holy Spirit. If you have accepted Jesus into your life

and heart as Savior, then He is there by way of His Holy Spirit. So you have access! And by the way, being filled with the Holy Spirit is not you getting more of The Spirit, but The Spirit getting more of you! It's you allowing God's Holy Spirit access to every area of your life and trusting Him with life's difficulties. Our extraordinary God has given you extraordinary access to His Spirit's wisdom, power, comfort and peace. The question is will you rely on Him or yourself when the tough times come your way. When things are out of control are you willing to trust the One who is ultimately in control?

I want to give you a very powerful example of how this literally works. I talked to a very dear friend of mine this week. He was a member of the church I pastored in Nashville, TN back in the early 90's. His name is Kenny. He was unjustly accused of being a deadbeat dad by an ex-wife who was addicted to drugs. I went with him to court, but the judge gave no one a chance to speak on his behalf and he was sentenced to 6 months in jail. As we left the courtroom I was so mad. I knew the situation well. Kenny looked at me and said, "Brother Larry, it's okay, maybe God has a jail ministry for me to do for 6 months." Wow, what an attitude! Three or four months into his sentence I had an officer from the jail come by the church. He told me that Kenny had started a Bible study with the inmates. He had been listening in and had prayed to receive Jesus as his Savior. He then told me, "Kenny said I could come see you and you would baptize me!" I did! I asked Kenny if he remembered that and he said, "Yeh that was Officer Campbell!" At the end of his sentence I went to pick Kenny up and the officer that brought him out said this: "This is a strange day. We are usually glad to see these guys go, but we hate to see this one leave!" And with that he wished Kenny the best! Like Joseph, others were able to see God's Spirit at work in Kenny and Kenny was better for it as well! Why do I say that? Because of...

You Factor #4 **God will bless you!**

The road to dream realization may be a long one and a difficult one, but God is taking you somewhere, for a reason. One of those reasons is to bless you! Remember the verses from Jeremiah I read to you earlier?
Listen...

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

How did this apply to Joseph?

Genesis 41:45 Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

Genesis 41:46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt.

Genesis 41:47 During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully.

Genesis 41:48 Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it.

Genesis 41:49 Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

Genesis 41:50 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On.

Genesis 41:51 Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household."

Genesis 41:52 The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

God blessed Joseph for his faithfulness to hold on to his faith and his God-given dream even though his dream had collided with reality! He had faced the dream killers and endured 13 years of slavery and imprisonment. I think Joseph understood a New Testament verse many years before it was ever written...

Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

The key is to not give up! Our extraordinary God will work in all of your circumstances, to transform your life and allow you to fulfill His extraordinary dreams for you! The secret to not giving up is to trust God, not self. Rely on His discernment and wisdom! Allow yourself to be a vessel of The Holy Spirit and know that God will bless you!

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Let's pray!