

Sermon Series: Extraordinary Dreams**Sermon Title: Dream Endurance****Sermon Text: Genesis 40:1-23****Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry****Sermon Summary**

This message continues our look at the life of Joseph and the God-given dream he had been given. Joseph's dream had collided with reality as he was sold into slavery by his own brothers. He then faced trials and tribulations that sought to kill his dreams. Joseph depended on God's presence, was dedicated to his calling, and determined to be faithful through it all. However, the length of time his dream had to endure was around 13 years. It becomes clear later that God's timing was perfect, personal, practical and purposeful. Verses of Scripture are explored that explain why these truths and how they apply not only to Joseph, but also to each of us today.

Full Sermon Notes

"You are Waymaker, even when I don't see it You're working!" Sometimes we just can't see it! We can't see or understand how anything good could come from some of our life's difficulties and tragedies. When it seems our dreams have been put on permanent hold! But there is such a thing as dream endurance! Let's pray and ask God to help us understand the concept of dream endurance and why it's so important to trust God's timing for His extraordinary dreams for our lives! Pray!

I shouldn't have to say this to anyone in this room, but all of us in this room, including myself, have to be reminded of this truth: Satan is always going to fight our God-given dreams! We should expect that but it so often catches us by surprise! And another truth I shouldn't have to say to anyone in this room, including myself, but we all need to be reminded of is this truth: Our God is bigger, stronger, and greater than anything Satan can conjure up! We must trust that our God will use every hardship to make us stronger, and in the end we'll be better for it because God works all things together for our good. In other words, He gives us dreams, plans, and tasks to do and He'll use everything that comes our way to help get us to the place He wants us to go. He will also provide everything we need in order to see the dream become a reality! It's because of this equation...

Extraordinary God + Ordinary People = Transformed Lives

If you're joining us for the first time in this series, we're looking at the epic story of Joseph. Yes, the Joseph with the coat of many colors. The first week we discovered God had given Joseph a dream or two. We also discovered how Joseph's dreams collided with reality! He found out pretty quickly it would not be a cakewalk to see the dream accomplished. His father questioned him, and his brothers despised him so much they sold him into slavery and made their dad think Joseph had been torn to pieces by a wild animal. Oh, by the way, Joseph's God-given dream was that he would be a great leader and others, including his family, would someday bow to him. He didn't fully understand the dream, but he began to understand it was in fact from God! . Joseph's dreams went from the initial collision with reality to a constant battle with dream killers.

Things like devastation, discouragement, despondency, doubts, anger, confusion and temptations to give up or take matters into his own hands! Today we come face to face with one of the hardest realities and one of the toughest issues Joseph had to deal with...Dream Endurance!

Endurance has to do with time and patience and I think everyone of us in this room has at one time or another had to deal with the struggle of waiting for dream fulfillment. You know, the old "Hurry up and wait" thing! When the topic of endurance comes up, it is inevitable that the conversation will at some point deal with patience. Do you struggle with patience in general? Have you ever struggled with patience when it comes to God's timing in your life? Would Joseph's God-given dream endure the wait? How about yours? What does the word endurance mean to you? According to Webster it is...

"the ability to do something difficult for a long time"

and...

"the ability to withstand hardship or adversity; especially: the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity."

If you analyze this definition you'll notice it is built around the concept of time and the words long and prolonged. Ok, are you ready for this? When we started our story Joseph was 17 years old. Next week when we talk about dream fulfillment, Joseph will be 30 years old! Do the math - 13 years! Joseph had been thrown into prison by his owner Potiphar after Potiphar's wife had falsely accused Joseph of attempted rape. While in prison, Joseph becomes the head trustee. Remember?

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,
Genesis 39:21 the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

Genesis 39:22 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.

Genesis 39:23 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.

While he's there something very interesting happens that God will use down the road in Joseph's life. We pick up our story in Genesis 40:1...

Genesis 40:1 Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt.

Genesis 40:2 Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,
Genesis 40:3 and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined.

Genesis 40:4 The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time,

Genesis 40:5 each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

Genesis 40:6 When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected.

Genesis 40:7 So he asked Pharaoh’s officials who were in custody with him in his master’s house, “Why do you look so sad today?”

Genesis 40:8 “We both had dreams,” they answered, “but there is no one to interpret them.”

Then Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.”

Genesis 40:9 So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, “In my dream I saw a vine in front of me,

Genesis 40:10 and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes.

Genesis 40:11 Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup and put the cup in his hand.”

Genesis 40:12 “This is what it means,” Joseph said to him. “The three branches are three days.

Genesis 40:13 Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer.

Genesis 40:14 But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison.

Genesis 40:15 I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.”

Genesis 40:16 When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread.

Genesis 40:17 In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.”

Genesis 40:18 “This is what it means,” Joseph said. “The three baskets are three days.

Okay parents, the following verse is a bit graphic if you want to hold your little ones ears. I’ll give you just a minute...

Genesis 40:19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale your body on a pole. And the birds will eat away your flesh.”

Genesis 40:20 Now the third day was Pharaoh’s birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials:

Genesis 40:21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh’s hand—

Genesis 40:22 but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.

Genesis 40:23 The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

Forgotten? Really? You've got to be kidding? How in the world could this guy just forget Joseph? How could he not be so grateful to even be alive? I mean the dreams could have been

reversed! He could have had the baker's dream. Anyway, he forgot Joseph and said nothing to the Pharaoh. Another bout with the dream killers for Joseph! Can you imagine week after week just waiting for someone to come and tell him, "The Pharaoh has ordered your release!" But that just didn't happen. He had been forgotten. Have you ever felt forgotten? Have you ever felt God has forgotten you? Maybe you've begun to wonder whether or not God ever had a dream for you in the first place. Would Joseph's dream endure the wait? Will your dream endure the wait? Why would God make us wait in the first place? I mean, if it's God's dream for us, why the wait? Why doesn't God just work His magic and make the dream happen in an instant? In the blink of an eye! Why put us in a holding pattern and make us wait? I have a sneaky suspicion God's got some answers for you today! Why the wait?

God's Timing is Perfect!

I love what J.R. Tolkien's character Gandalf said in *The Lord of the Rings*. "A wizard is never late, nor is he early, he arrives precisely when he means to!"

God is no wizard, but I can tell you He is never late, nor is He early, He arrives precisely when He means to! Now in Tolkien's story, Gandalf is being facetious, and joking around, but when God talks about being on time, he's not trying to be funny.

The Psalmist Asaph, who we heard from last week, put it this way in Psalm 75:1-3...

Psalm 75:1 We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks, for your Name is near; men tell of your wonderful deeds.

Psalm 75:2 You say, "I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge uprightly.

Psalm 75:3 When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm..."

That was no joke! This Psalmist understood the importance of giving thanks for and trusting in God's timing, God's wisdom, and God's protection! In other words, "God, I may not understand your timing or your ways, but I trust Your ability to hold my world together when it has been shaken to the core!!" We know Joseph trusted God's timing, although he didn't understand it! We know this by looking at his faithfulness to God throughout all of his difficulties. At times it must have seemed his God-given dream was turning into a nightmare, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and imprisoned! And we know Joseph did get a little impatient at times. He told the cupbearer...

Genesis 40:14 But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison.

So we know it wasn't easy for Joseph, but as we learned last week, Joseph depended on God's presence, was dedicated to the dream and determined to be faithful! Learning to trust God's timing is not always easy, but it's always best!

God sees things we can't see and while it may be hard, we need to trust His timing. If we rush things and get out ahead of God, we can get ourselves into big trouble. Have you ever painted

something and the instructions said to wait a certain amount of time before you handled it and you got impatient, and got fingerprints on it and had to repaint it? Or glued something and just couldn't wait, and it broke again and you had to reglue it? In life, the consequences of impatience and not waiting on God can have far greater consequences! We must trust God's perfect timing, and we must also come to understand another reason for the wait is that...

God's Timing is Personal!

God is concerned about you personally. He desires to use all of the events in your life to make you the man or woman of God He created you to be! The reason the dream takes time to fulfill is God is working with you personally to grow you! I once heard this statement...

God is more concerned with our character than He is with our comfort!

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way...

Hebrews 12:10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

Hebrews 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Sometimes it is uncomfortable when God starts chiseling away at some of the attitudes, habits or traits that are holding us back from becoming the work of art God wants us to become. When an earthly architect designs and builds a building, people are used to build the building. The focus is on the building. God's kingdom is so different. He is building people. So the timing of the completion of the project is not as important as the completion of God's goals for the people!

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

Ephesians 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Ephesians 2:21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

Ephesians 2:22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

As I thought about the statement...

God is more concerned with our character than He is with our comfort!

Some other things occurred to me. Like this...

God is more concerned with who we become than how quickly we become!

In the coming weeks we will see how God was using all of Joseph's difficulties to help him become the man of God he needed to be! A man who would be a leader not just because he had a God-given dream to be a leader, but because God had developed him into a leader through each and every difficult life lesson! We see God developing Joseph's character as a leader while in prison.

Genesis 40:6 When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected.
Genesis 40:7 So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?"

Some leaders don't really care about those they lead! Joseph did. Maybe one of the reasons he cared was because he knew what they were going through! He had been and was still going through difficulties of his own. Sometimes we want to become leaders without having gone through the life experience we need in order to be a good leader. This is not to say young people can't be leaders. They can, but I would encourage all young leaders, and the old ones as well, to seek God's wisdom through His Word and through Godly advice from faithful men and women who've traveled the road. And then I also thought about this...

How we achieve the dream is as important as the dream itself!

Some people try to apply the old adage "The ends justify the means," or "the result is the only thing that matters!" But that's not the case when it comes to the things of God! You see it's not just the job we are doing that is important to God, but how we accomplish the job! Are we Christlike in the way we pursue our dreams or is it "achieve the dream at all cost?" Does our integrity, honesty, and trustworthiness remain intact as we pursue our dreams? We must never forget who we are and what we are becoming matters to God as much as the task He has given us to accomplish! And one of the reasons for this is the fact that one of the most extraordinary dreams of all that God has for us is this: He wants us to be more like Jesus everyday in motivation, attitude, and action. There's a Scripture in 1 Peter that I believe sheds some important light on what I'm talking about. If we're going to be more like Jesus then it stands to reason we need to learn how Jesus handled things in life, like the dream killers we talked about last week. Check this out...

1 Peter 2:19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.

1 Peter 2:20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

1 Peter 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Peter 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

1 Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Wow and wow! What a passage!

1 Peter 2:19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.

Joseph was certainly bearing the pain of unjust suffering! Jesus certainly bore the pain of unjust suffering! Sometimes in your life there will be things that aren't fair, problems, difficulties and unjust suffering, even when you're living for the Lord, and maybe especially when you are living for the Lord because, as I've said, Satan is going to try and discourage you from living out your faith and following your God-given dream! What are we to do? Learn lessons from Joseph and Jesus! They were conscious of God and their God-given dreams! They were concerned with others! Jesus, God in the flesh, gave us the perfect example of dream endurance! The Bible says Jesus was tempted in every way like us, but without sin. Don't you know He was tempted to speak out and put the people who were hurling insults at Him in their place? But He didn't retaliate or make threats. He trusted the One who was ultimately in control! And while He was on the Cross He prayed for the people who had nailed Him there and even promised one of the criminals he would be with Him in paradise! If I were in prison or on a cross would I be concerned about others? Something to think about! And Peter asks a question in this passage I think we shouldn't overlook...

1 Peter 2:20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?

Sometimes we suffer consequences of our sin, disobedience, and prideful determination to do our own thing, in our own time, rather than trust God's dream and timing for us. And we may blame God even when what we are going through is not a part of God's plan, but a result of our plans gone bad!! However, even in those situations, if we ask for forgiveness He will forgive! And if we get back to pursuing God's extraordinary dreams for us we can become more like Jesus even in the midst of trouble...

1 Peter 2:20 ... But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

1 Peter 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

And this takes us to our third answer to the question of why the dream has to sometimes endure a lengthy journey.

God's Timing is Practical!

This is so important for us to know! God's timing makes sense. We may not understand it, but He understands and knows things we can't know and perceives and sees things we can't see. Sometimes the dream not only takes time, but unusual routes. Joseph's dream took some really unusual routes. Routes, I'm pretty sure, Joseph wouldn't have chosen for himself. But God had His reasons for taking Joseph the route He took him. In the next couple of weeks we're going to see just how practical God's plans were in Joseph's life. But for us, here and now, when we

can't figure things out, we're going to need to trust God's direction and His wisdom each step of the way. Listen to this most practical advice from the writer of Proverbs in chapter 4:5-13 and then I'll explain...

Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.

Proverbs 4:6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.

Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

And then verse 13 gets really practical...

Proverbs 4:13 Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.

The dream has to endure delays while we gain the wisdom we'll need at the next level. When I look at some of the delays in my life, I've come to the conclusion that I'm a slow learner! But gaining the wisdom God desires for us to have is worth more than silver and gold! Wisdom, and the understanding that comes with it, will protect you, watch over you, exalt you, honor you, and guide you! And let me point this out to you. The writer of Proverbs had previously said...

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

Proverbs 3:6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

When God says He'll lead you along straight paths, this doesn't mean He will draw a straight line from where you are now to where He wants you to be! No, the straight paths simply means you won't be meandering around without direction. God will make it clear to you, in time, the path. However, God will probably not take you directly to your ultimate dream destination. Why? God's timing is practical. Let me put it this way. If God's desire for you is to get from point A to point G on the map, He will probably not draw one long straight line from A to G. He may, in fact, draw several short straight lines. One from point A to point B. One from point B to point C. One from point C to point D. You get my point! Why is this?

Because at point B, there's a lesson you need to learn! At point C there's a person you need to meet whom God will use to help you in your journey! At point D there's some critical supplies you'll need to pick up! At point E there's someone who needs your help in their journey! When we look at Joseph's life, we see this being played out practically! And our final answer as to why the dream sometimes has to endure those difficult delays will help you understand even more clearly how practical God is with His dreams for us.

God's Timing is Purposeful!

We read this verse last week, but listen to it again...

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails.

Remember, God's dream for you is not just about achieving some goal, or doing some task! No, God's dream has a purpose far beyond just being able to say, "I did it!" Remember, God is developing character in your life. You see, if your inner being is right, your outward doing will be right! Along the way we will be tempted to do wrong, to take dishonest shortcuts, to lie just a little bit, or to try and manipulate situations to get what we want. Do you think Joseph was tempted to do this? Maybe. Remember the dream the baker had? The true interpretation was not a pretty one! Joseph must have realized that he was not going to get any favors from the Baker if he told him the real interpretation. But Joseph knew the importance of truth! He was not going to lie about what God had revealed to him concerning the Baker's dream to try and gain a "get out of jail" card! If a person claims to be following a God-given dream or goal in life, but they utilize ungodly ways to get there, they may achieve temporary success but it will not be blessed by God and will end up falling apart!

You see, a major part of God's dream for you is found on the journey to get to your dream and the little accomplishments along the way that are really not so little after all! Lives touched, lives changed, lessons learned, lessons taught, love received, love given! If you just run past the needs and the hurts of others on your way to your grand prize, how sad is that? What dream could be so important for you to step on others just to achieve your dream? One of the saddest things I've seen in my life is folks who are always trying to get somewhere and they're trying to get there as fast as they can. Some people spend their whole life always trying to get to the next goal or dream or station in life and they never slow down enough to learn any lessons, or share any lessons, to give any love or receive any either. They never take the time to live in the moment and cherish the powerful gift of life God has given them today! Sometimes I think God waits on fulfilling the dreams He has given us in order to get us to slow down and smell the roses. There have been people who have achieved Gold and Platinum albums in the music world who would say this, "If I could trade that Gold Album for all the things I lost getting that Gold album, I'd trade it back in a heartbeat!" It's not that Gold Albums are bad or achieving great success in life is bad, but be careful that you don't allow success and achievement to cause you to miss out on life along the way. The joy is in the journey! God's timing is purposeful because He wants us to understand these verses...

James 4:13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

James 4:14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

James 4:15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

And we must understand this very important purpose that God has for our lives: God has a bigger redemptive purpose for the things He is doing! We have the advantage of knowing the end of Joseph's story and can see how God was carefully working all things together for Joseph's good, but, as we'll see in the coming weeks, God had another purpose. Joseph's dreams were not just for his personal benefit! God was using Joseph to keep the dream of a Jewish Messiah alive, and salvation for the world! The Psalmist David also understood a thing

or two about God's timing and he gives us some clear indications of the motives and activities behind God's timing in Psalm 145:13ff.

Psalm 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.

Psalm 145:14 The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.

Psalm 145:15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.

Psalm 145:16 You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

Psalm 145:17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.

Psalm 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Psalm 145:19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

Like Joseph, David had been through some trials and tribulations of his own. He also had come to understand that God's dream was about an everlasting kingdom not a temporary earthly kingdom, and that God was faithful to all His promises and motivated by love! He knew The Lord is there for those who fall and lifts those who are bowed down. He meets their needs at the proper time! He opens His hand and satisfies. The Lord is righteous in all His ways. He is near to all who call on him, to all who call on Him in truth. And you can be honest when you cry to God. He wants your honesty! Honesty is one of God's core values! And I just love that last verse...

Psalm 145:19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

The Psalmist is not talking about being scared of God in some kind of "I can't trust God", or fearing "He might hurt me or lash out at me if I try to talk to Him!" Fearing God has to do with respect, honor, and reverence! Fearing God's wrath or His anger only comes to play when we reject the ways of God by being dishonest, disrespectful, having a total disregard for the holiness of God, and dishonoring the sacrifice Jesus made on the Cross to show us God's love and save us from our sins. And even if you've done all of that, you can repent and ask for forgiveness! Jesus died to take the wrath that God has towards our wickedness! The only way a person would have to face the wrath of God for their sin is if they reject the gift of forgiveness and trod the blood of Christ underfoot! Otherwise, we can know God hears our cries and saves us. So remember this...

God's timing is Perfect, Personal, Practical and Purposeful! When you're struggling with dream endurance, hold on to this promise found in God's Word...

Psa 9:9 The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Psa 9:10 Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you

Let's Pray!!