

“You Can’t Keep a Good Man Down” (Genesis 40-41)

There is a parable about a farmer whose old dog fell into a dry well. After assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the dog but decided that neither the dog nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he planned to bury the old dog in the well and put him out of his misery. When the farmer began shoveling, initially the old dog panicked. But then it dawned on the mutt that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back he could shake it off and step up. This he did blow after blow. “Shake it off and step up, shake it off and step up, shake it off and step up!” he repeated to encourage himself. It wasn’t long before the dog, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly out of the well. What he thought would bury him actually benefited him—all because of the way he handled adversity.¹

That story always reminds me of Joseph, who frequently found himself about to be buried in some hole. Yet, like this courageous dog, Joseph also had the resolve and courage to “shake it off and step up.” Genesis 40-41 explains how God uses adversity to benefit His servants. In fact, as we study this section we will learn that suffering can prepare ordinary Christians for extraordinary service.

Scene 1 (40:1-8)

Moses begins our story with these words: “**Then it came about after these things [cf. 39:20-23], the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended [cf. 39:9]² their lord, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the same place where Joseph was imprisoned**” (40:1-3). These three verses ooze God’s sovereignty. While Joseph is wasting away in jail, God brings some influential and unexpected guests. (The cupbearer and baker were responsible for Pharaoh’s drink and food.) The word “**in**” is repeated three times in 40:3 to emphasize that God is the One that sovereignly drops these two men into prison with Joseph.

In 40:4, “**the captain of the bodyguard**” (none other than Potiphar) put Joseph in charge of the cupbearer and baker. Moses writes that he “**attended**” (*sharath*) to the men. This word means “to wait on as a servant” (cf. 39:4). Joseph isn’t consumed with the injustice of his situation. He doesn’t go on a hunger strike. He isn’t consumed by bitterness. He doesn’t spiral into depression. Instead, he chooses to focus his attention on serving those around him. Serving others had two very beneficial effects on Joseph: **First, serving kept him from wallowing in self-pity.** It is difficult to feel sorry for yourself when serving others (Mark 10:45). **Second, serving paved the way for his ultimate deliverance.** If Joseph hadn’t served the cupbearer and baker he would have never heard and interpreted their dreams. If he hadn’t interpreted their dreams, he would have never interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams. And if he hadn’t interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams, he would have never been placed in a position to deliver the covenant people of God. And if he hadn’t delivered the covenant people of God, the Messiah never would have come to save us from our sins! Remarkably, our salvation was, in part, tied to Joseph’s willingness to serve his fellow prisoners when others may have been swirling in depression, asking “Why me, God?”³

In time, the cupbearer and baker each had a dream on the very same night (40:5). Verses 6-8 tell us, “**When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. He asked Pharaoh’s officials who were with him in confinement in his master’s house, ‘Why are your faces so sad today?’ Then they said to him, ‘We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it.’ Then Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please.’**” It is important to observe that Joseph took notice of the condition of the men. He could have easily become mired in self-pity. Instead, he takes notice that the cupbearer and baker look uncharacteristically discouraged and immediately discerned that something was wrong. He then draws them out. One of the keys to the Spirit-filled life is to be an others-centered person (Phil 2:4).

Imagine this...Joseph was the one that ought to be sad. He was the one who had been falsely accused and put in prison. Yet, here he is, cheering up somebody else! Even though we may be in adverse conditions we can still encourage a person who is in even greater trouble than we are. When we are waiting for somebody to encourage us, it may be that we can be encouraging somebody else.⁴

Now back to our story. The cupbearer and baker are sad and discouraged because there was no one to interpret their dreams. Dreams played an important role in ancient Egypt, and their interpretation was a specialized skill. As prisoners, the cupbearer and baker have no access to expert interpreters.⁵ Joseph recognized that the dreams of the cupbearer and baker were revelations from God.⁶ Realizing that God had given him the ability to interpret their divine revelations, Joseph invited the two prisoners to relate their dreams to him. He was careful, however, to give God⁷ the glory for his interpretative gift (40:8; cf. 41:16, 25, 28, 39).⁸

Scene 2 (40:9-19)

Joseph prepared himself to hear the cupbearer's dream, which was like a Home and Garden Television video on fast-forward.⁹ Moses writes, **"So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, 'In my dream, behold, there was a vine in front of me; and on the vine were three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, and its clusters produced ripe grapes. Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand.'** Then Joseph said to him, **'This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer. Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon'"** (40:9-15). Some think that Joseph was wrong to appeal to the cupbearer in this way.¹⁰ But I see no reason to think that. Joseph probably saw this as the means of God's provision to his prayers. He had high hopes. That's not wrong, since we serve a God who does mighty things on our behalf. We should be people of hope. While content to remain in the dungeon for as long as God willed, Joseph also made every effort to seek his release through every legitimate channel (cf. Prov 16:9).

Moses goes on to write, **"When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, 'I also saw in my dream, and behold, there were three baskets of white bread on my head; and in the top basket there were some of all sorts of baked food'¹¹ for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.'** Then Joseph answered and said, **'This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you'"** (40:16-19). But there is a play-on-words in this section. Joseph uses the phrase **"lift up your head"** (40:19; cf. 40:13) to describe the baker's hanging. This brings new meaning to the phrase, "Heads up!" The baker would not simply suffer execution, but his corpse would then be impaled and publicly exposed. Scholars point out that the Egyptians did this to prevent his spirit from resting in the afterlife.¹²

Scene 3 (40:20-23)

Our chapter concludes with this account: **"Thus it came about on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him"** (40:20-23).

Joseph's predictions came true just as God had said! He was two for two in his interpretations. Unfortunately, the chief cupbearer **"forgot"** Joseph. This is not a mental lapse but a moral lapse. He self-centeredly does not bother to **"remember"** himself with his former inmates.¹³ Our text does not indicate what happened in Joseph's heart as he waited in vain day after day. It just ends with the bleak words, **"Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him"** (40:23). This is yet another reminder that people will disappoint us. Therefore, our trust cannot be in people.

Notice the place in your Bible between 40:23 and 41:1. It's a white space, a chapter break. But that little break represents two years in Joseph's life, two years in a dungeon, two years out of his twenties—the prime of his life. That white space in your Bible represents the maturing of Joseph, when he dealt with his disappointments and moved, not into despair, but into hope in God alone.¹⁴ I say that because of the product we see coming out at the other end. We don't see a cynical, angry man, but rather a godly, mature man who is able to handle the heavy responsibilities thrust upon him. Psalm 105:19 says of this time that "the word of the Lord tested him." Those two silent years in the dungeon after his disappointment with the cupbearer were a time of learning to hope in God.¹⁵

Joseph's life teaches us that disappointments are essential to spiritual growth because they demand faith and resting all hope upon God.¹⁶ Nowhere in this narrative do we see Joseph feeling sorry for himself or blaming others. He simply took each situation as it came and made the best out of it. The biggest problem in life is not having problems. Our problem is thinking that having problems is a problem.¹⁷

Jesus warned us in John 16:33b, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." Every setback is an opportunity to grow in dependence on the Lord. Trials may be viewed from two standpoints, and it will make all the difference to our spiritual life and peace which of these two points of view we take. From the human side, Joseph's suffering was due to injustice on the part of Potiphar, and ingratitude on the part of the cupbearer. From the divine side, these years were permitted for the purpose of training and preparing Joseph for the great work that lay before him. If we look only at the human side of trials we shall become discouraged, and may be irritated and angered, but as we turn to look at it from the divine side we shall see God in everything and all things working together for our good (Rom 8:28). Today, God wants to use adversity to benefit you. He wants to use your suffering to prepare you for extraordinary service.

Scene 4 (41:1-8)

In 41:1-7, Pharaoh has two hideous dreams. In the first dream, seven fat cows are eaten by seven gaunt cows (41:1-4). In the second dream, seven plump ears of grain are eaten by seven thin ears (41:5-7). In 41:8, Moses writes, **"Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh."** The "magicians" that Pharaoh sent for shouldn't be confused with magicians of our own day. They didn't wear tuxedos and pull rabbits out of hats. They were the wisest, most educated men of Pharaoh's kingdom. They were schooled in the sacred arts and sciences of the Egyptians. Yet, Pharaoh's magicians and wise men were totally baffled because the two dreams were a revelation from God. And the things of God can only be grasped through His Spirit.

Joseph was in prison for a divine appointment. Now the pieces of the puzzle begin to come together.¹⁸ If Joseph had been released from prison two years earlier there is no guarantee where he would be at this time, when Pharaoh needs his services. Joseph quite probably would not have been taken back into Potiphar's house. Perhaps Joseph would have been sold to another Egyptian or even to a traveling band of slave traders who then might have sold Joseph to another master in another land.¹⁹

Scene 5 (41:9-24)

It was not good for the king to be in such a state, and certainly not for anyone who worked so closely with him, as did the cupbearer. So at the opportune time, the cupbearer delicately volunteered that he knew of someone who could interpret Pharaoh's dreams (41:9-13).²⁰ **"Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh"** (41:14). The Egyptians hated hair and would shave all the hair off their bodies and then wear wigs.

In 41:15-16, we come to a very important exchange. **"Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.'"** What an opportunity for Joseph to capitalize upon! He could have used the occasion to make a bargain with the king—his freedom in exchange for the interpretation to Pharaoh's dreams. But as much as I'm sure Joseph desired to be released from prison, he never brought up the subject. His first concern was not with his own comfort, but with serving God faithfully in the midst of God's divine appointment.

Joseph rejects Pharaoh's approach in emphatic terms, and with a minimum of words. (**"It is not in me"** is all one word in Hebrew.)²¹ Joseph then quickly attributes his powers to God. He doesn't present himself as the "Dreaminator" or the "Dr. of Dreamology." Instead, he freely admits he has nothing to offer in and of himself. The interpretations come from God alone.²²

When someone compliments you on your ability or on something you have done, it is fine to accept it simply by saying, "Thank you." The person is trying to encourage you, and it can come across as false humility if you always respond with, "It wasn't I; it was the Lord." But, even when you say "thank you," you had better be thinking to yourself, "Thank You, *Lord*, for Your grace in enabling me to do that." If you sense that the other person is attributing something to you where God alone deserves the credit, then you need to be bold to honor God as Joseph does (cf. 1 Cor 4:7).

Joseph is a man of steel. He told Pharaoh, who himself was considered to be god incarnate that **"the God"** (*ha Elohim*) would explain his dream! Thus, to Pharaoh's face, Joseph asserted that his God was superior to and sovereign over Pharaoh and the "gods" of Egypt. The reader of Genesis can see that God was moving, because this was the third pair of God-given dreams that Joseph had been given to interpret. But Pharaoh did not know this. In fact, he did not believe in Israel's God. And besides, he thought that he himself was a god.²³

In 41:17-24a, Pharaoh explained his dreams to Joseph. He also shared that he told his dreams to his magicians, but no one could explain it to him (41:24b).

Scene 6 (41:25-36)

Joseph informs Pharaoh that his dreams are **"one and the same"** (41:25). The seven good cows and the seven good ears are seven years of plenty. The seven lean cows and the seven thin ears will be seven years of famine (41:25-31). Joseph's solution is as follows: **"Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it. Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine"** (41:33-36).

Three times in this section, Joseph attributes the outcome of Pharaoh's dreams to God:

- **"God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do"** (41:25).

- **“God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do” (41:28).**
- **“The matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about” (41:32).**

Scene 7 (41:37-45)

In 41:37-45, we read Pharaoh’s response to Joseph’s interpretations: **“Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. Then Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?’ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.’ Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.’ Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, ‘Bow the knee!’ And he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.’ Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.”**

When Joseph appeared before Pharaoh it was his only way out. Pharaoh was a god, a political ruler. The Egyptians believed that he descended from the gods. Yet, Joseph ends up saying, “Pharaoh, you’re not God!” Joseph must have been so tempted to tell Pharaoh what he wanted to hear. He may have thought to himself, “I’ll do anything. I’ll say anything to get out of this hell-hole.” But in the end, he says, “I can’t do it.” He looks Pharaoh in the eye and says only the God I serve is the true God. Apparently, Pharaoh was a pluralist like many Americans because he calmly replied, “Okay. Do you need a job?” Joseph must have thought to himself, “Let me check my calendar. I’ve been cleaning latrines. Okay, I’m available.”

Joseph went from the pit to the pinnacle, from the gutter to glory...and all in one day! Joseph can’t even see down to how good he had it before. To naturalize Joseph, Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name (41:45; cf. Dan 1:7) and an Egyptian wife, from an appropriate level of society. Joseph’s marriage to an Egyptian seems to have been Pharaoh’s order, and God permitted it. The patriarchs generally avoided marriage to Canaanites, but marriage to non-Canaanite Gentiles was less serious. Joseph’s wife and in-laws did not turn him away from his faith in Yahweh or his high regard for God’s promises to his forefathers (cf. Moses).²⁴ I like to believe that Joseph taught her about the true and living God so that she abandoned her false gods and came “under the wings” of Yahweh, the God of Israel.²⁵

Scene 8 (41:46-57)

Our story closes with young Joseph preparing Egypt for the seven years of famine (41:46-49). Then in 41:50-52, God blesses Joseph with two sons before He hits Egypt with a famine. Joseph named his firstborn **“Manasseh,”** which means **“God has made me forget²⁶ all my trouble and all my father’s household.”** He named the second **“Ephraim,”** meaning **“God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”** If the name of Joseph’s first son (Manasseh) focuses on a God who preserves, the name of Joseph’s second son (Ephraim) focuses on a God who blesses.²⁷ Joseph gave his boys Hebrew names that testified of God’s faithfulness. No doubt these Hebrew names would have raised some eyebrows in Egypt. People may have asked, “Why did you name your kids that?” No doubt, Joseph told them. He honored God with his family life, even in this foreign, pagan culture. The notation of the birth of Joseph’s sons is, of course, very significant in view of God’s purposes for Abraham’s family. An allusion to the blessing aspect of the patriarchal promises occurs in 41:49 (cf. 12:2-3).

In 41:53-57, Moses wraps up our story: **“When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said,**

then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do.’ When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.” What a story! There are five practical lessons here to remember:

(1) God is always sovereign, even when it seems He has forgotten you. It’s obvious that God was sovereign in all these events. He put these two men in the same prison as Joseph. He gave them their dreams. And even though it seemed like the timing was wrong, in that He “wasted” two years of Joseph’s life, God gave Pharaoh his dream at precisely the right moment. As the master weaver, God was bringing all these strands together so that all was working according to His schedule. *Nothing* is outside of His sovereignty, even though it seems like it to us as we sit in a dungeon for two more years. Never doubt God’s sovereignty.

(2) God is never unfaithful or cruel, even when circumstances seem otherwise. God’s people down through history have gone through terrible trials. A skeptic might say that God is cruel to allow such things. But a skeptic doesn’t have God’s eternal plan in view. A skeptic doesn’t understand how God lovingly uses trials in the lives of His children. When the enemy taunts us by saying, “Look at your circumstances and you will see that your God is unfaithful or cruel,” we need to say to our soul, “Hope in God.” None who have hoped in Him have ever been disappointed. Don’t doubt His goodness when He is lovingly purifying your faith through trials.

(3) God’s promises are true in His timing, not ours. If Joseph had been released from prison two years earlier, he never would have been appointed as second in the land to Pharaoh. God’s timing is clearly best, although Joseph had to take that by faith until years later when he could look back on how God worked it all together for good. Like it or not, there are certain lessons, such as patience and endurance, which we cannot learn except through waiting on God. In God’s time, His plans make sense. But we need to remember that sometimes we won’t be able to discern God’s timing until eternity.

(4) We are not responsible for others’ behavior, but we are responsible for our own behavior and attitudes. Joseph could have become angry toward the cupbearer and let his resentment burn into bitterness and revenge. Let’s face it; he had good cause to be angry. The cupbearer wasn’t willing to risk his neck enough to talk to Pharaoh about Joseph until it looked like it might gain him some advantage. But in spite of the flakiness of the cupbearer, Joseph had to deal with his own attitude. Later, when he was number two under Pharaoh, he never sought revenge against the man, nor against his brothers. People may have mistreated you and disappointed you because they were being selfish and uncaring. You have a choice: You can grow bitter and angry, blaming them for your troubles, or you can trust in the sovereign God and rejoice in His grace toward you. They will give an account to God for how they sinned against you. But you will give an account for your attitude and behavior in response to their sin against you.

(5) God’s grace is always sufficient if we will receive it. Joseph came through these trials stronger, not weaker, gentle, not bitter, because he hoped in God. Even though he was in prison, the Lord was with him. Even though the cupbearer forgot him, God never did. Joseph experienced what Paul and every other believer undergoing trials has experienced—that God’s grace is sufficient for our need, if we will just receive it.²⁸

One of our family’s favorite Disney characters is Tigger from “Winnie the Pooh” fame [show congregation]. Tigger is a loveable, extroverted tiger. Tigger bounces on his tail everywhere he goes. His

mode of motion also describes his attitude. He never gets down for long; his nature is to bounce back from adversity. Tigger likes to sing a song about himself that says in part,

The wonderful thing about Tiggers
Is Tiggers are wonderful things.
Their tops are made of rubber,
Their bottoms are made out of springs.

Maybe if we had tops of rubber and bottoms of springs we would become more resilient.²⁹ Regardless, God is calling you and me to live a life of resilience because God uses adversity to glorify Himself and benefit you and me. Who knows...God may even use your suffering to prepare you for extraordinary service.

Copyright © 2006 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, www.timelessword.com

Notes

- ¹ Ed Rowell, *Go the Distance: 21 Habits for Winning at Life* (Nashville: Broadman & Homan, 2002), 51.
- ² The cupbearer and baker had “offended” (*chata*) their Lord. This same Hebrew word is found in Gen 39:9: “How then could I do this great evil and sin (*chata*) against God?” Obviously, the cupbearer and baker were not guilty of some minor indiscretion or inadvertent offense against Pharaoh, but they committed some grievous sin against him.
- ³ See also Bob Hallman, “Dream On!” (Genesis 40:1-23): <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/kauai/teachings/genesis.html>.
- ⁴ R.T. Kendall, *God Meant it for Good: A Fresh Look at the Life of Joseph* (Charlotte, NC: Morning Star, 1986), 69.
- ⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 526.
- ⁶ Joseph’s attitude was consistent with the OT’s rejection of occult practices and its reliance on prophecy as a means of discovering God’s will (see Deut 18:10-22).
- ⁷ In Genesis 40-41, *Yahweh* does not appear once, while *Elohim* appears in Gen 40:8-9; 41:16, 25, 28, 32 [twice], 38, 39, 51, 52. In Genesis 39, *Elohim* appears once (39:7) and *Yahweh* appears seven times. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*: NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 477.
- ⁸ Daniel also had the ability to interpret dreams and likewise gave God the credit (cf. Dan 2:28). For other remarkable parallels between Joseph and Daniel, see Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988 [2002 ed.]), 637.
- ⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 471.
- ¹⁰ Kendall believes that Joseph was trying to manipulate his future. Kendall, *God meant it for good*, 71. Wiersbe argues that Joseph was exhibiting unbelief. See Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Authentic: Genesis 25-50* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1997), 99.
- ¹¹ The baker’s description of “all sorts of baked food” (Gen 40:17) was common to kingly menus because the Egyptian dictionary lists 38 kinds of cakes and 57 varieties of bread. Apparently, they liked to eat in Egypt. See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Vol. 2: WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1994), 324.
- ¹² Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 384.
- ¹³ Waltke, *Genesis*, 527.
- ¹⁴ There are remarkable parallels between Joseph’s life and the apostle Paul’s life:
- Both were men called by God for ministry.
 - Both were men of great character and integrity.
 - Both were unjustly imprisoned.
 - Both experienced a series of divine appointments during their respective imprisonments that resulted in great blessings to the world. Paul’s imprisonment gave Paul time to write the prison epistles including: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Paul’s imprisonment served to advance the gospel (Phil 1:12). Paul’s imprisonment gave him the privilege of proclaiming the gospel throughout the entire praetorian guard (Phil 1:13). Paul’s imprisonment encouraged other believers to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly (Phil 1:14). Hallman, “Dream On!”
- ¹⁵ Steven J. Cole, “High Hopes, No Hope—but God” (Genesis 40:1-23): http://www.fcfonline.org/site/search_methods.asp?search=1&search_method=advanced&sermon_book=Genesis
- ¹⁶ Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 473.
- ¹⁷ Rowell, *Go the Distance*, 55
- ¹⁸ Bill Crowder, *Joseph: Overcoming Life’s Challenges* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, 1998), 17.
- ¹⁹ Barry C. Davis, *Genesis* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Biblical Seminary unpublished class Notes, 2003).
- ²⁰ The cupbearer gave a fairly accurate account. However, being the political animal that he was, he did some selective editing. He neglected to mention that the young Hebrew actually claimed to have no power to interpret dreams and said that the power to interpret came from his Hebrew God. The cupbearer also gave the false impression that he took the initiative in getting Joseph to interpret his dream. And, of course, the cupbearer made no mention that he had failed to carry out his promise to mention Joseph to Pharaoh. Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 477.
- ²¹ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 152.
- ²² Hallman, “Rags To Riches” (Genesis 41:1-57): <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/kauai/teachings/genesis.html>.
- ²³ Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 479, 476.
- ²⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Genesis* (<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/genesis.pdf>, 2005), 244-245.

²⁵ Some are bothered by the fact that Joseph took an Egyptian wife. Perhaps he was wrong, although under the circumstances, he didn't have much choice. Pharaoh was honoring him by giving him a bride from a highly regarded family in Egypt. Also, it's clear from the names given to their two sons that Joseph didn't allow his wife's pagan background to influence him but rather he influenced her toward the true God. Furthermore, throughout this story Joseph is a type of Christ. There are many striking parallels: Christ was rejected by His own, suffered and died, and was then exalted as the Savior of the world, at which time He received the name above all names and a Gentile bride (the church). Even so, Joseph, rejected by his brothers and given up as dead, was later exalted as the savior of the world from famine (41:55, 57). So his receiving a new name and a Gentile bride fits the type.

Another factor is that God's heart was always broader than just Israel. His covenant with Abraham was that through his seed, all the nations would be blessed. But Israel often forgot its missionary purpose and hoarded its covenant blessings. Through the fact that two of their tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, were half Egyptian, God was saying to His people, "Don't get proud about being Hebrews. I chose you to be the channel of blessing to all nations." Joseph's Egyptian wife should have kept Israel humble about their race and reminded them of their missionary calling. In any case, Joseph's taking an Egyptian wife in this situation does not provide an excuse for a Christian entering into marriage with an unbeliever, which is clearly forbidden in Scripture.

²⁶ Joseph had come to trust God in place of his father. In this sense he had forgotten his father's household. "Forget" does not mean here "not remember" but rather to have something no longer (cf. Job 39:17; 11:16).

²⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, 512.

²⁸ Adapted and revised from Cole, "High Hopes, No Hope—but God."

²⁹ This great illustration comes from Rowell, *Go the Distance*, 58-59.