

AUGUST 2018

CELEBRATING
30 Years

TODAY IN THE WORD™



*I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away;
and my salvation will not be delayed.*

Isaiah 46:13

JOSEPH AND GOD'S PLAN

A devotional from



MOODY
GLOBAL MINISTRIES

TODAY WITH GREG THORNTON

Interim President of Moody Global Ministries

The Best-Laid Plans



Most of us like to plan ahead. At the office, I schedule meetings weeks or even months in advance. At home, my wife and I sort out

what we should do next weekend, and sometimes compare calendars with our children, trying to set vacation plans for the year ahead.

But I've learned to hold plans loosely. I have discovered that often my life does not proceed in the way I expected. Our so-called perfect plan may take detours with an unexpected health diagnosis, job change, or family concern.

As believers, how should we react when our best-laid plans go awry? In Christian circles, I often hear people pray using the phrase, "If God so wills . . ." It is not that we don't have confidence that God can heal or that He can secure us a new job. It is because we, as believers, are aware that we have a limited perspective. We don't have the Lord's divine omniscience. Even more than the requests we offer, we want His will to be done in our lives.

Joseph is an extraordinary example of this truth. Here was a young man whose life did not go according to plan.

Joseph's brothers were jealous of their younger brother and plotted against him. They threatened to kill him (Gen. 37:20) and then sold him into servitude for twenty shekels of silver (v. 28).

Years later, when Joseph looked back at the terrible things that had happened in his life, he said, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20). Would Joseph have chosen this plan? Certainly not! But God worked through all of the events in Joseph's life to bring good for His people.

What a comfort to realize that God's perspective is clearer than our own. Isaiah 55:8–9 explains, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

We try to be responsible with our plans, but we also hold those plans loosely: "If God so wills." We have a God who not only knows us intimately, but who orders our lives. What a comfort to know that He goes before us. In Him, we have both a purpose and the best plan. ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

God Meant It for Good

One of the most astonishing statements recorded is Genesis 50:20: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” This was Joseph’s answer to his brothers when they feared he would take revenge on them. How could he escape bitterness after abusive treatment at their hands? The answer is that Joseph understood the role of God’s sovereignty in his life.

To describe God as *sovereign* is to say that He rules over all creation and exercises ultimate control over everything that takes place within it. This sovereignty is especially evident in three of His most important works: creation, providence, and redemption.

In creation, God established His superiority to and authority over all He has made. Creation depends upon God, not the other way around (Acts 17:25). Providence is His work upholding and directing the work of creation according to His plan. He provides for His creatures and has ordered the universe (Job 38:1–41:34). In redemption, God exercises His sovereignty over creation graciously to provide salvation for those who are His through Jesus Christ.

This intersection of God’s control and human interaction in redemption is reflected in the church’s prayer in Acts 4. After describing how Gentile and Jewish leaders and the people had opposed Jesus, the disciples affirmed that Christ’s enemies had only done what God’s “power and will had decided beforehand should happen” (v. 28). This does not make God responsible for evil—those who sin do so of their own volition. Yet even their rebellious actions are drawn into the overarching plan of God. This is why Romans 8:28 assures us that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” We too have been drawn into God’s great plan.

We do not need to understand all the workings of God’s great drama of redemption to take comfort from these words. While we may not be called, as Joseph was, to save a nation from starvation, we are no less significant to God. No matter what is happening in our lives today, God is in control. ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more, read *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor (Crossway).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Jamie Janosz

Learning More about the Bible

If you've considered pursuing further education focused on the Bible or ministry, Moody Bible Institute Distance Learning might be right for you. Dr. Bryan O'Neal, vice president of MDL, shares more about online education programs available through Moody.

Q – I can't go back to school full time. Can I still enroll in a Moody course?

A – Sure! Moody offers courses and undergraduate and graduate degree programs online with a flexible schedule.

Q – What if I want to take one class?

A – You can enroll as a nondegree student. If you decide to go further in your studies, up to 18 credit hours can later be applied to a Moody degree program. The courses you take through Moody Bible Institute Distance Learning are fully accredited, which means they are generally transferable to similarly accredited institutions.

Q – What is one class you would recommend for someone just starting to get serious about Bible study?

A – Courses such as *Interpreting Scripture* or *The Story and Structure of the Bible* would be beneficial to everyone who wants to go deeper in their study of God's Word.

Q – What class or program will help

me be a better leader at my church?

A – Moody offers an online degree, the Bachelor of Science in Ministry Leadership, as well as a certificate program in Biblical Leadership. Any of our programs centered in Scripture and ministry skills will enhance your ministry.

Q – Are Moody's classes expensive?

A – Moody's current tuition rates are \$340 per credit hour, which compare very favorably with private institutions.

Q – Will I be able to handle the workload if it has been years since I sat in an actual classroom?

A – Our faculty work hard to help you with this transition, and the class *Foundations of Learning* is designed to help students succeed. Most students tell us that their normal work and home responsibilities have equipped them to manage their time and focus to do well in the structure of online classes.

Q – Will I need special equipment?

A – You need reliable access to a computer with online access and reasonably up-to-date software.

Q – What's the next step of Bible education with Moody?

A – Go to our website and read more: moody.edu/moody-bible-institute-distance-learning. ■

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

Joseph and God's Plan

In her poem “Clarify,” 20th-century English poet Elizabeth Jennings prayed: *Clarify me, please, / God of the galaxies, / Make me a meteor, / Or else a metaphor . . .*

This month in *Today in the Word*, as we study the life of Joseph in the book of Genesis, we'll see how God has been “clarifying” Joseph over the years. We'll trace his life from immature teenager who boasted to his brothers of his multicolored coat and his unusual dreams, to a high-ranking official at Pharaoh's court, to an inmate in the Egyptian prison, and finally to the wise savior of his family. We'll look at the trials Joseph encountered—injustice, betrayal, disappointment, slander, loneliness—and we'll notice God's hand and God's plan for Joseph's life. The words, “The Lord was with Joseph,” are a refrain of Genesis 37–50.

Thank you for supporting *Today in the Word* and studying the Bible together as a community of friends! We pray this month's Scripture will help you understand better God's work in your life over the years. Our prayer for you is that no matter what you've been going through, you'll remind yourself, “The Lord was with _____ [insert your name].” We hope that Joseph's journey will also reveal to you the pictures, echoes, and metaphors from the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ■

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WEDNESDAY
AUGUST

1

The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

Psalms 135:6

Joseph and God’s Plan

Chapters 12 through 50 of Genesis tell the story of Abraham and his family. This story begins with God making some big promises to Abraham: Abraham will inherit the land of Canaan (15:7, 18–21), he will be the father of a great nation (12:2), and people from many nations will be blessed through him (12:3). No one, including Abraham, could have predicted how these promises were to be fulfilled. Surprises abound at every turn. The story of Joseph is how some of these promises begin to be fulfilled.

Our introduction to Joseph gives us several reasons for why his brothers came to hate him. After working all day with them in the fields, Joseph returned home and “brought their father a bad report about them” (v. 2). And Joseph was his father’s favorite, which was neither a hidden nor a discreet favoritism but was flaunted through the

gift of an ornate robe (v. 3). We have a picture of a coddled son who enjoys tattling on his older brothers. This tense situation deteriorated even further when Joseph recounted his dreams.

In Joseph’s first dream, his brothers bow down to him, and in his second dream his parents also bow before him. This disturbs even his father, who rebukes him (v. 10). The narrator does not say whether or not these dreams are from God, but like Jacob we should “keep the matter in mind” as we read the rest of Joseph’s story (v. 11).

How could God fulfill His promises to Abraham through parental favoritism and sibling rivalry? Often we see in Scripture how God fulfills His promises in surprising ways using unlikely people. Joseph’s journey would transform him and show us the remarkable ways God works to carry out His will.

APPLY THE WORD

Joseph and his clan do not offer the most flattering portrait of a healthy and loving family. But God used them in profound ways to further His plan in the world. No matter what family dysfunction you might have inherited, God can also use you! Take a few minutes and thank God for His generosity and patience in working with us.

PRAY WITH US

Thank you for joining us for prayer and study from the book of Genesis. Today, please uphold in prayer the Admissions staff—Audrianna Cageao, Deborah Moreno, and Elizabeth Powell—as they are getting ready for the next school year at Moody.

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Romans 5:8

THURSDAY
AUGUST

2

The Destructiveness of Sin

Jesus once asked His disciples, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Matt. 7:3). We are often blind to our own faults. We can also fail to see how those faults affect others, particularly those closest to us.

Today’s passage recounts Joseph’s brothers plotting to kill him, throwing him in a pit, selling him into slavery, and finally deceiving their father about what had happened. Most of the blame for this family’s dysfunction lies at Jacob’s feet. His favoritism of Joseph has escalated sibling rivalry into hatred. What’s more, Jacob does not seem to understand the tension his favoritism has caused. He sends Joseph on a three- to four-day journey to Shechem, far from the reach of his protection, to check on his siblings (v. 13).

Upon seeing Joseph, the brothers first thought about killing him. They were persuaded by Reuben not to kill Joseph but to throw him into a cistern instead. Joseph’s brothers “stripped . . . took . . . and threw” him into the pit, then sat down to a meal (vv. 23–25). The callousness of this act is further highlighted by Judah’s suggestion that they sell Joseph to some traveling merchants. They didn’t think of Joseph as their brother but rather as a commodity to be bought and sold. They completed their crime by deceiving their father into thinking a wild animal had devoured Joseph.

In one sense, their plan backfired. Jacob declared that he would mourn Joseph’s loss the rest of his life. His mourning would continually remind the brothers of their sin and of Joseph’s special place in their father’s affections.

APPLY THE WORD

Our sins can haunt us when we don’t deal with them. Prayerfully reflect on your own life. Are there sins you could be blind to? Ask God to help you see them. If His Spirit reveals any, confess those sins to God and repent. He has promised to forgive and cleanse you and to remove your sin as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).

PRAY WITH US

Please continue to pray with us for the Admissions department team: Christopher Toland, Jacqueline Haywood, Jonathan Morgan, and Joshua Walberg. We are grateful for their service of guiding young people through the application process.

Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Psalm 32:2

The Divisiveness of Sin

The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once said, “Sin is in itself separation from the good.” He captured one of the consequences of sin: It separates us from God and often from others as well.

Our Scripture passage focuses on Judah. As we will see throughout this month, the lives of the two brothers—Joseph and Judah—are closely intertwined. At the end of Genesis 37, Judah callously suggested selling Joseph into slavery (37:27). In the opening verse of today’s passage, we are told that Judah had left his father and brothers and gone to live with a Canaanite (v. 1). Like Joseph, Judah also is separated from his family and living among a foreign people. Some have speculated that Judah’s secret of what had been done to Joseph made him want to leave his family. Scripture doesn’t tell us Judah’s motives, but it is true that sin often has a way of alienating us from loved ones.

Judah did not seem to change much. When his first two sons died, the text makes no mention of his grief, in contrast to his father’s mourning of Joseph (37:35). He treated Tamar with deceit. Custom (and later Mosaic Law) required that when a family member died leaving behind a widow without children, the brother of the deceased was to marry the widow and provide children in his brother’s name (Deut. 25:5–10). This was a way to provide for vulnerable widows as well as preserving the name and inheritance of a deceased family member.

After Judah’s second son died, Judah strung Tamar along, allowing her to think that he would provide his youngest son for her—all the while never intending to actually follow through. His deceit and treachery would have condemned Tamar to a life of childlessness and shame.

APPLY THE WORD

Sin often causes division and alienation in relationships, whether in a family, a church, or a workplace. Pray today about that situation, and ask the Lord for reconciliation to take place. One of the benefits of the gospel is that it has the power to restore relationships because of what Christ has done (2 Cor. 5:11–21).

PRAY WITH US

In conclusion of our prayer time for the Admissions department, please add Lucas Manning, Randle Bishop, Reichert Zalameda, and Ryan Heinsch to your prayer list. May they always honor God as they help students follow God’s calling for their lives.

*I have not come to call the righteous,
but sinners to repentance.*

Luke 5:32

SATURDAY
AUGUST

4

A Change of Perspective

In the opening line of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin observes, “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: knowledge of God and of ourselves.” Our Scripture passage today is a story about recognition. Judah comes to know himself more truthfully, which leads to a significant change in his life.

Years passed since Tamar was dismissed by Judah to go back to her father’s house (v. 12). She realized Judah deceived her by not giving her his youngest son in marriage. Cast aside by Judah, she acted in desperation.

The time of shearing sheep was frequently accompanied by parties and social gatherings. When Tamar heard that Judah was coming to Timnah for this festival, she decided to act. She posed as a prostitute, and Judah took the bait. He propositioned her, and

she took his seal, cord, and staff as a pledge until her payment arrived. Her scheme succeeded, and she became pregnant with Judah’s child (v. 18). His lack of sexual restraint stands in sharp contrast to Joseph’s response to temptation in the next chapter.

When Judah discovered that Tamar was pregnant, he responded: “Bring her out and have her burned to death!” (v. 24). Tamar then played her trump card. She used the same words that Judah and his brothers said when showing the bloody garment of Joseph to Jacob: She asked Judah to “recognize” the seal, cord, and staff she had taken (v. 25).

The deceiver had been deceived. Judah’s response is a model of repentance and change. He acknowledged his wrongdoing, and as we’ll see later in the story, for the rest of his life he was a changed man.

APPLY THE WORD

The sons of Tamar and Judah are Perez and Zerah. Perez is an ancestor of David (see Ruth 4:18). The Gospel of Matthew reminds us that Perez is also in the line of the Messiah, Jesus (see Matt. 1:3). God can use and redeem every part of our lives, even what we’ve deemed shameful or embarrassing. Praise Him for His redemption in your life!

PRAY WITH US

Would you support in prayer the ministry of Dr. John Jelinek in his role of interim provost at Moody? Ask for insight in steering Moody through the changing times and for the Holy Spirit’s guidance in building MBI’s worldwide education.

For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.

Proverbs 24:16

The Lord Was with Joseph: Part 1

The Blue Heart Campaign is the United Nations’ attempt to raise awareness about the global epidemic of human trafficking. This persistent abuse has lingered for millennia; in our passage today, we see that Joseph has been sold to slave traders, who in turn sold him to a wealthy Egyptian. He is the victim of brothers, traders, and now a new master; and all of them view him primarily as a resource to be used rather than as a person created in God’s image.

When looking at the facts of Joseph’s life to this point, it would be easy to think that God had abandoned him. Indeed, Joseph has fallen from being the favored son of a wealthy man to a slave in a foreign household. But Genesis takes care to demonstrate that this is not the case. Twice we are told, “The LORD was with Joseph” (vv. 2, 3). Additionally, the narrator proclaims: “The LORD gave him success in

everything” (v. 3); “The LORD blessed” whatever Joseph touched (v. 5).

God’s blessing on Joseph was noticed by his new master, Potiphar, who continually gave Joseph more responsibility until he had “left everything he had in Joseph’s care” (v. 6). Because of Joseph’s presence, Potiphar’s household and fields flourished. This episode is a foretaste of God’s promise to Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth through his descendants (see Gen. 22:18).

God had not abandoned Joseph, and Joseph had also not given up on God. When Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him, Joseph rejected her offer because it would betray his master’s trust and he could not sin against God (vv. 8–9). Despite her daily persistence, Joseph remained steadfastly obedient to the God he knew was still with him even in slavery (v. 10).

APPLY THE WORD

Jesus promised, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). He knew His followers would face persecution and martyrdom. Our circumstances don’t determine God’s presence. Even in our trials and temptations, the Lord is faithful to be with us. Resolve, like Joseph, to be faithful to Him in every situation.

PRAY WITH US

Our Bible department faculty train the next generation of leaders and shepherds in the body of Christ. We pray today that the Lord would guide and bless Andrew Schmutzer, Benjamin Wilson, and Ernest Gray in their work, for His harvest.

Be strong and courageous. . . . for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Deuteronomy 31:6

MONDAY
AUGUST

6

The Lord Was with Joseph: Part 2

During the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, security guard Richard Jewell noticed a suspicious backpack left in an open square. He alerted the authorities and began clearing the area. The backpack turned out to contain a bomb. But rather than being hailed as a hero, Jewell was suspected of planting the bomb. His name was leaked to the media and he was publically humiliated. Even though he was later proved innocent, the false charge dogged him for the rest of his life.

Richard Jewell could have related to what Joseph endured. Joseph steadfastly spurned the advances of Potiphar's wife, but one day she took advantage of a situation where she was alone with him in the house. Seizing him by his outer garment, she pleaded with him to "lie with me." (v. 12). This time, Joseph did not say a word. He turned and ran, leaving his cloak behind.

Potiphar's wife used Joseph's cloak in retaliation for his rejection of an illicit affair with her. She used the cloak to frame Joseph, claiming he had attempted to abuse her (vv. 14–18). Potiphar had Joseph thrown into the king's prison where political prisoners would have been held. It appeared that Joseph's situation had deteriorated—he had gone from a being a slave who was nevertheless a trusted household manager to being imprisoned. But as we will see, his new location would put him into contact with people who had connections to Pharaoh.

The chapter ends with a reminder that the Lord was with Joseph, even though to others it must have looked like God had abandoned him (v. 21). But through Joseph's difficulties, God is refining him and giving him responsibilities to prepare him for his future role.

APPLY THE WORD

The so-called prosperity gospel claims that God's favor is always demonstrated in our "best lives now." The story of Joseph contradicts that! Slavery and imprisonment were dreadful and difficult—but God was still present and still working. When you face discouraging life situations, you can have confidence that God still loves and cares for you.

PRAY WITH US

For the next two days, please continue to focus your prayers on Moody's Bible faculty—Gerald Peterman, Michael Wechsler, and Ronald Sauer—as they impart the wisdom of God's Word to their students.

TUESDAY
AUGUST

7

*My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please.*

Isaiah 46:10

Joseph in Prison: Part 1

Since its inception in 1902, *Popular Mechanics* magazine has published speculation and predictions about the world of the future, but some confident declarations have missed the mark—the 1929 prediction that people of the future would wear asbestos clothing and the 1951 assertion that people would fly personal helicopters in place of cars haven’t materialized!

We do not know how long Joseph had been in prison at this point in the story. His total stay was about thirteen years (see 37:2; 41:46). In our passage, he acquired some new companions: the king’s cupbearer and the king’s baker, both important roles. In ancient Egypt, the cupbearer served as a confidant and political advisor to the king, whereas scholars describe the position of baker as a “Royal Table-scribe.”

Joseph had again risen to a trusted position within the prison and was given

the task of attending to these new inmates. When he asked about their troubled expressions, both men said that they have had dreams. Ancient Egyptians believed that the gods communicated through dreams, but dream interpretation was a specialized science only for those trained in the art. In prison, they would not have had access to the experts.

Joseph, however, did not share their belief in the Egyptian gods or in mystically gifted interpreters. He responded: “Do not interpretations belong to God?” (v. 8) Even in prison, and even in conversation with powerful people who might have access to Pharaoh, Joseph was unafraid to stand for his God and for truth. One commentator puts it this way, “The events of the future lay in Yahweh’s hand only, and only the one to whom it was revealed was empowered to interpret.”

APPLY THE WORD

Like the ancient Egyptians, it can be tempting for us to trust in our own techniques or technological savvy and to live under the illusion that we can control, or at least predict, our future. Joseph reminds us here that God alone holds our times in His hand. What area of your life do you need to surrender to God’s control?

PRAY WITH US

Concluding our intercession for the Bible professors at Moody, please add to your list Steven Sanchez, Eric Redmond, John Goodrich, as well as Jonathan Armstrong, director of the Center for Global Theological Education.

*I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.*

Psalm 130:5

WEDNESDAY
AUGUST

8

Joseph in Prison: Part 2

Joseph was chosen, special, elected, confirmed not just by his father’s favoritism but also by dreams given to him by God. Yet, as scholar Gary Anderson says, “Election is not a matter simply of a set of benefits to be claimed and enjoyed; election involves a cost.” Joseph paid a cost.

The cupbearer shared his dream with Joseph: a vine with three branches that blossom with grape clusters. He was pressing the grapes directly into Pharaoh’s cup. Joseph responds with a confident interpretation. The three branches represent three days. In a short time, the cupbearer will have his position restored. And then Joseph seizes an opportunity: He pleads with the cupbearer to remember him, and briefly recounts his ordeal of kidnapping and wrongful imprisonment.

The chief baker then shared his dream, and he also wanted a favorable dream

interpretation—but Joseph could respond with only the truth. In three days, the baker would be executed. This second interpretation proves that Joseph’s ability to interpret dreams was real. It also should have served to remind the cupbearer of Joseph’s unique ability and plight.

This narrative is recounted with perfect dramatic tension. It looks like our hero Joseph has finally found a way to escape from years of prison! His God-given ability to interpret dreams will now see him freed! But the passage ends on a despairing note: “The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him” (v. 23). We can imagine the crushing disappointment as Joseph eagerly waited for something to happen, day after day, month after month. Would deliverance never come? Was God still faithful? Had all his gifts from God and his testimony for God been for nothing?

APPLY THE WORD

John Calvin wrote, “Nothing is more improper, than to prescribe the time in which God shall help us.” While we wait on the Lord, we should follow Joseph’s example of using his God-given gifts to serve others and trusting in the Lord. If you are in a season of waiting on God’s deliverance, consider how you can be faithful at this time.

PRAY WITH US

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, welcomes your prayers for MBI finances. Financial support and prayers of God’s people is the foundation of our ministries and the expression of God’s love and care for Moody. Thank you for your support!

THURSDAY
AUGUST

9

*Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*

Psalm 20:7

Pharaoh and His Dream: Part 1

In his biography of Douglas MacArthur, William Manchester describes him in this way: “His belief in . . . God was genuine, yet he seemed to worship only at the altar of himself. He never went to church, but regarded himself as one of the world’s two great defenders of Christendom (the other was the pope).” Powerful leaders often succumb to the temptations of pride.

If anyone in the ancient world had reason to be proud or think they were self-sufficient, it was Pharaoh. He ruled a vast empire and was thought to be divine. Yet in this passage we see that he is needy and desperate for answers.

Like most ancient monarchs, Pharaoh had many advisers in his court, but it would have been unusual for him to ask them to interpret a dream. Since Pharaoh himself was thought to be divine, most Egyptians assumed that

he could easily understand dreams from the gods. But now Pharaoh has had a disturbing dream that he cannot understand, and he calls for all the experts (v. 8). This was like the senior cabinet, the board of executives, the leading scientists, and the greatest theologians, all consulted together.

The most intelligent and informed counselors in the most powerful empire of the day were unable to help. The chief cupbearer, perhaps sensing the desperation of Pharaoh, took the drastic step of recommending his former prison inmate as a potential source of help. (v. 11). We should not miss how strange it is that Pharaoh actually listens to this advice. Without hesitation, Pharaoh sends for Joseph (v. 14). He was desperate for an answer, and all the wisdom of Egypt had proved inadequate. Why not take a chance on a foreign slave in prison?

APPLY THE WORD

Like Pharaoh, we might think that we have it all together. We have savings accounts and extended family and job security. We have access to the best doctors and military and schools. But we are dependent on God. Confess your reliance on Him, knowing that the strongest and wisest resources of the world are nothing compared to Him (Ps. 20:7).

PRAY WITH US

Barry Cole, James Chadwick, Jeffery Knapp, and Joseph Ibatuan in Investments provide day-to-day management of hundreds of individual trust agreements with Moody’s donors. Please pray for their vital ministry to be a blessing.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

1 Peter 5:6

FRIDAY
AUGUST

10

Pharaoh and His Dream: Part 2

Helen Keller became deaf and blind after an illness before she was two years old. Years later, having overcome numerous challenges, she said: “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

Joseph certainly had his share of suffering, and in this passage we begin to see how it changed him. Pharaoh sent for Joseph and brought him out of the prison. He 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” (v. 15). When he was younger, Joseph might have enthusiastically agreed. But years of suffering and responsibility taught him to acknowledge that his gifts and abilities came from God: “I cannot do it . . . but God will give Pharaoh the answer” (v. 16).

Pharaoh recounted his dreams for Joseph. He saw seven healthy and robust cows grazing by the river. These cows were then devoured by seven ugly and gaunt cows. Similarly, in another dream he saw seven healthy heads of grain. In a bizarre image, the healthy grains were eaten by seven thin heads of grain (vv. 22–24).

God gave Joseph the interpretation immediately. Both dreams foretold the same thing: seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. Notice how Joseph still directed praise toward God: “God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do” (vv. 25, 28). Joseph’s ability to deliver a difficult message to a powerful ruler came from his deep conviction in the sovereignty of God. Throughout these verses, he continuously testifies that God is control, God is faithful to do what He says, and God is gracious to reveal His plan.

APPLY THE WORD

Do you have a testimony about the character of God? Have you seen His sovereignty, faithfulness, and graciousness in your life? If so, be a witness! Whether you stand before rulers or friends, leaders or neighbors, you can have confidence in speaking about who God is and what He has done. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to share with others.

PRAY WITH US

Mark Wagner, a longtime Moody trustee, stepped into the service as interim chief operating officer. Our prayer for him today is that he would be guided by the will of God for MBI and would follow the heart of God for His people.

SATURDAY
AUGUST

11

*In their hearts humans plan their course,
but the LORD establishes their steps.*

Proverbs 16:9

Pharaoh and His Dream: Part 3

On May 19, 1780, the sky darkened around noon over New England. Many feared it was a sign that the end of the world was imminent. In the Connecticut State Counsel someone called for adjournment, thinking the Final Judgment was at hand. One legislator, Abraham Davenport, responded: “I am against an adjournment. The day of judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause of an adjournment: if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish therefore that candles may be brought.”

Joseph made the case to Pharaoh that the leadership of Egypt needed to prepare for the famine to come. The fact that this dream had been given in two variations underscored that the matter had been firmly decided by God and would happen soon (v. 32).

Egypt relied on the fertility of the Nile River for growing grain. Its regular cycle

of flooding ensured that fertile soil was always available. Famines were not unheard of, but they were rare. Seven years of famine would have been beyond consideration. Yet, God has revealed to Pharaoh that famine was inevitable.

In verses 33 through 36, Joseph went beyond interpreting Pharaoh’s dream to give him advice about what should be done. As one commentator noted, “The strong predestinarian content of the speech is combined with a strong summons to action. The fact that God has determined the matter . . . is precisely the reason for responsible leaders to take measures!”

Joseph’s God-given wisdom was displayed in his ability not only to interpret dreams but also to give sound advice. Pharaoh at once recognized God’s hand on Joseph and placed him in a position of great authority.

APPLY THE WORD

As Christians, we know certain truths about the future. Jesus will return one day. The faithful will be redeemed. That knowledge of what God is going to do should not lead us to complacency but rather should motivate us to take responsible action. What steps are you taking to act responsibly and faithfully in light of what God has promised to do?

PRAY WITH US

Moody’s Engineering Operations takes care of our campus on a daily basis. For the next three days, pray for this team and for their service to the Moody community. Today, please pray for Mark Williames, Jesse Ruggles, Thomas Drost, and Paul Siebold.

He raises up the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.

1 Samuel 2:8

SUNDAY
AUGUST

12

Joseph Exalted

As a child, Chris Gardner was abused and placed in a foster home. As a young adult, he struggled with homelessness while trying to raise a child. Through persistence and some relationships, however, he became the CEO of a stock-brokerage firm. His life story inspired the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness*.

In our passage, Joseph has also had a remarkable reversal of fortune. He woke up that morning in a prison. By the end of the day, he was proclaimed second in command in Egypt, the most powerful nation in the world.

Pharaoh recognized the God-given wisdom of Joseph and so entrusted the management of the kingdom to him (v. 41). The rest of the passage describes the details of how power was transferred to Joseph. The signet ring was more than a symbol. It gave Joseph the authority to speak and act in

Pharaoh's name (v. 42). The fine robes and gold chain demonstrated Joseph's favored status at a glance. Riding in a chariot with runners clearing the way would be similar to a presidential motorcade today (v. 43). To complete his transformation, Pharaoh gives Joseph a new name and the daughter of a powerful priestly family as his wife (v. 45). If Joseph thought that the ornate robe his father Jacob had given him was special, Pharaoh has far surpassed this to elevate Joseph above all others.

Review this chapter to see all the times that Joseph gives God the credit for his ability and wisdom (vv. 16, 25, 28, 32). This served as a testimony to Pharaoh himself. Joseph recognized that God had led him to this position. Joseph had learned that God was present and faithful when he was a lowly slave and prisoner, and this allowed him to trust God with the credit when he became a powerful advisor to Pharaoh.

APPLY THE WORD

God delights to use the unexpected and the unlikely to fulfill His purposes. The apostle Paul reminds us that God often does this so that our only boasting can be in the Lord (see 1 Cor. 1:26–31). Be encouraged today that if God can use a prisoner, a shepherd, or a runaway prophet, He can use you.

PRAY WITH US

Please single out for prayer the following Engineering Operations team members: Roger Vinlasaca, Scott Schaeffer, Lauren Schmidt, Al Campa, and John Fraats. May God bless their work in repair, replacement, and maintenance of MBI's equipment and facilities.

MONDAY
AUGUST

13

*If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.*

Psalm 137:5

Joseph: Years of Plenty

Parents of adult children often remind younger parents to enjoy their children while they are young, because “the years just go by so fast.” And some researchers have concluded that most people do experience the perception that the older you get, the more quickly time seems to pass.

Our passage includes several time markers. Joseph is thirty years old (v. 46). It has been thirteen years since his brothers had sold him into slavery (37:2). As promised in the dream, seven years of plenty come and go. Joseph had a flurry of activity during these years. He traveled the country, collected the food, stored it, kept records, and finally gave up on trying to keep track of all the grain (vv. 46–49). He demonstrated the practical skill and wisdom necessary for this kind of long-term project. Pharaoh’s faith in him is rewarded.

Joseph’s home life has also been busy. His name was changed to Zaphenath-Paneah, and he was given an Egyptian wife (v. 45). How easy it would have been for Joseph to forget about his past life and embrace all that came with being Zaphenath-Paneah, taking on a new identity. Yet, when his children are born, he gives them Hebrew names, not Egyptian ones. In the naming of Manasseh, he expresses gratitude that God has made him forget the years of slavery and the grief at being torn away from his father’s house (v. 51). He named his second son Ephraim as a testimony of God’s blessing in the place of suffering (v. 52).

He is not going to wallow in the time and relationships he has lost, but he is not going to ignore them either, as the giving of the name indicates. In the giving of both names, Joseph expresses his thanks to God.

APPLY THE WORD

Gratitude is not an easy virtue to cultivate. In his success, Joseph did not forget God, and he thanks the Lord for his emotional recovery from trauma. As you reflect and pray today, think of two or three things in your life you are thankful for, both trials and blessings, and praise God for His faithfulness to you in hardship and in success.

PRAY WITH US

Today, we have the privilege to encourage in prayer the rest of the Engineering Operations team: Jamie Ixcaragua, Israel Ledee, Gerald Malozienc, Eric Rathbun, Daniel Yoo, and Cory Smith. Ask for God’s protection and safety in the workplace.

*I have made you, you are my servant;
Israel, I will not forget you.*

Isaiah 44:21

TUESDAY
AUGUST

14

Family Reunion: Part 1

During World War II, Corrie ten Boom was arrested for hiding Jewish people from the Nazi regime. She was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where her sister Betsie died. After the war, she was speaking on forgiveness at a church in Munich where she saw a former prison guard. She later described seeing him: “Suddenly it was all there—the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie’s pain-blanching face.” What would she do when seeing this guard face to face?

Joseph finally came face to face with his brothers after twenty long years. Undoubtedly, the memory of how they treated him came to the surface. But Joseph also remembered something else: the dreams that God had given him (v. 9).

Joseph—and the reader—must wonder at this point whether his brothers have changed. This chapter opens with

Jacob urging ten of the remaining brothers to go down to Egypt to buy food because of the famine. But Jacob did not want to send Joseph’s younger brother, Benjamin, with them because “he was afraid that harm might come to him” (v. 4). Jacob was still heartbroken with grief over the loss of Joseph. He still had a favorite son who received preferential treatment. Did the brothers harbor resentment against Benjamin like they did against Joseph?

Joseph is in an interesting position to test his brothers. He recognized them at once, but they do not recognize him (v. 8). He is dressed like an Egyptian official, and surely, it never occurred to them that their enslaved brother could possibly be an important leader. Joseph devised a test for his brothers’ honesty and character: he has all but one put in prison, and they must choose one brother to return with Benjamin to authenticate their story.

APPLY THE WORD

This passage illustrates the tension and difficulty of forgiveness and reconciliation. Can Joseph trust his brothers? What would it take for him to do so? Participating in God’s work of forgiveness and reconciliation might require us to walk slowly toward someone else, trusting that God will provide the answers and healing we need.

PRAY WITH US

Our Counseling Services staff—Stephen Brasel, Gayla Gates, and Holly Porter—help our students deal with issues and difficulties they encounter in today’s complicated world. May the love and the wisdom of Christ continue to bring healing to the hurting!

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Mike Kellogg, Moody Radio Host (Retired)

Q **Why did God allow evil in the world? Why didn't He create a universe where everything was good?**

A After each day of creation, God declared that what He created is good. But God didn't create good. It is God Himself who is Good and Righteous. And God is eternal, existing from before creation. God Himself is the standard.

It is also clear that God didn't create evil; all of His creation is declared to be good (Gen. 1:9, 12). Evil happens when created beings go against what God has made known as His will. Critics have suggested that it is unfair for God to create an imperfect world and then judge humanity for making wrong choices. But the Lord created men and women in His image, with creativity and choice, not as robots or automatons. Evil happens when God's created beings—whether angels led by Lucifer or Adam and Eve—rebel against God or disobey God's clear instruction (Gen. 3:6).

Each believer must choose to make God the center of his or her life and renounce the pull of evil and sin by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. We must accept Christ, the Son of God, to be the administrator of our life. In this way, our lives are a foretaste of God's final defeat of sin and evil (Rev. 20:14).

Q **Is there a biblical position about immigration?**

A In the Old Testament, Israel was instructed in Leviticus to treat the alien and strangers among them as natives, and to love them as themselves, since they were once foreigners in the land of Egypt (Ex. 22:21; 23:9). Indeed, the Lord instructed them: "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 19:34).

We can conclude from the instructions in the New Testament that we are to treat immigrants with compassion. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 5:43–44; Mark 12:31). And Jesus defines our neighbor not as someone who is like us but as someone who is unlike us (Luke 10:25–37). We are also instructed to care for vulnerable people in society such as widows and orphans (James 1:27).

Scripture doesn't prescribe specific public policies, but it does instruct believers in how they should live out their faith in God in relationship to other people. Immigrants are no exception. Historically, Christians have led the way in trying to support refugees, provide educational opportunities, and advocate for just laws and treatment.

We are sinners, and it is only God's wonderful grace that can make us acceptable to Him.

Q I grew up in a religious tradition that referred to and honored saints. What does the Bible say about saints?

A Ephesians 1:1 says that if you are a true believer, then you and every other believer are saints, translated as “holy people” in the NIV. *Saints* is just another term for born-again Christians. In popular language *saints* is used to describe “super-spiritual” people or those with extraordinary qualities such as patience. In some religious traditions, saints are expected to have performed miracles or had other supernatural qualities recognized by the church. But according to Scripture, all those who trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation are in fact saints of God.

It's important to note that *saint* doesn't mean “sinless.” All saints are sinners saved by the grace of God and transformed daily to the image of Christ as we seek to obey and live by His Word. And we look forward to being glorified into His presence after our death, when, as the Bible says, we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2).

Q Why would Isaiah say that our good deeds and our righteous conduct are like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6)? Aren't they examples of what we ought to be doing?

A We have to understand our calling to good deeds in the proper context. The Isaiah passage reminds us that all the good things we could ever do will never be good enough to save any of us. They cannot accomplish our salvation or put us in a right relationship with God. We are sinners, and it is only God's wonderful grace that can make us acceptable to Him.

The letter to the Ephesians puts it this way: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (2:8–10). God's grace saves us, and then we have His power to live in a way that brings Him glory.

When sinners try to win God's favor by doing nice things, they assume they don't need God's provision. Many people think that somehow they can win His favor by impressing Him with their good works. This is impossible. If we refuse to accept His redemption through Christ, we are rejecting God's gift of salvation. Only by accepting the truth that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was raised from the dead to defeat the power of sin and death can we be in a relationship with God.

WEDNESDAY
AUGUST

15

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Family Reunion: Part 2

In Shakespeare’s masterpiece *Macbeth*, the title character murders King Duncan to fulfill his own ambition of becoming king of Scotland. Wracked by guilt and the fear of being found out, he is unable to enjoy his royal position. Ultimately, he falls into madness.

After three days in prison, Joseph presented his brothers with their test. One of them must stay behind in prison while the rest bring food back to their households. Then they are to bring the youngest brother, Benjamin, to Egypt to prove that their story was true (v. 20).

This harsh treatment was not what Joseph’s brothers expected. Why were they being singled out? Their minds immediately went back to what they had done to Joseph. Verse 21 makes clear that they all felt responsibility for the crime they had committed: “They said to one another, ‘Surely we are being punished because of our brother. . . .’”

They vividly recalled Joseph’s distress and his pleading with them from the pit. How often had those words and that image come into their minds in the last twenty years? They had been living in their own kind of prison created by the guilt from their sin.

Joseph had been communicating to his brothers through an interpreter, and they did not know he could understand their conversation. Though he was deeply moved by their words, he was still not ready to confront them directly. His test of their character must continue.

Now Joseph’s brothers faced another difficult conversation, this time with Jacob, who demonstrated little sympathy for their plight. He was too focused on his own grief and loss: “You have deprived me of my children . . . Everything is against me! . . . My son will not go down there with you” (vv. 36–38).

APPLY THE WORD

In Psalm 32, David describes what it was like for him to live with guilt: “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long” (v. 3). But God has provided freedom from the prison of our guilt! “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

PRAY WITH US

Greg Thornton, interim president and senior VP of media, will appreciate the prayers of the Moody family for our leadership team. May their decision making be shaped by the mind of Christ and based on the eternal Word of God.

God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

Ephesians 2:4–5

Judah Assumes Leadership

Can people change? The answer has been debated for generations by philosophers, psychologists, and poets. Some argue we are born as blank slates to be shaped by our circumstances. Others claim we come into this world with our personalities and proclivities already determined. Christians believe that faith in God can transform anyone through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph's test of whether his brothers had changed from selfish vindictiveness ran into an obstacle. He would not provide any more food for the family unless they brought Benjamin with them—but Jacob refused to let him go. Reuben tried to convince his father by offering the lives of his own two sons as a guarantee that he would bring Benjamin back (42:37). Jacob would not listen.

Judah now stepped up to the challenge of leadership among his family. With

food running out, Judah analyzed the situation and decides: “Send the boy along with me . . . so that we and you and our children may live and not die” (v. 8). Yes, it is a risk to send Benjamin. But if they do not take that risk, Benjamin will die of starvation.

Notice especially that Judah is no longer derailed by his father's clear favoritism. As one commentator says, “Judah's reference to Benjamin as ‘our brother’ (43:4) counters Jacob's label (‘my son’) and the exclusivity (‘he alone is left’) with which he talks of Benjamin (42:38).”

Judah offered himself as a pledge of Benjamin's safety (v. 9). The last time Judah offered a pledge, it was a foolish gift to a prostitute. The last time he made a convincing speech to his family, it was to sell Joseph to a traveling band of Ishmaelites. His priorities had been transformed.

APPLY THE WORD

Ephesians 2 says, “You were dead in your transgressions and sins . . . But God . . . made us alive with Christ.” When God transforms us, it becomes possible to restore broken relationships. Do you have relationships that need God's healing? Rejoice today that we worship a God that allows for and enables radical change in people's lives.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Bryan O'Neal heads Moody Bible Institute Distance Learning, bringing a Moody education to thousands of learners across the globe. Would you praise the Lord for this fruitful ministry and pray for Dr. O'Neal and his team?

FRIDAY
AUGUST

17

*Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed,
O God, you who are God my Savior, and my
tongue will sing of your righteousness.*

Psalms 51:14

An Invitation to Dinner

Leadership trainer Crane Stookey warns that some narcissists or manipulators use generosity as a cover for their control tactics. What looks like a thoughtful gift or extravagant bequest may actually come with many strings that bind the recipient.

The first time Joseph's brothers were in Egypt, they were treated harshly, falsely accused, and thrown in prison. During their second visit, the generosity they received put them even more on edge.

When Joseph saw that Benjamin was with the group, he invited the brothers to his house for a feast. This unusual act of hospitality elicited a sense of panic in the group (v. 18). They worried that they will be accused of theft, went out of their way to explain to Joseph's steward what had happened, and offered to return the money. The steward wondered whether their God put the silver back in their sacks. As readers, we know that this

money was placed there by Joseph; but the steward's response nods toward an important truth: God sovereignly works through human agents.

Despite his emotion, Joseph calculated every move—his gracious reception, arrangement of the seats, and most importantly, the treatment of Benjamin. By providing his younger brother with five times more food, he attempted to elicit the jealousy of the others. Once the brothers were all sated with wine, the final test could begin.

Though Joseph was testing his brothers, his generosity was not the ploy of a manipulator or narcissist. His goal in wining and dining them was not to draw them under obligation to him. Rather, he needed to ascertain whether reconciliation was possible with his family—a true restoration to a loving relationship. He longed to regain his Hebrew place.

APPLY THE WORD

We are called to be generous in our support for the Lord's work, God's servants, and those in need (see 2 Cor. 9:6–13; 1 Tim. 5:18; James 1:27). But we must never let our desire for control masquerade as generosity. We only have open hands and hearts when we remember that God owns all things and we are His stewards and servants.

PRAY WITH US

Please pray for Daniel Schombert in Telecommunications, as he ensures good phone connections for everyone at Moody. We appreciate his capable management of the phone systems, both in everyday operations and special events.

*A brother wronged is more unyielding
than a fortified city; disputes are like
the barred gates of a citadel.*

Proverbs 18:19

SATURDAY
AUGUST

18

The Final Test: Part 1

The Great Sand Dunes National Park in Colorado includes the tallest sand dunes in North America. The ascent to the top can be deceptive. After what seems like an excruciating hike, the peak approaches—only to unveil another small plateau followed by another steep incline. Climbers are in fact only halfway up to the peak.

Joseph's brothers must have had a similar feeling in today's passage. They had Simeon back, Benjamin was safe, their grain sacks were full, and they were on their way home. The trip really could not have gone better. What they did not realize is that Joseph had carefully orchestrated this scene to lead to a final test.

As the brothers were sleeping off their sumptuous meal, Joseph had his silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack (v. 2). This cup was not just a valuable object because it was silver; it was also used

for divination (v. 5). The cup would have represented Joseph's authority as a ruler of Egypt, his gifts of wisdom, and his wealth and status.

When accused of stealing the cup, the brothers proclaimed their innocence—and this time they were telling the truth, unlike the falsehoods they had told Jacob about Joseph's supposed death so many years ago. They agreed to have their bags searched, and when the cup was discovered in Benjamin's sack, "they tore their clothes," a sign of mourning (v. 13).

Their choice to return to the city with Benjamin demonstrated their solidarity with their brother. They didn't allow him to be carted away to save their own skins. Joseph had presented them with an easy opportunity to rid themselves of another favored sibling, at great benefit to themselves—and they refused.

APPLY THE WORD

Psalm 15:2–4 declares that the person who is worthy of approaching the temple to worship is one "whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, . . . who keeps an oath even when it hurts." The brothers keep the promise to their father and stick with Benjamin even when it is difficult. May we also remain faithful to our word.

PRAY WITH US

With hundreds of students, as well as faculty and employees to serve, our Campus Post Office employees are always busy. Ask the Lord today to strengthen Anthony Harper, Nga Tran, and Victor Perez and to keep giving them His joy.

SUNDAY
AUGUST

19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17

The Final Test: Part 2

Dallas Willard wrote that a thief is not only someone who steals but someone who *would* steal, if the right situation presented itself.

Judah and his brothers were in an impossible situation. Rather than argue with Joseph, they “threw themselves to the ground before him” (v. 14). Judah confessed, “God has uncovered your servants’ guilt” (v. 16). This was not a confession about stealing the cup, which we know they did not take. Rather, this was Judah’s confession of their sin against Joseph from many years ago. Their guilt prevented them from defending themselves against a sin they had not committed. In fact, Judah says that he and his brothers are all slaves.

Joseph’s first response probably sounded generous to his servants and assistants. He declared that only

Benjamin will be his slave, and the rest were free to go home (v. 17). At this point, Joseph has now placed his brothers in a situation closely resembling what had happened to him years before. They could get rid of Benjamin and go back home.

The last time he had this opportunity, Judah came up with the idea of selling the favored son as a slave (37:27). Now, he gives an impassioned speech offering his life for the life of Benjamin. He knew that Benjamin was the son beloved by their father (vv. 27–29). But rather than this favoritism driving Judah to jealous hatred, it became the reason Benjamin must not be enslaved.

Judah’s heart had been transformed from selfish lusts to selfless love. He cared too much for his father to see him grieved in this way (v. 34).

APPLY THE WORD

From Adam and Eve to the present day, God has not given up on humanity. He patiently works to bring people into a relationship. If you don’t have a personal relationship with God, He invites you today! Trust that Jesus has died for your sin and been resurrected to defeat the power of sin, and experience the transformation of God in your life.

PRAY WITH US

Please continue to uphold in your prayers our Campus Post Office staff: Richard Tatina, Samuel Ramos, Christy Ay, and Brenda McLemore. Thank God for their work of keeping our students and staff connected to each other and to our constituents.

*It was not you who sent me here, but God.
He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his
entire household and ruler of all Egypt.*

Genesis 45:8

MONDAY
AUGUST

20

The Unveiling

The great English preacher Charles Spurgeon said, “When you go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head.” This belief enabled Joseph to not only be at peace with his history but also to reconcile with his brothers who had treated him so unjustly.

Before this point in the story, Joseph had been hardnosed with his brothers: alleging that they had committed crimes, treating them harshly, and imprisoning them. But we readers also know that he had to run out of the room on several occasions because he was overwhelmed with emotion (42:24; 43:30).

In the dramatic scene in our reading today, Joseph finally revealed his identity to his brothers and offered his own interpretation of what had happened to him. Four times, he declares that God is the one who

brought him to Egypt: “God sent me ahead of you” to save lives (v. 5). The means God used to send Joseph to Egypt was the betrayal of his brothers. They could not have known that by selling Joseph into slavery, they would be saving their own lives.

From the larger perspective of the book of Genesis, Joseph not only saved the lives of Abraham’s family, he also spared people from many nations. God had promised Abraham that his family would be a blessing to all nations. The Joseph story shows how God keeps that promise. The surprising part is that God kept His promise to Abraham by redeeming the evil that Joseph’s brothers did to him.

This does not absolve the brothers of the great evil they inflicted on Joseph. Rather, it demonstrates that God is able to use even the most difficult and dysfunctional situation for His purpose.

APPLY THE WORD

Who sent Joseph to Egypt, his brothers or God? The biblical answer is both! The interplay of God’s sovereignty and human action is one of the great mysteries of Scripture. Paul said: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (Rom 11:33).

PRAY WITH US

As the new semester starts on Moody’s Chicago campus, please join Dr. Larry Davidhizar, VP and dean of the faculty, in prayer that Christ’s name will be glorified through the teaching of His Word at Moody Bible Institute.

TUESDAY
AUGUST

21

*We implore you on Christ's behalf:
Be reconciled to God.*

2 Corinthians 5:20

Brothers United

Civil wars divide not only nations but also families. Whether family members take different sides in the conflict or whether geographic divisions tear them apart, the loss of those bonds can leave emotional scars for generations.

Joseph and his brothers all had scars from the betrayal that had torn apart their family several decades earlier. But finally reunification and reconciliation was possible. Joseph embraced his brothers, and “afterward his brothers talked with him” (v. 15). This is more than a throwaway observation. Recall that, years before, “they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him” (37:4). At last, these siblings were moving from rivalry to relationship.

News of Joseph’s family reunion reached Pharaoh. He offered to relocate Joseph’s entire family to Egypt. He provided carts for an easier move and assured them that they would have the

best of the land and everything they would need. Joseph had clearly been a blessing and great help to Pharaoh.

Joseph sent his brothers back home with one last command, “Don’t quarrel on the way!” As one scholar said, “Joseph’s parting shot was realistic, for the ancient crime was now bound to come to light before their father, and mutual accusations were likely to proliferate.”

When Jacob heard that his beloved son was still alive, he “was stunned and did not believe them” (v. 26). Assured of the truth of the report by the cartloads of Egyptian goods Joseph had sent, Jacob revived for the first time in years. He was determined to go and see him, despite the difficulty of travel and his advanced age. Another reunion was worth it; the journey would be hard, but healing the wounds of familial separation would be sweet.

APPLY THE WORD

The kind of reconciliation Joseph and his brothers experienced serves as a picture of the ministry God has called us to in the church (see 2 Cor. 5:18). When we share the gospel, sinners are reconciled to God through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Our calling as peacemakers can help God’s people live in fellowship together (Matt. 5:9).

PRAY WITH US

Today is Convocation on Moody’s Chicago campus, marking the beginning of the new academic year. As our students prepare to dive into their courses, let’s pray that they will enjoy learning, develop positive Christ-pleasing attitudes, and grow in faith.

I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes.

Genesis 46:4

WEDNESDAY
AUGUST

22

A Promise-Keeping God

In the 1950s, Bill Fair and Earl Isaac created an automated scoring system to rate how likely a person was to repay a debt, which became the credit-score system vital in the economy today. If someone makes a promise, how do we know they will fulfill it? The credit rating is important because humans can be unpredictable. The objective measurement provides confidence to the lender, and the loan can be approved.

God made several promises to the Patriarchs. One key promise was that they would inhabit the land of Canaan, clearly defined and reiterated (12:7; 13:14-17; 15:7; 26:3). Though Jacob was excited to be reunited with Joseph, he also had some apprehension about leaving the Promised Land. God had told his father, Isaac, "Do not go down to Egypt" (26:2). This may be the reason Jacob paused at Beersheba, the southern border of the land,

to offer a sacrifice and seek God's direction.

God spoke to Jacob in a vision. This is the last time God would appear to any of the Patriarchs in such a direct way, and God affirmed for Jacob that he could indeed go down to Egypt (v. 3). In fact, Egypt is the place in which another of God's promises will be fulfilled: God will make the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob into a great nation there.

Further, God affirms that He will be with Jacob (v. 4). This was a remarkable guarantee in a culture that assumed deities were geographically limited. On a more personal note, God assured Jacob that he will have a peaceful death in the presence of his favored son (v. 4). Jacob had confidence from God's promises to move forward with his plan and bring his whole family and their possessions to Egypt.

APPLY THE WORD

God does not change. The same God who made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is faithful to fulfill them. We can have confidence that God will keep His promises, including that Jesus will return and we will live with Him forever. And God has given us His Spirit to indwell us while we wait. Praise Him for His faithfulness!

PRAY WITH US

Would you pray for Sam Choy, chief marketing officer, and his staff? They work hard to connect the larger Moody community to Moody's ministries through print and digital media and to communicate with effectiveness Moody's vision to our donors.

THURSDAY
AUGUST

23

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!*

1 John 3:2

Joseph and His Family

“I like Jesus, I’m just not a fan of the church.” “I’m very spiritual but I’m not religious.” “I’d rather worship God by myself in nature rather than go to church.” All these statements reflect a misunderstanding of what it means to be one of the children of God. Our salvation is not intended for us to be Lone Ranger Christian; rather, we are part of Christ’s body, the church. We are formed into the community of believers.

Our study has focused on Joseph, but our passage today reminds us that the Joseph story is about more than simply the experience of one individual. This is the story of a family, a community in relationship with God. God had made a covenant with Abraham that necessitated the creation of a family. Several generations later, we can see how God’s promise is being fulfilled.

The Israelites take up Pharaoh on his offer to resettle them in Egypt,

with God’s assurance that He would continue to be with them. The extended family includes Jacob, his sons, their wives, and their children—dozens of people who will now move from the Promised Land to Egypt to ensure their survival. The fact that they all moved together no doubt helped them retain their identity as Israelites in the land of Egypt.

After twenty-two years of assuming Joseph was dead, Jacob was finally reunited with his beloved son. Jacob had often stated that because of the loss of Joseph, and potential loss of Benjamin, he would go to the grave because of sorrow (37:35; 44:29). Now he declared that he could die in peace. His eyes have seen the salvation from famine God provided through Joseph and God’s faithfulness to preserve his family.

APPLY THE WORD

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.” Christians are the church! God is using the community of the redeemed to proclaim His salvation to the ends of the earth. Rejoice that you can be a part of that in Christ.

PRAY WITH US

Our Public Relations team—Brian Regnerus and Ava Roller—welcomes your prayer support today. They are entrusted with a task of representing Moody to the general public and to the media, and they do an excellent job!

I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.

Leviticus 11:44

FRIDAY
AUGUST

24

In Egypt, but Not of It

People who move to a new country—whether as immigrants, refugees, or missionaries—often try to learn their new culture while maintaining their previous national and cultural activity. The first generation might keep their language and customs, but their children and grandchildren assimilate more until the original cultural identity is subsumed into the new one.

Joseph was also concerned about assimilation. He knew how dominant Egyptian culture could be. He had assimilated in many ways: he spoke the language, adopted their dress, and took an Egyptian name. But he was also concerned that he and his family maintain their Hebrew distinctiveness.

When his family was about to meet Pharaoh, Joseph coached them about what to say. He wanted them to emphasize that they are shepherds, which were less socially desirable to

the Egyptians (46:30). He wanted his family to live in Goshen apart from other Egyptians, allowing them to maintain their identity as children of Abraham throughout their time in a foreign country.

The plan worked better than Joseph could have hoped. Not only did Pharaoh allow them to live in Goshen, he also put them in charge of his own livestock (v. 6). The Hebrew phrase here literally reads “officers of cattle,” which was a well-known Egyptian office. It would have allowed Joseph’s family to have legal protection not normally given to immigrants.

When asked by Pharaoh, Jacob described the years of his life as “few and difficult” (v. 9). But the scene ends in a touching way with an elderly Jacob blessing Pharaoh (v. 10). This reversal of roles fits well with Abraham’s call to “be a blessing” to the nations (12:3).

APPLY THE WORD

Christians also decide what parts of our cultural environment to embrace or resist. Are there areas of your life where perhaps you should be living in a more distinctively Christian way? Pray to God for wisdom in this area, and ask Him to show you where you might need to make changes to be a witness for the gospel of Christ.

PRAY WITH US

Computers have changed our world and also brought new challenges with them. Frank Leber, VP of Information Technology Services, and his team face these challenges every day and will be grateful for your prayers today.

SATURDAY
AUGUST

25

*I lift my eyes up to the mountains—
where does my help come from?*

Psalms 121:1

Crisis Management

From 1845 to 1849, Ireland experienced what became known as the Great Famine. A potato blight wiped out the crop most people depended on for both food and wages, absentee landlords allowed high rents to be collected for squalid living conditions, and high taxes made other available food such as bread too expensive. Some one million people starved to death, and another million emigrated from their home country. In four years, the population declined by nearly 25 percent.

The famine throughout Egypt and Canaan was particularly severe (v. 13). Under Joseph’s administration, the Egyptian government had collected a surplus of food during the seven good years. This surplus came from a 20 percent tax, along with purchases of excess grain (41:34–35). Now Joseph had to sell the grain back to the people in order to sustain them for the duration of the famine.

The people negotiated with Joseph and agreed first to sell their livestock, then their land, and finally they became debt slaves (vv. 16–19). This shows the true depth of the famine and how desperate people were. Their situation was essentially that of a sharecropper, agreeing to give 20 percent of their crop yield to Pharaoh. This was the same as the tax during the years of plenty, but the difference now was that technically Pharaoh owned the land.

This arrangement allowed lives to be spared even during the years of dire famine. People were grateful to Joseph for this provision: “You have saved our lives” (v. 25). In fact, as Pharaoh’s debt slaves, their food supply was now Pharaoh’s responsibility. In a summary comment, the narrator notes that the situation in Egypt is the same in his day (v. 26). The land still belonged to Pharaoh.

APPLY THE WORD

The Mosaic Law encourages Israel to care for the orphan, widow, and sojourner (Deut. 10:18). In contrast to Pharaoh, it also ensures that debt-slavery was not intended to be a permanent status, and release was mandated during the Jubilee Year (Lev. 25:13–55). How might God be calling you to care for the vulnerable today?

PRAY WITH US

James Anderson, Richard McNeill, Steven Takushi, Timothy Gauger, and Timothy Canfield in Client Technology Services provide desktop support and computer communication capabilities for Moody’s ministries. Would you pray for their service at Moody?

Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too.”

Genesis 48:11

SUNDAY
AUGUST

26

An Unusual Blessing: Part 1

Second-generation immigrants often struggle to know where they belong. In *Affinity* magazine, one second-generation teenager said: “I feel too American to be Chinese and too Chinese to be American.”

As we’ve seen, Joseph had assimilated well to Egypt. But how would his sons fit into his Hebrew family? Joseph likely could have raised them as Egyptians and given them every advantage his position afforded. Instead, he gave them Hebrew names. In the scene from our reading today, Joseph has his sons formally adopted by Jacob. This would firmly cement their identity as a part of the family of Israel. Joseph knew that being a part of God’s covenant family was far more important than having the advantages of being Egyptian.

After a long life of struggle and sorrow, Jacob was now on his deathbed. Scripture devotes almost all of chapters

48 and 49 to describing Jacob’s final words and actions, highlighting for us the importance of this moment of the passing of the Patriarchs. Jacob reflected on God’s promise that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan and become a great nation (vv. 3–4). He wanted Joseph’s sons to be a part of this and declares, “Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine” (v. 5). They would inherit as if they were full sons of Jacob.

Joseph arranged his sons so that the older would approach Jacob’s right hand while the younger would approach his left (v. 13). The right hand was thought to convey a more powerful blessing and was more appropriate to the firstborn. As we see so often throughout the book of Genesis, the roles get reversed. Perhaps Jacob was thinking about his own struggle with Esau as the younger brother who sought his father’s blessing (see Genesis 27).

APPLY THE WORD

Joseph prioritized God’s blessing over Egypt’s advantages. Are we willing to relinquish our grip on our status, material advantages, or pride in our national identity if needed to be faithful to Christ? In their book *All Together Different*, J. Brian Tucker and John Koessler offer wisdom regarding how to navigate these complex questions in today’s world.

PRAY WITH US

In conclusion of our prayers for the IT department, please include the Enterprise Infrastructure Services team—Joseph Kessinger, William Eyerdom, and Michael Paniak. Thank God for their expertise as they provide systems and security support.

MONDAY
AUGUST

27

*By faith Jacob . . . blessed each of Joseph's sons,
and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.*

Hebrews 11:21

An Unusual Blessing: Part 2

When the apostle Paul wanted to encourage Timothy in his faith and ministry, he wrote, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5). He reminded Timothy of his legacy of faith from the blessing of his family.

When Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, he also reminded them of the legacy of faith in their family. He reminded them that his father and grandfather “walked faithfully” before God (v. 15). “Walked faithfully” is a key phrase. It not only describes the faith of Abraham and Isaac but also the faith of men like Enoch and Noah (see 5:22; 6:9). It also describes the essence of covenant faith that the people of Israel will need in the future (see Deut. 30:16; Micah 6:8). Jacob wants these boys to know

that they are a part of a family of faith, people who walk closely with God.

As Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph noticed that he had crossed his hands so that the younger son was receiving the blessing of the right hand. Joseph tried to correct what must surely have been a mistake, but Jacob firmly rejected his correction. He intended the younger to be blessed over the older.

This is another example of the theme throughout Genesis, following the pattern of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and now Ephraim and Manasseh. God's blessing does not take worldly standards into account. His blessing is purely an act of His grace and cannot be presumed upon because of birth or position. Jacob also assures Joseph that both sons will be blessed and will have many descendants.

APPLY THE WORD

Today, thank God for the legacy of faith He has given you. If your biological family includes people who introduced you to and nurtured you in the faith, praise God for that blessing. If you came to faith through a spiritual father or mother who told you about Jesus, thank God that someone invited you to be part of the family of God.

PRAY WITH US

Please include the rest of the Enterprise Infrastructure Services in your prayers today. Thank God for the service of system administrators Kyle Sparrow, Paul Walker, and Joseph Straw that enables Moody's ministries across the globe.

The scepter will not depart from Judah . . . until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

Genesis 49:10

TUESDAY
AUGUST

28

The Days to Come: Part 1

Since the earliest recorded history, humans have wanted to know the future. Some of the earliest written texts are attempts to forecast the future by tracing the pattern of the stars or through examining the entrails of a sacrificed animal. The desire to know the future is just as strong today. From forecasting the future of the economy to following the advice of a horoscope, people want an advantage from a peek into the future.

Thankfully, when Scripture talks about the future, it does so truthfully and accurately. During his final days, Jacob gathered all of his sons not only to bless them but also to tell them about what would happen to them “in days to come” (v. 1). On another occasion in the Pentateuch, a passage is introduced by the phrase, “in days to come” (Num. 24:14), and again the focus is on a coming king who will deliver God’s people from bondage and oppression.

The sons are generally grouped by their shared mothers and then listed in birth order. The first three sons are told why they will not have the blessing of the firstborn bestowed upon them. Reuben violated Jacob’s concubine, Bilhah (35:22), and Simeon and Levi broke an agreement with the Shechemites (34:1–17). Judah was the next son in line. Judah is described in royal terms as a lion. Not only will his brothers bow down to him, but “the obedience of the nations shall be his” (v. 10).

Jacob describes Judah as one who will “wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes” (v. 11). This language is used by later writers to describe the messianic King (see Isa. 63:1–6; Rev. 19:15). In his final days, Jacob saw into the future to prophesy how his descendants would become a blessing to the nations.

APPLY THE WORD

God’s promise of a messianic King has been fulfilled in Christ. Just as ancient Israel could look forward to and anticipate God’s deliverance through a Messiah, we look forward to the day when Christ will return. Knowing that God has kept His promise to Jacob can give us confidence that He will keep His promises regarding His Second Coming.

PRAY WITH US

Bruce Everhart, VP of Donor Development and Channel Strategy, welcomes your prayers for the ministry of his team that works hard to establish and develop new ways to connect Moody with our friends and donors around the world.

WEDNESDAY
AUGUST

29

*Your father's blessings are greater than
the blessings of the ancient mountains,
than the bounty of the age-old hills.*

Genesis 49:26

The Days to Come: Part 2

“Don’t forget where you came from!” This advice is often given to first-generation college students, people moving to another area of the country, or those who become more financially successful than their parents and grandparents. It is a call to remember that they have not achieved everything simply because of their own effort. Rather, many people have supported them to provide these opportunities.

Our reading today continues to recount Jacob’s blessings for his sons. He now comes to Joseph. Joseph receives the longest and most elaborate blessing. Jacob recounts for Joseph how “With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility” (v. 23). Joseph was now the second-in-command to the Pharaoh of Egypt, but he had experienced opposition and suffering. His brothers betrayed him, Potiphar’s wife lied about him, and the royal cupbearer forgot him. He should not

forget this history of oppression and deliverance.

Jacob reminds Joseph that he has overcome these difficulties “because of the hand of the Mighty one of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, because of your father’s God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you” (vv. 24–25). God was with Joseph. He has achieved his position and saved his family because of the Lord’s help. What is true for Joseph will also be true of all who come after him.

God’s presence with Joseph meant that he was blessed by the skies above, the deep waters below, with fruitfulness and new life and children (v. 25). These blessings are things that we might take for granted as the normal process of life. As Jacob reminds Joseph, these are gifts from God, and we must never forget where they come from.

APPLY THE WORD

Where have you come from? Not just your family of origin, but your spiritual journey—where has God delivered and led and blessed you? Reflect on your story today, taking time to thank God for His blessings and praise Him for His guidance. Consider sharing your story with someone as a testimony of encouragement to God’s faithfulness.

PRAY WITH US

Would you commit to prayer Moody Radio’s WKES, broadcasting to central and southwest Florida? Give thanks to God for its talented staff: Pierre Chestang, Kate Bruington, Ron Maxwell, John Blok, and Andrew Leuthold.

*In his hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all mankind.*

Job 12:10

THURSDAY
AUGUST

30

The Burial of Jacob

A person's will usually reflects what they value as most important. In 2007, hotel owner and businesswoman Leona Helmsley died with an estate worth an estimated \$4 billion. Much of that money went to a charitable trust; however, she also left a \$12 million trust fund for her dog, Trouble. She left two of her grandchildren \$5 million each (contingent on their regular visits to her husband's grave) and left her other two grandchildren nothing.

Jacob's last wish was that he be buried in the cave his father Abraham had purchased for the burial of Sarah (49:30–31). In the midst of his grief, Joseph arranged to fulfill his father's final request. He had Jacob embalmed by his personal physicians, with the full service of respect paid to his beloved father. Notice the respect that Jacob and Joseph had also earned from the Egyptians, who honored him with a period of public mourning (v. 3).

The trip back to Canaan for Jacob's burial is an important detail in this story. It demonstrates the importance of that land to Israel. God had promised Abraham that he would have many offspring, he would receive the land of Canaan, and that his descendants would be a blessing to the nations. This passage refers to all three of those promises. Abraham's many descendants go up to bury Jacob. Jacob's tomb serves as a foothold in the Promised Land. The fact that "all Pharaoh's officials accompanied him" is yet another sign of how important Joseph was to Pharaoh (v. 7). Joseph had been a blessing to that nation.

This scene is a dramatic reminder that God is keeping His promises. It also demonstrates that for all his faults, Jacob believed and acted on those promises, ensuring Israel's future in the land.

APPLY THE WORD

Jacob was most concerned about living faithfully according to the promises God had made to him. He also passed that hope on to his children. What is most important to you? What kind of legacy do you hope to leave those who come behind you? What plans are you making now to ensure that you will give glory to God through your choices?

PRAY WITH US

Today we ask for prayer on behalf of our Human Resources headed by vice president Debbie Zelinski. The Moody community on campus wouldn't be possible without their diligent work of attracting, hiring, retaining, and developing the people God leads to Moody.

FRIDAY
AUGUST

31

By faith Joseph . . . spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

Hebrews 11:22

The Final Reconciliation

Simon Wiesenthal recounts a time during his confinement in a concentration camp when a nurse approached him and asked him to come to the hospital to see a dying German soldier. This soldier was an SS officer, who grabbed Simon by the hand and recounted all of the horrible deeds he had done against the Jews. He could not live with the guilt, and he was afraid to die without confessing and asking for forgiveness from one of the victims.

For seventeen years, Joseph's brothers had been living with him in Egypt—and they had never relinquished the fear that Joseph was harboring a grudge against them. They worried that it was only the presence of their father that prevented him from exacting vengeance. Now that Jacob was dead, they hatched a plan to appease Joseph: to claim their father's dying wish was to tell Joseph to forgive his brothers

(v. 17). But in addition to their idea to manipulate their father's memory, they also admitted the depth of their sin against Joseph. They call their actions "sins" and "wrongs" (v. 17). They also fell at his feet and offered to be his slaves (v. 18).

Joseph responded with weeping (v. 17). Upon seeing his brothers grovel before him, Joseph did not gloat or take any self-satisfaction in their position. He confessed that it was not his place to seek vengeance, but God's (v. 19). He then recounted the main message he had learned in his life: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (v. 20). God works out His purposes and plan through sinful men. He redeemed every element of Joseph's life in order to save many lives, including His beloved family of Abraham.

APPLY THE WORD

In our study of Joseph, we have seen the power of forgiveness, the faithfulness of God to keep His promises, and God's sovereignty in the midst of difficult circumstances. Rejoice in the assurance that God is able to redeem even the bleakest of circumstances. This truth is most clearly seen in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

PRAY WITH US

On this last day of the month, let us thank God in prayer for all the lessons in humility, prayer, faith, and wisdom this study of Joseph has been! Let's pray that these lessons will stay with us and will strengthen our walk with Christ.



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