

The First Family

Date: 6.21.2026 | Joseph Interprets Dreams
Scripture: Genesis 40-41

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

God is in control and helps His people.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

God helped Joseph understand dreams and made him a leader at the right time.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

God gave Joseph wisdom to interpret dreams and used him to help others, showing that God is in control of what happens.

STUDENTS:

God sovereignly worked through Joseph's suffering and gifting to raise him up at the right time, demonstrating His control over circumstances and His purpose to provide and preserve life.

ADULTS:

God's sovereign providence is displayed as He orchestrates events—through dreams, suffering, and timing—to elevate Joseph for His redemptive purposes. God reveals that He alone holds wisdom and authority over the future, accomplishing His purposes to preserve life and fulfill His greater plan.

MEMORY VERSE

So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
Galatians 3:9



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Special Revelation - God reveals Himself directly and in greater detail. God speaks directly to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2-3), audibly at Sinai (Deuteronomy 5), and by powerful signs and wonders (Deuteronomy 34), and vocal confirmation (Mathew 3:17). He revealed Himself through dreams and visions in Isaiah 6, Daniel 9, and Revelation 1. Every case of such revelations in the Bible concerns the person's place in the outworking of God's saving purposes. There are no instances in which God gives special guidance to the ordinary believing Israelite or Christian in the details of their personal existence. Ultimately, God reveals Himself to us through His Son Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-3) John MacArthur Biblical Doctrine, 74

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

After being betrayed by his brothers in **Genesis 37** and then falsely accused and imprisoned in **Genesis 39**, Joseph remains in prison in Egypt. Yet even there, the Lord continues to be with him. The keeper of the prison entrusts everything to Joseph because “the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed” (**Genesis 39:23**). Joseph's difficult circumstances have not changed, but neither has God's presence. As in the previous chapters, Joseph's story continues to emphasize that God is sovereignly working through suffering, injustice, and delay to accomplish His greater purposes.

While Joseph is in prison, two important officials from Pharaoh's court—the chief cupbearer and chief baker—are imprisoned after offending Pharaoh (**Genesis 40:1–4**). These men held positions of great trust, as they were responsible for preparing and serving Pharaoh's food and drink to protect him from poisoning. Their arrival in prison is no accident. God is providentially arranging events that will eventually lead to Joseph's elevation and the preservation of His covenant people.

One night, both the cupbearer and the baker had troubling dreams they could not understand (**Genesis 40:5**). In the ancient world, dreams were often viewed as messages from the divine, and because these men were imprisoned, they had no access to Pharaoh's magicians or wise men who normally interpreted such matters. When Joseph notices their distress, he compassionately asks why they are troubled (**Genesis 40:6–7**). Their response allows



Joseph to testify to God's sovereignty as he declares, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (*Genesis 40:8*).

By God's help, Joseph interprets both dreams accurately. He tells the cupbearer that he will be restored to Pharaoh's service in three days, but the baker will be executed in three days (*Genesis 40:9–19*). Joseph asks the cupbearer to remember him and mention him to Pharaoh when he is restored, hoping for release from prison (*Genesis 40:14–15*). Exactly as Joseph predicted, Pharaoh restores the cupbearer and executes the baker on his birthday three days later (*Genesis 40:20–22*). Yet despite Joseph's request, the cupbearer forgets him completely (*Genesis 40:23*).

Joseph remains in prison for two more full years. This delay reminds readers that God's timing is often slower than we desire, but never late. Though forgotten by men, Joseph is not forgotten by God. Throughout Genesis, God remembers His people and acts at His perfect timing (*Genesis 8:1; 19:29; 30:22*). During these years, Joseph undoubtedly continues to learn patience, trust, and dependence upon the Lord.

After two years, Pharaoh himself had two disturbing dreams that none of Egypt's magicians or wise men could interpret (*Genesis 41:1–8*). In that moment, the cupbearer finally remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh how Joseph accurately interpreted the dreams in prison (*Genesis 41:9–13*). Pharaoh immediately sends for Joseph, and Joseph is brought from the prison, shaved, clothed, and presented before Pharaoh (*Genesis 41:14*).

When Pharaoh asks Joseph to interpret the dreams, Joseph quickly refuses to take personal credit, declaring, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer" (*Genesis 41:16*). After thirteen years of betrayal, slavery, false accusation, and imprisonment, Joseph has not become bitter or prideful. Instead, his focus remains on God's glory. At his first opportunity before the most powerful ruler in the world, Joseph boldly points Pharaoh to the sovereignty of God.

Joseph explains that Pharaoh's two dreams carry the same meaning: God is revealing that Egypt will experience seven years of great abundance followed by seven years of severe famine (*Genesis 41:25–32*). Joseph then advises Pharaoh to appoint a wise administrator to store grain during the plentiful years so the nation will survive the famine (*Genesis 41:33–36*).

Pharaoh recognizes that the Spirit of God is with Joseph and appoints him to oversee the entire plan (*Genesis 41:37–40*). At thirty years old, Joseph is elevated from prisoner to ruler, becoming second in authority only to Pharaoh himself (*Genesis 41:41–44*). In an astonishing reversal of circumstances, the slave and prisoner is exalted to one of the highest positions in the known world. Joseph is given an Egyptian wife and fathers two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, whose names reflect God's faithfulness in Joseph's suffering and fruitfulness in affliction (*Genesis 41:50–52*).

As Joseph predicted, the seven years of abundance come and go, followed by seven years of famine (*Genesis 41:53–54*). But because God gave Joseph wisdom, Egypt is prepared. Joseph's careful administration ensures that food is available not only for Egypt but also for surrounding nations (*Genesis 41:55–57*). Once again, God fulfills His covenant promise that those who bless Abraham's offspring will be blessed (*Genesis 12:3*). Through Joseph, God blesses Egypt and prepares the way to preserve Israel.

Though Joseph's rise to power may seem like the climax of his story, it is not the final goal. God has not elevated Joseph merely for his own comfort or success. Joseph's exaltation is the means by which God will preserve Jacob's family during the coming famine and fulfill His covenant promises. The true climax is still to come when Joseph is reunited with his brothers and recognizes that every painful event in his life was part of God's sovereign plan for deliverance.

Joseph's story points forward to Jesus Christ. Like Joseph, Jesus was rejected, humbled, and suffered unjustly before being exalted to a place of authority. Joseph went from prison to the palace; Jesus went from the cross to the throne. Through Joseph's suffering, God provided physical salvation for many during the famine. Through Jesus' suffering, God provides eternal salvation for all who trust in Him. *Genesis 40–41* reminds believers that God is always at work behind the scenes, even in seasons of waiting, suffering, and silence. His delays are not His absence, and His plans are always greater than we can see.

TELL THE STORY

Genesis 40-41



Use The Message version of the Bible to re-tell the story or use one of the re-tellings from these three children's Bibles:

The Biggest Story Storybook Bible - Joseph's Mean Brothers and What God Meant to Do

The Jesus Storybook Bible - The Forgiving Prince.

Hey Oh! Bible - Joseph in Egypt

Joseph was still in prison, but God had not forgotten him. Even there, the Bible says that the Lord was with Joseph and helped him succeed. Soon, the prison keeper trusted Joseph and put him in charge of the other prisoners.

One day, two new prisoners arrived. They were important servants of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. One was Pharaoh's cupbearer, and the other was his baker. Both men had upset Pharaoh and were sent to prison.

One night, each man had a strange dream. The next morning, they were upset because they did not understand what their dreams meant.

Joseph noticed they were troubled and asked what was wrong. They told him about their dreams, and Joseph said, "Only God can explain dreams."

With God's help, Joseph told the cupbearer that in three days he would be restored to Pharaoh's service. But Joseph told the baker that in three days he would be put to death.

Everything happened exactly the way Joseph said.

Before the cupbearer left prison, Joseph asked him, "Please remember me when you return to Pharaoh." But the cupbearer forgot Joseph.

Joseph stayed in prison for two more years.

Then one night, Pharaoh had two troubling dreams. In one dream, seven healthy cows were eaten by seven skinny cows. In the second dream, seven full heads of grain were swallowed by seven thin heads of grain.

Pharaoh asked all of Egypt's wise men to explain the dreams, but no one could.

Then the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph.

He told Pharaoh, "There is a man in prison who can explain dreams."

Pharaoh quickly sent for Joseph. Joseph was brought from prison, cleaned up, and stood before Pharaoh.

Pharaoh said, "I hear you can interpret dreams."

Joseph answered, "I cannot, but God can."

Joseph explained that both dreams meant the same thing: Egypt would have seven years of plenty followed by seven years of terrible famine. Joseph told Pharaoh to store food during the good years so the people would survive during the famine.

Pharaoh knew Joseph's wisdom came from God. So Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over all Egypt—second only to Pharaoh himself!

Joseph went from being a prisoner to being one of the most powerful men in Egypt.

Everything happened just as God had planned.

Joseph's story reminds us that even when life is hard, God is still working. Joseph had to wait many years, but God never forgot him.

Joseph also points us to Jesus. Like Joseph, Jesus suffered before He was exalted. Joseph was raised from prison to power to help save people from famine. Jesus died and rose again to save people from sin forever.

Genesis 40–41 teaches us that God is always working behind the scenes, even when we cannot see it.

REBUILD THE STORY

1. Who were the two important prisoners placed in prison with Joseph? *Genesis 40:1-4*
2. Why were the cupbearer and baker upset one morning in prison?
Genesis 40:5-8
3. What did Joseph say about who can interpret dreams?
Genesis 40:8
4. How did Joseph interpret the cupbearer's and baker's dreams?
Genesis 40:12-19
5. What happened after the cupbearer was restored to Pharaoh?
Genesis 40:20-23
6. What troubling dreams did Pharaoh have two years later?
Genesis 41:1-8
7. How did Joseph explain Pharaoh's dreams, and what did he tell Pharaoh to do? *Genesis 41:25-36*
8. How did Pharaoh respond to Joseph's wisdom? *Genesis 41:37-44*
9. How do you think Joseph felt when the cupbearer forgot him?
What would have been hard about waiting on God for two more years?
10. Why is it important that Joseph gave God the credit instead of taking credit for himself?
11. What can Joseph's story teach us about trusting God when we have to wait a long time?



12. How does Joseph's being raised from prison to power point us to Jesus?

GOSPEL EMPHASIS

Even in the midst of Joseph's suffering, God was with him and was using every painful circumstance for His glory and Joseph's good. Though Joseph was forgotten, imprisoned, and forced to wait many years, God had never abandoned him and was preparing him for the very role that would save many lives. Joseph consistently gave God the credit for his wisdom and success, showing that he trusted God's sovereignty even when he could not understand his situation. His story reminds us that God is always working out His plan of redemption, even when life feels confusing or unfair. Joseph points us to Jesus, who also suffered before being exalted and through whose suffering God accomplished salvation for the world. Because of Jesus, we can trust that God is sovereign over every detail of our lives and that He is working all things together for His glory and the good of His people.



WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use your Attributes of God poster as a guide.

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank You for always being with us! Help us realize that You are using the circumstances You place us in for our good and Your glory. Help us recognize Your work in our lives and give You the honor when we reflect Your glory!



THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Genesis 42-50