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Genesis 41:1-57

The Genesis of God's People: Through All The Years

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Website: In Genesis 41:1-57, Pharaoh has two dreams that predict both good years and bad years are coming. He can't interpret these dreams, but soon discovers a young Hebrew man who can, Joseph. Joseph successfully interprets Pharaoh's dreams and is promoted to the second highest office in all of Egypt. God brought Joseph through years of trial so that he could lead Egypt through years of hardship. *God gives us good and bad years to help others and bless us.*

Introduction: (Slide #1)

1. Monica and I have been watching the Olympics in Rio this week.
2. **(S2)** Did you know that when Michael Phelps was a kid, he was afraid to put his face in the water.¹
3. He was 15 when he attended his first Olympics, the 2000 games in Sydney (heard on Paul Harvey).
4. He didn't medal but he still broke his first WR that year and in 2004 he competed in Athens.
5. In Athens he won six golds and two bronze, but the following November he was arrested for a DUI.
6. He apologized, did probation and community service, and won eight more gold in Beijing in 2008.
7. Right after his victory, a picture surfaced of his recreational drug use online, and he was suspended.
8. In London 2012 he became the "most decorated Olympian of all time"—won 4 golds and 2 silvers.
9. He retired, but in 2014 he was arrested for a second DUI, and was so low he considered suicide.
10. Before he went to rehab his Christian friend Ray Lewis gave him a copy of *A Purpose Driven Life*.
11. He shared with the ESPN Magazine that this book "turned me into believing there is a power greater than myself and there is a purpose for me on this planet."²
12. Michael Phelps is not yet a Christian, but we can pray Jesus finds him.
13. He may have just won four more gold in Rio (26 total, 22 golds), but he still needs something more.
14. God has taken Michael Phelps through the highs and lows of life in an arena we'll never experience.
15. God takes us through highs and lows in order to get our attention and reveal himself to us.

(Genesis 41 and Joseph's rise to triumph is a lesson on God using good and bad years for Joseph's good.)

I. God gives us good and bad years. (vv. 1-8) **(S3)**

(Although we've been preaching through the story of Joseph, today's story begins with Pharaoh.)
(Pharaoh has two dreams that predict seven years of plenty and famine for Egypt.)

A. God gives Egypt good years and bad years. (vv. 1-2, 6)

1. Seven fat cows in the Nile show Egypt's agriculture is dependent on river (usually reliable).
2. Joseph's homeland of Canaan/Palestine is dependent on rainfall (less reliable).
3. What's going to destroy both? V. 6 says the "east wind" (west wind brings Mediterranean rain).
4. East of Egypt/Palestine is the Arabian desert with an average summer temperature of 104 °F.
5. It sometimes get as hot as 115 °F and that hot air blows into Palestine and Egypt wilting crops.
6. In the film **Interstellar**, a blight has killed everything but corn and there are wicked dust storms.

¹ Info adapted from: <https://swimswam.com/bio/michael-phelps/> (accessed 8.12.2016). Checked at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Phelps

² Quoted from: www.al.com/sports/index.ssf/2016/08/rio_2016_did_michael_phelps_re.html (accessed 8.12.2016).

7. Interstellar is judgment, “This world’s a treasure... it’s been telling us to leave for a while now.”
8. In Egypt, this east wind isn’t God’s judgment, but a natural occurrence... bad years just happen.
9. God gives everyone, doesn't matter who you are, good and bad years.

(The hero of Interstellar is a farmer named Cooper; the hero of our story is a farmer named Joseph.)
(God uses Joseph and the hardships he has experienced to prepare Egypt for famine.)

B. God gives Joseph years of hardship. **(S4)**

1. **17 Sold into slavery 37:2** — He probably worked for Potiphar for many years.
2. **25? Thrown into prison 39:20** — He was betrayed by Potiphar’s wife (23-27?)
3. **28 Interprets prisoners’ dreams 41:1** — He interprets dreams for chief cupbearer and baker.
4. **30 Brought before Pharaoh 41:46** — He interprets Pharaoh’s two dreams.
5. **39 Meets brothers 45:6** — After 7 years of plenty, during 7 years of famine, he finds brothers.
6. Even if Joseph had a good job for Potiphar and Pharaoh it doesn’t mean those were easy years.
7. He was kidnapped, enslaved, a foreigner, thrown in prison, married to a foreigner, and renamed.
8. God gave Joseph years of hardship (17 to 39 = 22), which reminds us of Abram (75 to 100 = 25).

C. No one likes going through years of hardship.

1. You probably don’t rip your bandaid off as slow as possible or ask the Dr. if you can come back.
2. When God takes me into hardship, my prayer is usually, “Lord, please make this stop asap.”
3. I don’t like pain for a day, especially not a week, a month is the worst, years are unimaginable.
4. Think of the most frustrating hardship you’re in right now (physical, relational, even spiritual).
5. If God wants, he can take you out of that in a moment, but he hasn’t, has he?
6. God takes us thru these times, not so we can make it stop, find the best solution, or dominate.
7. God uses good and bad times to change us, give us patience, kindness, and gentleness.
8. He uses these times to change our POV, give us a Jesus perspective.
9. God gives us good and bad years.

(When Joseph was 17, he was prideful and arrogant, so God humbles him—something changes.)
(He doesn’t fight Potiphar’s wife, bemoan his plight in prison, or demand Pharaoh’s respect.)
(At some point along the way, he must catch a glimpse of what God is trying to do.)

II. God gives us good and bad years to help others. (vv. 9-40) **(S5)**

A. When Joseph went through those hard years, he could have stayed down.

1. I wonder if Joseph ever wished his dad hadn’t given him that robe or he hadn’t had those dreams.
2. I wonder if he wished that he hadn’t helped the Cup Bearer and Baker since it didn’t help him.
3. But God gave Joseph those dreams and experiences, those hardships, to prepare him for Pharaoh.
4. If you’re looking for a man who can interpret dreams, God gave two at home, and two in prison.
5. When he got thrown in the pit by his brothers, he could have stayed down (Gen 37:4).
6. When Potiphar threw him in prison (referred here as a “pit”), he could have stayed down.
7. But when Pharaoh calls, he rises up, cleans up, and goes to work to serve others.

B. God gave Joseph hard years to bless others (v. 16).

1. When Pharaoh calls him, Joseph says, “God is concerned about shalom/peace for Pharaoh.”
2. God wants to use Joseph to bring peace, prosperity, and welfare to the nation of Egypt.

3. Joseph interprets the dreams and suggests a practical plan for dealing with the famine (vv. 33-36).
4. Even when Egypt hasn't given Joseph shalom, Joseph still wants shalom for Egypt.
5. When those around you don't seem to care about your shalom, do you care about theirs?
6. Are you seeking the peace and prosperity of your Egypt?
7. God gave Joseph hard years to bless others...

(God gives us good and bad years to help others.)

C. The story of Jane Granz is a story of many hard years.

1. In the 1970s, when Jane was 40, her husband Norman was misdiagnosed with Parkinson's.
2. He had OPCA, which is neurodegeneration (brain), and turned him into an invalid (vs. CNS).
3. The doctors put him on medication that stripped his body of sodium and eventually killed him.
4. Before he died, this tiny woman cared for her large 6 foot husband for 30 long years.
5. She began to sleep in the closet so she could watch him kick on the bed.
6. Every summer the MA police loaded him into an ambulance stretcher in the back of her car.
7. Then the fire department in ME unloaded him at their summer house by the ocean.
8. During this time a friend asked her if she'd be willing to house a young man for a semester.
9. At first she resisted, but she said yes, and he shoveled, mowed, and gave her joy.
10. Even as she cared for her husband, she began to house young men from the school.
11. Her husband died but she kept hosting the young men... until one day it was my turn.
12. When I asked her how many she'd hosted, she couldn't remember, but said 8-10.
13. She didn't think of it as extraordinary, but she helped a lot of pastors graduate with less debt.
14. In the midst of good and bad years Jane learned to help others.

III. God gives us good and bad years to help others and bless us. (vv. 41-57) **(S6)**

A. God put Joseph through tough times to bless him.

1. When Pharaoh clothes Joseph with a white "fine linen" cloak, he gives him status and royalty.
2. In v. 43, Pharaoh gives Joseph a chariot and a herald calling before him, "Bow the knee!"(ESV)
3. Remember what his father told Joseph when he shared his sun, moon, and stars dream?
4. "Shall I and your mother and your brothers [...] bow ourselves to the ground before you?"(NIV®)
5. The Egyptian sun god, Ra, was believed to be manifested in Pharaoh (god incarnate).
6. His father-in-law is a priest of On, which the Greeks named Heliopolis, "The city of the sun."
7. God gives Joseph greater honor than anything he could ever have imagined.
8. The Hebrew word "to kneel" is the same as "to bless" (בָּרַךְ bā·răk).
9. God has used Joseph to bless others, and now God is blessing Joseph.

(God gives us good and bad years to help others and bless us.)

(How do we see God bless Joseph in way that he also blesses us?)

B. Two Applications: 1) God can heal your bad years, and 2) God can make any year fruitful. **(S7)**

1. Manasseh means "forget"—God has taken away all the painful memories. (v. 51)
2. Ephraim means "twice fruitful"—God has given Joseph success in the midst of hardship. (v. 52)
3. God can not only take away your hurt, he can make you grateful for it, and better because of it.
4. When we're in hard times, we want it to stop, but with time, we say, "I wouldn't change a thing."

(God gives us good and bad years to help others and bless us.) (S8)

- C. The story of Joseph is not your average story, it's a savior story.³
1. We put ourselves in Joseph's shoes, but there's only one other man like Joseph—Jesus.
 2. Joseph went out into the field to help his brothers succeed, but he was rejected by them.
 - a) **Jesus** came to bless Jerusalem and his people with salvation, but he was rejected by them.
 3. Joseph was cast into a pit from which he would rise to greater power and authority.
 - a) **Jesus** was cast into a tomb from which he would rise to the greatest power and authority.
 4. Joseph was promoted to the second highest office in the land, only Pharaoh's throne was higher.
 - a) **Jesus** ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father on the highest throne.
 5. Joseph was filled with the Holy Spirit of God, so much so that Pharaoh caught a glimpse.
 - a) **Jesus** is not only filled with the Spirit, he sends his Spirit to you and me (foreign bride).
 6. Joseph is the savior who fed and nourished the nation of Egypt during famine.
 - a) **Jesus** is the savior who will feed any who believe so that they never thirst again (John 4:14).
 7. In the story of Joseph, we're not Joseph, we're Egypt.
 - a) We're born into famine—have you come to the storehouses to be fed?
 - b) Jesus promises all who put their faith in him will be clothed in white and nourished forever.
 - c) Jesus not only washes away our sins, he fills us up with his goodness.
 - d) There's no need to starve, the harvest is here in Jesus Christ.
 8. God takes us through good years and bad so we can find our fill in His Son.
 - a) God uses these years to be a blessing to our Egypt and to receive his blessing ourselves.

God gives us good and bad years to help others and bless us.

Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace. (ESV)

³ *Why Chapter 41 is Not The "Payoff" You Thought it Was* by Voddie Bauchan. Uploaded 5/31/2014. Accessed 8/10/2016. <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=531141345280>