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GENESIS 41:14-16,25-38

RAGS TO RICHES



THIS WEEK'S **focus**

Do you know which celebrities have the most followers on Instagram? According to Forbes Magazine, the top three most followed Instagram accounts in fall of 2023 were Cristiano Ronaldo (soccer player), Lionel Messi (soccer player), and Selena Gomez (singer and actor).¹ Many of us gravitate toward celebrities and pay a lot of attention to how they live their lives. Today we will watch Joseph interact with the most influential and powerful person of his day: Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt. Despite Pharaoh's immense power and fame, Joseph walked confidently because God protected him and provided for him.



CENTRAL **truth**

God grants us wisdom when we trust Him.

¹ "The 10 Most Followed Instagram Accounts in the World in 2023," Forbes India, published Sept 11, 2023, updated Sept 15, 2023, <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/most-followed-instagram-accounts-world/85649/1>.



EXPLORE

scripture

GENESIS 41:14-16,25-38

GENESIS 41:14-16

14 Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they quickly brought him from the dungeon. He shaved, changed his clothes, and went to Pharaoh. **15** Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But

I have heard it said about you that you can hear a dream and interpret it.” **16** “I am not able to,” Joseph answered Pharaoh. “It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”

GENESIS 41:25-32

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams mean the same thing. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. **26** The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years. The dreams mean the same thing. **27** The seven thin, sickly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind are seven years of famine. **28** “It is just as I told Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. **29** Seven years of great

abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt. **30** After them, seven years of famine will take place, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. The famine will devastate the land. **31** The abundance in the land will not be remembered because of the famine that follows it, for the famine will be very severe. **32** Since the dream was given twice to Pharaoh, it means that the matter has been determined by God, and he will carry it out soon.

GENESIS 41:33-38

33 “So now, let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt. **34** Let Pharaoh do this: Let him appoint overseers over the land and take a fifth of the harvest of the land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. **35** Let them gather all the excess food during these good years that are coming. Under Pharaoh’s authority, store the grain in the cities, so they

may preserve it as food. **36** The food will be a reserve for the land during the seven years of famine that will take place in the land of Egypt. Then the country will not be wiped out by the famine.” **37** The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants, **38** and he said to them, “Can we find anyone like this, a man who has God’s spirit in him?”

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GENESIS 41:14-16,25-38

CONVERSATION

questions

▶ READ GENESIS 41:14-16.

.01 What made Joseph's response to Pharaoh so unique?

.02 Reflect on a time when God was faithful despite your weaknesses and limitations. How was He faithful to you?

.03 How can our gifts point our friends and family to the Lord's greatness?



HISTORY

Since our dreams today tend to be silly or boring—and usually not prophetic—it may seem arrogant of Pharaoh to think his dreams were important enough to notify his advisory team. Keep in mind that in the ancient Near East, dreams were seen as frequent pathways of communication for the various gods that were worshiped.² Additionally, Pharaoh's dreams had included the Nile River, which was central to the lives of the Egyptians.³ Their economic and spiritual vitality was linked to this body of water. For a nightmare to include the Nile River would have presented a sincere concern to Pharaoh. As Joseph later highlighted, God giving this dream to Pharaoh twice ensured both its importance and also that the events it predicted would happen soon (see Gen. 41:33).

² John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 72.

³ Lennox. *Joseph: A Story of Love, Hate, Slavery, Power, and Forgiveness* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2019), 168.



READ GENESIS 41:25-32.

.04 How is God’s power emphasized in Joseph’s interpretation of the dreams?

.05 Why do you think God warned Pharaoh of coming disaster when Pharaoh did not follow Him?

READ GENESIS 41:33-38.

.06 How did God use Joseph’s painful experiences to prepare him for leadership?

.07 How is Joseph’s wise plan evidence of God’s provision?

.08 What does God’s ability to draw blessing out of brokenness say about His character?

GIVE AN ANSWER

Did Joseph ever lose trust in God during his suffering? As modern-day readers, we have the luxury of reading Joseph’s story in one sitting, and we know that things panned out well for the young man sold into slavery. Joseph, on the other hand, lived this out moment by moment. Did he wrestle with his faith in God? We don’t have any indication that Joseph lost trust in God during his treacherous journey, but we do know that the Lord was with Joseph (see Gen. 39:2,21). It may be difficult for us to believe Joseph didn’t lose trust in God, because that isn’t our experience with suffering. We doubt. We complain. We lose confidence in who God has declared Himself to be. And while it’s not mentioned in Joseph’s story, we know these responses to suffering are expressed by people throughout Scripture (see Job 6:4; Lam. 2:5; 1 Chron. 13:11; Ps. 13:1), and this could have been Joseph’s experience as well. Remember: the Lord is not cold or unaware of our suffering (see Ps. 56:8). If we are following Jesus, we can confidently know that our pain is never wasted (see Rom. 8:28-29).

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GENESIS 41:14-16,25-38

NOW

what?



CENTRAL truth

God grants us wisdom when we trust Him.

.09 How can you tell if your life shows that you have confidence in God?

.10 What can we learn from our limitations and weaknesses? What might be God trying to teach us in our moments of weakness?

.11 How can we encourage one another to see the Lord's provision in painful experiences?

.12 What gifts do we have that we often forget to thank the Lord for?

DAILY devotions

MEMORIZE GENESIS 41:16

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about humans?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

GENESIS 41:14-16

DWELL

Despite all his power as a ruler, Pharaoh was helpless in interpreting a dream he had. Hearing of a Hebrew prisoner with the ability to rightly interpret dreams, Pharaoh called Joseph before him. Joseph, aware of his own limitations, admitted that while he could not do what Pharaoh asked, Joseph's God could. Limitations and weaknesses are seen as things to be avoided in our culture. There are seemingly endless videos, podcasts, and books that tell us we need to get better, smarter, stronger, and so on. However, what if our limitations are actually an opportunity for God to show up? This happened for Joseph. He understood that God is the source of true wisdom and that resting in the Lord always yields better results.



How are our limitations opportunities to trust God?



How can you point others to the Lord when your achievements are celebrated?

MEMORIZE

Write Genesis 41:16 on an index card or sticky note and attach it to your bathroom mirror. Say the verse aloud each day, emphasizing a few different words each time.

PRAY


Heavenly Father, thank You for how You created and gifted me. In all that I say and do, help me to point others to Your Son—King Jesus.


day 2

DANIEL 2:17-23

DWELL

There are a lot of similarities between Daniel and Joseph's stories: both were Hebrew men exiled from their homeland as teenagers; both were given the ability to interpret dreams; both would rise to power in service to their kings. In Daniel's time, King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that his court of wise men and magicians both describe and interpret the troubling dream he had. Death was the penalty for those who could not provide an answer. The Lord provided an answer to Daniel, and verses 20-23 serve as a celebration for God's power and insight. How we respond when God moves and acts on our behalf matters. Gratitude is the only appropriate response to the Lord's kindness.

 Where have you seen God's provision in your life recently? Take time to celebrate Him.

 Note Daniel's celebration of God's power. What descriptions stick out to you? Why?

MEMORIZE

Save Genesis 41:16 as a wallpaper or screensaver on your phone or computer. Read it aloud each time you see it.

PRAY


Lord, You are the Good Shepherd who provides for Your people. May my life reflect my gratitude for who You are and all that You have done for me.


day 3

GENESIS 41:25-32

DWELL

Though the people of Egypt treated Pharaoh like a god, there is only one true God. Pharaoh's inability to interpret his dreams and save Egypt from the coming famine served as proof that he was not that god. While most of us don't worship kings and queens or foreign gods today, there are still things in our lives that claim to offer us ultimate security, belonging, or happiness. When we try to find these things in sources that are not from God, we are guilty of idolatry—bowing our knee to false gods. The one true God longs to reveal Himself to you as you trust Him to be the source of all things.

 What similarities and differences did Pharaoh's two dreams share?

 What false gods do you see as temptations in our modern-day culture?

MEMORIZE

Say the book, chapter, and verse number for Genesis 41:16 out loud several times. Then read aloud just the first few words of the verse. Do this a few times a day and see if you can memorize more each time.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, though I am tempted each day to place my trust elsewhere, give me eyes to see that You are the one true God in whom I lack nothing.

day 4

GENESIS 41:33-38

DWELL

Joseph not only interpreted the dream with God's help, but he also exercised wisdom in how to strategically preserve food and resources for the coming famine. These two things solidified in Pharaoh's mind that Joseph was the man for the job. Joseph had spent thirteen years in Egyptian captivity, learning the culture and leading in significant ways. Now, the moment had arrived when those experiences and God's wisdom would intersect in a unique way. In seasons of suffering, it can be difficult to see the ways in which God is moving and providing. However, we serve a gracious God who wastes nothing, not even our times of suffering.

↑ Why do you think the Lord granted Joseph insight to save a nation that worshiped other gods?

→ How have you seen the Lord's provision specifically during tough times?

MEMORIZE

Write out Genesis 41:16 on a piece of paper. Circle three to five key words in the verse and consider their importance. Focus on those words and see how much of the verse you can speak from memory.

PRAY

King Jesus, it is difficult to see Your activity during painful seasons. Help me to believe that no experience, when placed in Your nail-pierced hands, is wasted.

day 5

PSALM 105:17-22

DWELL

In a psalm of thanksgiving to God for His faithfulness, the writer reflects on Joseph's story. God indeed leveraged this story filled with such pain, confusion, and loss as an opportunity to carry out His promises to the people of Israel. Without Joseph's exile and rise to power, this psalm would never have been written. God's blessings extended not just *to* Joseph but also *through* him for the preservation of the people of Israel. God's blessings are intended to have a ripple effect. For those who have been truly blessed, we should long to share those blessings with others.

← How might the psalmist's reciting of Joseph's story have been an encouragement to the Israelites?

↔ Have you been generous with how the Lord has blessed you? How can you share those blessings with others?

MEMORIZE

Read Genesis 41:16 several times. Then start by trying to memorize the first two or three words. Once you have those words memorized, add a few more words at a time until you can say the whole verse.

PRAY

Lord, You are the same God who was with Joseph. You are with me and have blessed me greatly. Reveal to me how I can extend Your blessings to those around me.