

READ

Genesis 40 - 41

REFLECT

Genesis 40 and 41 hinge entirely on the meaning of dreams, and as it happened, Joseph's life – and thus the life of his family and the history of Israel – hinged on those dreams, too. Much of the ancient world ascribed dreams to being messages from God; Joseph said as much when he said that the interpretation of dreams belongs to God (40:8). A previous chapter made it clear that God was with Joseph, and as such, he had the ability to understand the dreams of his peers and use them to correctly predict future events. Two officials of Pharaoh wound up in prison with Joseph and each was distressed because of a strange dream they'd had. Joseph heard their description of the dreams and said exactly what was to happen – the wine steward was returned to his position and the baker was hung. The wine steward must have been too overwhelmed, or scared or something, to bring up Joseph to anyone, and eventually he forgot all about the one who could so easily and correctly interpret dreams. But then, two years later, Pharaoh had his own distressing dream. None of the religious experts in all of Egypt could interpret the dream, which could have only frustrated Pharaoh even more, but then that forgetful wine steward remembered Joseph and his dream interpretation prowess. In a hurry to figure out what his dream meant, Joseph was brought before him and he asked if Joseph really did have the power to interpret dreams. Humbly, Joseph said that it wasn't him, but God – and then he went on to explain what Pharaoh's dream meant. Seven years of great abundance were coming that would be followed up with seven years of famine. It was providential that Joseph was there to both interpret the dream and build policy from the message Pharaoh had received from God. When Joseph suggested that the Pharaoh do just that, he enlisted Joseph to manage all of Egypt as the second in command. During his rule he collected and saved so much grain that it was uncountable. He also was married and had two sons in that time – Manasseh and Ephraim. When the famine struck, just as Joseph had predicted, Egypt was well prepared and every surrounding country came to buy grain, making Egypt even richer. God certainly was with Joseph.

REACT

- Joseph was able to interpret the dreams of two inmates in his jail, yet the one who received a positive interpretation turned around and forgot all about Joseph. Have you ever had kindness you've given forgotten? How did you respond? Did it make you more likely to remember kindness done to you?
- Joseph was imprisoned for years after a false allegation was made against him, yet he finally had a chance to get out when the Pharaoh called on him to interpret his dream. When he got out, he expressed no ill-will toward those who'd done him harm. Many modern stories of falsely imprisoned people are the same. How would you have felt about being falsely imprisoned and then subsequently released?
- Joseph advised Pharaoh to make national policy based on his dream. While I'd be afraid to have an President or world leader make similar policies based on their dreams, urging Pharaoh to save was sound advice and it worked out well. Have you ever made decisions based on a dream or intuition? How'd it work out?

RESPOND

Trusting In God's Presence: Joseph believed God was with him and allowed that trust to guide his behaviors. He didn't get angry at the situations he was placed, instead he believed that they could be used to better himself and his situation. His patience and trust were rewarded. Keeping a clear head, not allowing our anger get the best of us, and always moving toward the just, loving ends of God can help us get out of any situation, no matter how bad. How can you build your trust in God's presence? There's no one size fits all solution – maybe simple prayer will help you, or study of scripture. Maybe there's a song you know that reminds you or a sign in nature. Whatever it is, hold on to that and continue to use it to remind you that God is with you.