Week 7: *Genesis 41:37-57*

**Hook**

*all for good*

the story of Joseph in Genesis

**Main Point:** When we are faithful, we can be a witness to the world of the power and wisdom of God.

**Hook:**

Stars dream of endorsement deals, lending their name to a brand and becoming a representative of sorts. Below are some of the most lucrative endorsement deals in recent history. Break into groups and attempt to match the celebrity to his or her endorsement.

1. Selena Gomez
2. Usain Bolt
3. Justin Timberlake
4. Brad Pitt
5. Ashton Kutcher
6. Jennifer Anniston
7. Dale Earnhardt Jr.
8. Taylor Swift
9. George Clooney
10. Serena Williams

A. McDonald’s, $6 Million
B. Diet Coke, $26 Million
C. Lenovo, $10 Million
D. Coach, $10 Million
E. Mountain Dew/Army National Guard, $25 Million a year
F. Nespresso, $40 Million
G. Puma, $10 Million a year
H. Chanel, $7 Million
I. Nike, $55 Million
J. Nespresso, $40 Million

Q: Have you ever been persuaded to purchase a product because someone you support endorsed it?

Q: What qualities would you expect in someone who is endorsing a product?

Q: When a believer demonstrates faithfulness, what characteristics of God might people be pointed to?
Week 7: *Genesis 41:37-57*

**Book**

**Main Point:** When we are faithful, we can be a witness to the world of the power and wisdom of God.

**Text Summary:** Because Joseph interpreted his dreams, Pharaoh put Joseph over all of his house and all of his people—the entire land of Egypt. Pharaoh recognized the Spirit of God in Joseph and said there was no one as wise and discerning as Joseph. During the seven plentiful years, Joseph gathered up so much grain to store that he couldn’t even measure it anymore. Joseph married an Egyptian woman and had two sons, whom Joseph named to remind him of God’s faithfulness to him. When the famine came, as God said it would, Egypt was the only nation to have bread. Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold the bread to all the Egyptians. Other nations came to Egypt to buy grain, too.

*Genesis 41:37-45 [Read]*

**Talking Point 1:** When we are faithful, people can see the Spirit of God in us.

**Q: What did Pharaoh see in Joseph? What made him different?**

**Q: Why did this make Pharaoh trust Joseph?**

Pharaoh put Joseph over his house and all of the people of Egypt, the entire land (vv. 40–41). The giving of the ring and robe and riding in the chariot describe a ceremony giving him an official position, something akin to “Grand Vizier” or “Overseer of the Royal Estates” or “Overseer of the Granaries of Upper and Lower Egypt”—all of which are positions found in Egyptian documents. The signet ring was used to seal official documents, so anyone using it was speaking on behalf of the king (v. 42). The gold chain and linen garments (v. 42) were signs of his new noble position and would have reminded him of when his father gave him a special coat (Genesis 37:3). This level of position was very rare for any non-Egyptian in this time period.

There were several Egyptian noblemen who could have considered themselves “second to Pharaoh” due to their rank, but this ceremony that Pharaoh performed for Joseph—having him ride in the second chariot and having everyone bow to him—set him apart as viceroy, the true second in command. Seeing all of Egypt bowing down to him would have also reminded Joseph of his original dreams, that one day his family would all bow down to him (Gen. 37:5–11). All but the king were required to bow to him (v. 43). Even though Pharaoh was king, Joseph would...
be the real decision-maker—no one would be allowed to do anything in Egypt without Joseph’s consent (v. 44). Joseph spoke for the king and ruled on the king’s behalf.

Giving Joseph an Egyptian name was also part of this ceremony and would have made him accepted by the Egyptian court and Egyptian people. Earlier, Potiphar’s wife had called him “the Hebrew servant” (Gen. 39:17) and the cupbearer had called him “a young Hebrew ... servant” (Gen. 41:12). Renaming Joseph with an Egyptian name would have made him an official Egyptian even though he was born a Hebrew. Giving him an Egyptian wife, especially the daughter of a priest, would have also fully assimilated him into Egypt, aligning him with one of the most powerful priestly families in Egypt. And yet, the biblical text never again mentions Joseph’s Egyptian name or his Egyptian wife, because the Bible’s focus is on Joseph as God’s chosen one.

Why was Joseph given such high honor by Pharaoh, especially since he was a Hebrew and a slave? The text tells us because Pharaoh saw the Spirit of God in him (v. 38). He was like no man Pharaoh had ever met, nor did he think he could find another man like him (v. 38). Pharaoh recognized that because Joseph had the Spirit of God in him, there was no one as wise or discerning as he (v. 39). This doesn’t necessarily mean that Pharaoh now worshipped Joseph’s God, but that he recognized a divine spirit within Joseph. Pharaoh would have interpreted this within his own religious belief system—a pantheon of many gods, but the Israelite readers of Genesis would have understood it as empowerment that comes from the Spirit of God.

In the Old Testament, God’s Spirit dwelled in the tabernacle or the temple, in the center of His people, in the Holy of Holies, on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. So His Spirit was with His people all the time, giving them protection and peace, except when His Spirit left the temple just before the Exile (Ezek. 10). But the Spirit of God could also fill specific people such as Joshua (Num. 27:18) or the artisans who built the tabernacle (Exodus 31:3) or come upon people such as Samson (Judg. 15:14) or Isaiah (Isa. 61:1) to lead the people, prophesy, or to perform a specific task. But at Pentecost, God poured out His Spirit upon believers (Acts 2:17). Now, all of those who have been born of the Spirit (John 3:8) are filled with the Holy Spirit – we are all the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16–17).

Every believer has the Spirit of God dwelling within him or her. But we still have a choice in the way that we live—we can choose to walk by the flesh or walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16–25). So, like Joseph, when we are being faithful, when we are walking by the Spirit, unbelievers will see God’s Spirit in us. They will see something different in us, the way Pharaoh saw something different in Joseph. They will see wisdom and discernment and the Fruit of the Spirit—supernatural love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). This is what it means to be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14–16).
What if unbelievers saw the Spirit of God in us so strongly that they would say, as Pharaoh said about Joseph, that they had never seen anyone such as this?

Q: Do you know anyone who is so led by Spirit that everyone around that person can see it? What is that person like? How does he or she bring light to everyone around (Matt. 5:15)?

Q: If you are a believer, but your life cannot be described by the Fruit of the Spirit, what can you do about it?

The Fruit of the Spirit is intentionally called “fruit” (as opposed to the “deeds” of the flesh) because it is not something we can try harder to do. As if we just work at it, we can be more loving or more peaceful. It is something that the Spirit of God produces in us. And like fruit on a vine, it is something that grows over time. It is up to us to stay connected to the vine (John 15:1–11).

Q: Read John 15:1–11. Who is the vine? How do we bear fruit?

Q: What is the connection between following Jesus’s commandments and bearing fruit?

Q: What are our lives like when we abide in the vine? How would a life like this be attractive to an unbeliever?

**Genesis 41:46-52 [Read]**

Talking Point 2: God uses our hardships and our pain and turns our mourning into dancing.

In this section, Joseph gives his two sons very significant names, which show his faith in God and how he already recognizes that God has brought good out of his hardships. Joseph was 30 years old when he became Pharaoh’s viceroy (v. 46), and he was 17 when he first told his brothers his dreams (Genesis 37:2). So, it had been 13 years of ups and downs for Joseph.

Though there were ups and downs within that 13 years, he still spent the whole time either as a slave or in prison, so, really, all of it could be counted as hardship. Now, suddenly he is in this amazing position of second in command to Pharaoh, with glory and honor and power and wealth and status. Imagine what he was thinking and feeling. Then his first seven years of ruling in Egypt were extremely plentiful.

During the first seven years, Joseph’s predictions came true—the land was abundantly plentiful. So Joseph executed his plan to prepare for the seven years of famine. He stored up so much grain that he couldn’t even measure it anymore (v. 49).

The text tells us in how he named his sons, who were born at some point during the first seven years:
• Manasseh – “forgetting” – “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house” (v. 51)
• Ephraim – “twice fruitful” – “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction” (v. 52)

Joseph gives his sons Hebrew names because Joseph still remains faithful to God, even while fully assimilated into Egyptian culture.

Joseph gives credit to God for his current situation and for helping him forget his hardship. Just as he gave credit to God when he told the cupbearer and the baker that it was God who gave him the interpretations of the dreams (Gen. 40:8). Just as he gave credit to God when he told Pharaoh, “It is not in me; God will give you a favorable answer” (41:16). Joseph recognizes that it is God who had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction—Egypt, the land where he had spent 13 years as a slave, falsely accused, and in prison (v. 52). God has brought fruitfulness out of his affliction; He has brought good out of his suffering (50:20).

Joseph says that God has made him “forget his hardship” and “all my father’s house” (v. 51). He wouldn’t carry a grudge; he wouldn’t carry the pain and suffering from his past into his present. Later, he would say that it was all part of God’s plan and it was what got him to where he was (50:20).

Q: Has God ever given you supernatural power and strength to let go of a difficult past hurt? If you feel comfortable doing so, share that story with the group.

Q: Do you have any examples from your life (or someone else’s) of how God used a hardship for good? How He brought fruitfulness out of affliction?

Do you believe that God can turn your pain into blessing and your heartache into joy (Ps. 30:11–12)? The apostle Paul writes that God comforts us in our affliction so that we can comfort others in their affliction, with that same comfort we received from God (2 Cor. 1:3–7). God can take the hard things we are going through and use it for our good. Then, we can use it to help someone else. He can turn our mess into a message. The very things that pain you so much right now may one day become your ministry to others.

**Genesis 41:53-57 [Read]**

Talking Point 3: God’s plan will always prevail; He will work all things together for our good.

Everything that God said would happen did. His plan unfolded exactly as He said it would. The first seven years of plenty happened just as God predicted through the dreams, and then came the seven years of famine, just as God had said through Joseph.
When the famine hit, Egypt was prepared. Because God had put Joseph in the right place at the right time. Because God had given Pharaoh a dream, but had given the interpretation and the instructions to Joseph—the one who loved God, who was called according to His purpose.

Joseph is the one for whom God orchestrated everything to work for good. But just like God promised Abraham, God would also bless the whole world through him—“in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). “All the earth” came to Egypt to buy grain (v. 57).

The promise in Romans is a promise to believers—those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). For them all things will work together for good. The Bible makes no such promise for unbelievers. Only for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. But, just as with Abraham, we are blessed to be a blessing. “God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work…. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way” (2 Cor. 9:8–11). God orchestrated all things for Joseph and his family. But through Joseph and His family, God also blessed many, many others.

Remember what Joseph calls the “good” that God worked. He didn’t say, “You meant this for evil, but God meant it for good, to make me second in command of Pharaoh’s kingdom. Look at how God blessed me and rewarded me and make it good for me.” No, his response was, God meant it for good, “that many people should be kept alive” (Gen. 50:20).

Joseph’s focus wasn’t just on himself or his family or Egypt. He saw how God was saving many people. How God cared about the whole world. God is making good out of our suffering, not just for us, but for many others through us. Can we let God use us as He did Joseph?

Q: How can you be a blessing to other people around you?

Q: How could focusing on how we can be a blessing rather than receive blessings change our perspective? How could it change our behavior?

Q: Where do you see suffering around you, both locally and on a global scale? How can you help?
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**Took**

**Main Point:** When we are faithful, we can be a witness to the world of the power and wisdom of God.

You might not have a million-dollar endorsement deal, but you have been given a platform from which people may observe you. Take a moment to reflect on the opportunities God has given you to demonstrate faithfulness.

**Q:** How might you demonstrate faithfulness in your job this week? Who might be impacted for the kingdom?

**Q:** How might you demonstrate faithfulness in your home life this week? Who might be impacted for the kingdom?

**Q:** How might you demonstrate faithfulness in your Bible Fellowship this week? Who might be impacted for the kingdom?

**CHALLENGES:**

**THINK:** *What witness is your life being?* Pharaoh saw the Spirit of God in Joseph. What do people see in you? What does the way you live your life say about what really matters to you? Does your life look different from the unbelievers around you? If so, how? If not, why not? Do people see the Fruit of the Spirit in you?

**PRAY:** *For the Fruit of the Spirit to grow in your life* – Pray that God will grow the Fruit of the Spirit in you. That He will continue to work on you from the inside out. That He will change your heart and your mind and make you more like Jesus.

**ACT:** *Abide in Christ* – To abide means to live, to dwell, to *remain*. This means every moment of every day, all the time, so it’s not really something you can just “do” as a homework assignment. But we can do an activity that would help give us an idea of what it would mean to abide in Christ every minute of every day. For one day this week, set an alarm on your phone to go off every hour on the hour. Each time it goes off, pray. If you are in the middle of a meeting or something you can’t really take a break from, just say a short silent prayer in your head. If you can get alone, say a longer one. The point of it is not so much the prayer as the hourly reminder to think about God. To acknowledge that the Spirit is there with you all the time.
v *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).