

Lesson 6 – 6 June 2010

Joseph, a Faithful Servant

Lesson Scope: [Genesis 41](#)

Lesson Focus

Joseph's astonishing, instantaneous rise from prisoner to second ruler in the kingdom is explainable only by the providence of God. Joseph had proven himself faithful. Jacob, Potiphar, the keeper of the prison, and Pharaoh all recognized the traits of a trustworthy servant in Joseph.

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh. Thirteen years earlier he had dreamed some dreams that foretold the future. Although it might have seemed impossible that they would be fulfilled especially when he was imprisoned, God was working according to His own timetable to bring Joseph's dreams to reality. Joseph illustrated the truth "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

Many people crave positions of authority and responsibility. Only those who have demonstrated a servant mentality are truly worthy of responsible positions. In some ways those in high positions are more of a servant than it may appear, because they are responsible to more people and for more people. The best servants are usually the ones who make the best masters.

The aspect of storing for the future has a physical and a spiritual application. God's people should be conservative financially. It is also a good practice to grow and preserve our own food. The spiritual theme is the most important. As parents we should be preserving a spiritual heritage that will be of value to our children, whatever future circumstances they may face.

God was using the events of this lesson for a number of purposes. (1) Joseph was elevated to high position. (2) God was moving to reunite Joseph with his family. (3) Pharaoh's court had a witness of the true God. (4) The whole family of Israel was being brought into Egypt.

God gives His children varied stewardship responsibilities. In their service, whether lowly or great, God always requires faithfulness.

Lesson Aim: To portray qualities of a faithful servant.

Theme Verse: 1 Corinthians 4:2.

Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

Lesson Text

The Humble Revealer

Genesis 41:14-16

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. ¹⁵And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. ¹⁶And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

Genesis 41:25

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

Genesis 41:32

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

The Wise Adviser

Genesis 41:33-41

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. ³⁵And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. ³⁶And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

³⁷And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. ³⁸And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? ³⁹And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: ⁴⁰Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. ⁴¹And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

The Able Administrator

Genesis 41:50-57

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. ⁵¹And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. ⁵²And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

⁵³And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. ⁵⁴And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. ⁵⁶And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

Questions for Study

The Humble Revealer

1. What is significant about Joseph's preparations before he came into Pharaoh's presence?
2. What did Joseph's reply to Pharaoh (Gen.41:16) reveal about his character?
3. How is it possible to remain humble in a position of authority?

The Wise Adviser

4. What motivated the advice that Joseph gave to Pharaoh?
5. How should we be preparing for future distresses?

The Able Administrator

6. What do verses 51 and 52 tell us about Joseph's outlook?
7. What benefits were realized because of Joseph's faithfulness?

Analyzing the Passage

Because Joseph was held in a dungeon (Gen.41:14), he needed some preparation in order to be presentable to Pharaoh. Joseph did not show a "poor me" attitude to the Egyptian officials.

Joseph clearly explained the meaning of Pharaoh's dream. The advice given in Gen.41-.32-36 was a continuation of the divinely inspired interpretation of the dream.

Pharaoh quickly elevated Joseph to high position (Gen.41-.40, 41), but maintaining that position required diligence. Pharaoh retained power to demote Joseph as suddenly as he had promoted him.

By giving Joseph a prominent Egyptian wife, Pharaoh was paving the way for Joseph to be accepted in high society. The names of his sons drew attention to God and showed that Joseph still identified with his Hebrew family. Egypt was ever a land of sojourn for Joseph.

It is impossible to estimate the amount of human death and suffering that Joseph prevented by conserving food and then dispensing it to the needy. The famine was a global catastrophe (Gen.41:56-57).

Principles and Applications

The Humble Revealer

1. A faithful servant develops respectful habits (Gen.41:14). Our appearance says something about our outlook on life. The modern fad of an unkempt appearance is not becoming to the people of God. Wearing jeans for dress up occasions, going without a belt, and infrequent shaving are a part of this trend. As ambassadors of the King, we dare not portray slovenliness.

2. A trustworthy servant attributes all honor and ability to God (Gen.41:15, 16). Nothing spoils a God-given talent as does pride; nothing graces it like humility. Attributing our ability to God is only right, for what have we that we did not receive? When the ungodly commend us for well-behaved children or our work ethic, we should quickly point them to God and take no honor to ourselves.

3. A faithful servant endeavors to be straightforward and clear in his communication of truth (Gen.41:25, 32). The catastrophic famine Joseph foretold was reason for fear, but Joseph delivered the message with confidence and trust in God. We could also fail by not presenting truth forthrightly enough. Many will label the message of coming judgment as fanatical, but we can deliver it without apology because we know it is true.

The Wise Adviser

4. A faithful servant understands the importance of discretion, fore-and

frugality. (Gen.41:33-36). Joseph's conservative policies during the years of plenty saved many lives during the years of famine. Our lifestyle should be known for careful saving rather than prodigal spending. We should also value our spiritual heritage and carefully preserve a spiritual legacy for our children.

5. Humility, honesty and sincerity give the faithful servant a persuasive influence. (Gen.41:37-39). Joseph was promoted because none other had the Spirit of God as he did. A Christian should be the most trustworthy employer or employee. Can others count on us to meet our appointments? Are our verbal commitments reliable? Faithfulness in these areas will set us apart from the ungodly.

6. The faithful servant demonstrates the guidance of God's Spirit (Gen.41:38-39). Beginning the day by asking God to direct us will help us maintain a God-consciousness throughout the day. We should ask God, first of all, to keep our hearts pure and secondly, to help us make wise choices. God will then help us in the many small decisions that ultimately determine the course of our lives.

7. A faithful servant is the one most like to be trusted with greater responsibilities (Gen.41:40- 41). Possibly Pharaoh knew more about Joseph's previous experiences than is recorded. Faithful service is such a rare commodity that it will not go unnoticed. Most positions of responsibility are attained through diligence. God is also watching and will reward us accordingly in the future (Matthew 25:14-30).

The Able Administrator

8. A Faithful servant remembers God in the midst of prosperity (Gen.41:50- 52). Joseph remembered to thank God for his success. Our tendency is to become proud and self-sufficient when things go well. God sometimes removes prosperity so that we learn to be properly grateful.

9. A faithful servant remains focused on his responsibility in good or ill. (Gen.41:53-55). When we concentrate on service rather than on personal gain we can maintain our emotional equilibrium. Otherwise we will become exalted when things go well and discouraged when they do not.

10. A faithful servant will always be willing to assist others in need (Gen.41:55-57). The food that Joseph stockpiled was distributed to both Egyptians and foreigners. Joseph typified Christ, who provided eternal life for whosoever will. The physical or spiritual help we offer should never be denied because of prejudice. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do

good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:10).

Important Teachings

1. A faithful servant develops respectful habits (Gen.41:14).
2. A trustworthy servant attributes all honor and ability to God (Gen.41:15-16).
3. A faithful servant endeavors to be straightforward and clear in his communication of truth (Gen.41:25, 32).
4. A faithful servant understands the importance of discretion, forethought, and frugality (Gen.41:33-36).
5. Humility, honesty, and sincerity give the faithful servant a persuasive influence (Gen.41:37-39).
6. The faithful servant demonstrates the guidance of God's Spirit (Gen.41:38-39).
7. A faithful servant is the one most likely to be trusted with greater responsibilities (Gen.41:40-41).
8. A faithful servant remembers God in the midst of prosperity (41:50-52).
9. A faithful servant remains focused on his responsibility in good or ill (Gen.41:53-55).
10. A faithful servant will always be willing to assist others in need (Gen.41:55-57).

Answers to Questions

1. What is significant about Joseph's preparations before he came into Pharaoh's presence?

Joseph wanted to present himself in a respectable manner. This demonstrated both self-respect and honor for his superiors. He did not try to get pity by calling attention to his plight.

2. What did Joseph's reply to Pharaoh (Gen.41:16) reveal about his character?

Joseph was not ashamed of his religion. He showed humility by not drawing attention to his own abilities. He was confident that God knew the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams.

3. How is it possible to remain humble in a position of authority?

We must ever maintain an attitude of reliance on God. Our central goal in life should not be continued personal advancement, but service to God and

our fellow men. We should view our office as a trust, not a birthright.

4. What motivated the advice that Joseph gave to Pharaoh?

He was concerned "that the land perish not." The plan to store up food was a simple approach that demonstrated practical wisdom. God had given Joseph these insights.

5. How should we be preparing for future distresses?

We have unprecedented opportunities to increase our knowledge of God's Word through study, church attendance, and Bible schools. The Bible teaches that we can use material things to lay up treasures in heaven. (See also 1 Timothy 6:18-19). Parents must take their child-training responsibilities very seriously.

6. What do verses 51 and 52 tell us about Joseph's outlook?

Joseph did not claim to be a self-made man, but he attributed his success to God. The naming of his sons is significant. While he said he was forgetting his past, the very meaning of his sons' names drew attention to his past. One explanation could be that he was forgiving and forgetting the unpleasant things but maintaining his identity with his father's house. Calling Egypt "the land of my affliction" indicated that he still saw himself as a foreigner. His homeland was Canaan, the land of promise.

7. What benefits were realized because of Joseph's faithfulness?

Jacob's family was spared from death. Note that their lives were threatened already in the second year of famine, an indication of its severity. (Compare Gen.42:2 and Gen.45:6). Many Egyptian lives were spared (Gen.47:25). The land of Egypt was spared the social upheavals that accompany famines. Many idolatrous Egyptians were made aware of the true God because of Joseph's testimony.

Summarizing the Lesson

A faithful servant serves in whatever station God has called. Considering God's work for us should make this a very reasonable proposition.

All God's servants will be amply rewarded with these words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant:... enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Research Guide

Read Psalm 105:16-22.