

Devotions

Pharaoh's Dreams



Prayer

Ask the Lord to quiet your mind, and give you understanding. Ask Him to help you apply his word to your life today.

Back Story

Have you ever forgotten something really important, something that altered the course of events in your life or someone else's? While imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit, Joseph had interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker with stunning accuracy. One would think that when the baker

1

WE STUDY

and spend time in the word of God by doing the weekly devotions.

2

WE WORSHIP

With other Christ followers in worship on Sunday morning or Monday night.

3

WE GATHER

In small groups during the week, to grow in our relationships with one another and with God

was impaled, the cupbearer wouldn't have been able to contain his astonishment and relief, and would have told everyone within earshot about the amazing dream interpreter he had met while in jail. However, as we read in Genesis 40:23, the cupbearer forgot all about Joseph.

Scripture

Genesis 41:1-16, NIV *Pharaoh's Dream*

41 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, ² when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. ³ After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. ⁴ And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

⁵ He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. ⁶ After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. ⁷ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

⁸ In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

⁹ Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. ¹⁰ Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. ¹¹ Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. ¹² Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. ¹³ And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled."



¹⁴ So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

¹⁶ "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

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Discussion

Recently, I visited with a 91 year old man who is living in a care facility where I serve. I offered to a favorite hymn to him. He couldn't think of a favorite initially, so I sang one of mine, "Great is Thy Faithfulness". This stirred something in him and he asked if I had the music for the song "He Touched Me". I did, and he was teary-eyed when I finished. He then shared some of his story:

"When I was twelve years old," he told me, "my step-father told my mother to choose between him or me. My mother had no means of supporting herself, so she told me I had to leave and kicked me out of the house. At the age of twelve, I managed to get myself from Michigan to Missouri where my father lived. I was able to stay there, but my father was on the road for his job all the time and I basically took care of myself. I felt so rejected and unloved. But like the song says, even though I felt guilt and shame, and wondered what was wrong with me, God was with me, and touched me. I had to rely on Him because He was all I had."

He went on to share a number of other very difficult life experiences that he had, many as the result of his early departure from his home and the life-altering path it put his life on. "I forgave my mother", he said. "I wouldn't say we were close – she didn't seem to desire that. But it was better to let it go than to have it fester in my heart."

The next thing he said really surprised me.

"I figure I'm the lucky one," he stated. "When I look back at all that has happened in my life, so many things – good things – happened that wouldn't have happened if I had stayed in that home. I learned to be very independent and resourceful; I received honors in the military because of survival skills I developed as a result of being forced to be on my own; and..." – his eyes twinkled, "I met my wife to whom I was married for over sixty years. Our paths wouldn't have crossed if my life had been different." He grew reflective once again. "And I wouldn't have learned to rely on God. I know it is God who was with me and protected me."

Even though it is hard for us to believe that the cupbearer would forget all about Joseph after being restored to his position, we should also recognize that if the cupbearer had shared his story with others immediately, it may not have resulted in Joseph's release.

While Joseph had probably given up on the cupbearer, he hadn't given up on God. God most certainly hadn't forgotten Joseph as the cupbearer had. In God's perfect providence, God brought Joseph back into the cupbearer's mind as Pharaoh related the strange duplicate dreams he had. Joseph, freed from his shackles and cleaned up for his presentation to Pharaoh, could have thought of ways to please the king and interpret his dreams in a more palatable way. Instead, Joseph chose obedience to a greater authority and not only obedience, but verbal allegiance, telling Pharaoh that God – the one true God - would give him the answer, not Joseph. It is important to note, this was at no small risk to Joseph's well-being since the Pharaohs believed themselves to be gods and may have responded with derision and further jail time or worse.

Joseph had no way of knowing how his life would unfold after interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh. We will hear that spectacular story next week. My

friend couldn't imagine he would ever recover from his rejection as a child, and yet is now one of the most grateful and empathetic people I've had the privilege of meeting. If you are feeling despair about where you find yourself in life right now, remember God has His purposes and will be with you every step of the way. Trust God to release your shackles and touch your life with his healing nail-scarred hands.

HE TOUCHED ME

*Shackled by a heavy burden,
'Neath a load of guilt and shame.
Then the hand of Jesus touched me,
And now I am no longer the same.
He touched me, Oh He touched me,
And oh the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened and now I know,
He touched me and made me whole.*

*Since I met this blessed Savior,
Since He cleansed and made me whole,
I will never cease to praise Him,
I'll shout it while eternity rolls.*

*He touched me, Oh He touched me,
And oh the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened and now I know
He touched me and made me whole.*

Songwriter: William J. Gaither

Day 2

Two Full Years



Back Story

The Bible story about Pharaoh's dreams, found in Genesis 41, begins with these words: "When two full years had passed..." Two years is both a short time and a long time. Our first two children were born fifteen months apart and two years flew by in a blur, as they both went from helpless infants to walking, talking and creating delightful mayhem in our home. On the other end of the spectrum, my father-in-law spent close to two years in a care facility with gradually diminishing capacity to walk and talk, and for him the days dragged by in a blur of pain and discouragement. For Joseph, as the days wore on following the cupbearer's release and it became ever more evident he had been forgotten, the two years must have seemed like twenty or more. He must have wondered at times if God had forgotten him as well.

Scripture:

Feeling forgotten is not unique to Joseph in the human experience. We often think of the psalms as songs of praise but within the psalms, there are also deep laments. Consider these verses from the psalms -

Psalm 31:12

“I am **forgotten** as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery.”

Psalm 42:9

I say to God my Rock, “Why have you **forgotten** me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?”

Psalm 77:9

“Has God **forgotten** to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”



Reflection:

Nearly two years ago, a dear friend was tragically killed when he was struck by a car while riding his bicycle. The accident was later proven to not be his fault, though this was not immediately known and people jumped to many conclusions, much to the heartache of his loved ones. His wife and daughters grieved the loss of an amazing husband and father, and his friends, of which there were many, felt the loss profoundly.

We often hear about, and many of us have experienced, the year of “firsts”. The first year without our loved one – the first Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthday, anniversary – all of these significant events remind us of the absence of our loved one. Friends and extended family check in on us often, sharing memories through laughter and tears.

I think frequently of my friend who was widowed, but since the accident, my own life has changed significantly with the addition of two grandsons, and a son still at home whose school and other activities keep me on the go, and time flies by. I recently checked in to see how my friend was doing. She shared that in many ways, the second year without her husband has been harder than the first. One of her daughters who is married and lives out of state purchased a home, and had multiple questions that they would have loved to ask her dad. For her other daughter, the realization is settling in that if she marries, her dad will not walk her down the aisle and her future spouse will never know the man who had such a great influence upon her life.

My friend said of “Year Two” and beyond, “I am scared that life goes on and everyone is going to forget him, even though my daughters and I will always have this huge hole in our lives. I heard something that really described it. It was said after a grandchild was born. ‘My happiest times are now also my saddest times because your dad is not here to share these things with me.’”



As Joseph counted the days in the Egyptian prison, forgotten and alone, life outside the prison moved along. Even the lives of his father Jacob and his brothers continued on, with the memory of Joseph fading with each passing day. His brothers married women who had never met Joseph, and had children who only heard the occasional story of an uncle who “died” before they were born.

Joseph’s imprisonment, based on false charges, had preceded that of the cupbearer and the baker so by the time Joseph was remembered by the cupbearer, he had been in prison far more than two years. He had made the best of difficult circumstances, assisting the warden and caring for all those in the prison. He recognized that the Lord was with him, giving him success and a measure of fulfillment even in the midst of his isolation.

Meditation

Despite the heartache my friend feels, she has also experienced joy in seeing her children move forward in their lives and relationships. She also brings joy to people each day serving those in great need in her job with an area non-profit organization. And she continues to trust the Lord and lean on Him for healing and hope for the future.

What is fascinating about the Psalms of lament is that often within the same Psalm there are praises to God and remembrances of his faithfulness. How true this is in our own lives as well. God's story continues to be written, and His purposes for our lives are woven through the best of times and the worst of times. We can claim God's promises and trust that he will redeem all of our life experiences for His glory.

Consider these later verses from the same Psalms:

Psalm 31: 22b, 24:

You heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help...Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.

Psalm 42: 11b:

*Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.*

And **Psalm 77**, the same psalm that in verse 9, wonders if God has forgotten his people, recalls the very purposes for which God was preparing his people in the life of Joseph:

- ¹³ *Your ways, God, are holy.
What god is as great as our God?*
- ¹⁴ *You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.*
- ¹⁵ *With your mighty arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.*