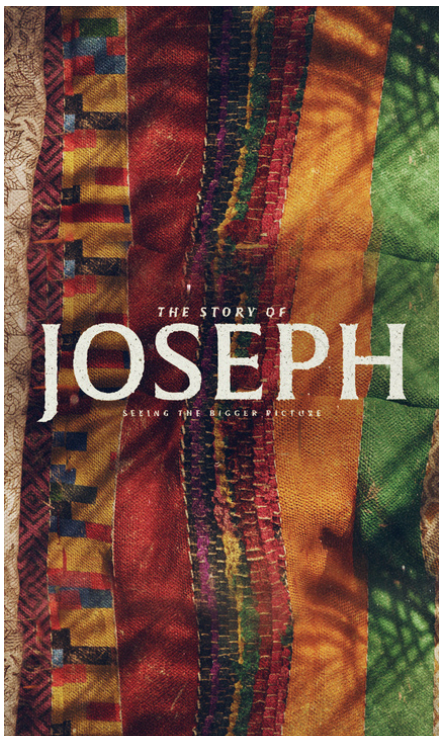


SERMON STUDY GUIDE



Part 6 // Rise to Power



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Begin planning as a group how you'll participate in the Serve Challenge for the Fall Season: Serving together is a fantastic way to build relationships within your group while showing our love for God and others through acts of service. There are several great ways to serve as a group this season.

Check them all out at www.newbreak.church/events.

ICE BREAKERS

- What's a completely unnecessary purchase you've made that you have zero regrets about?
- What's a quality you admire in other people and want to grow in yourself?

WARM UP:

SAY: I'm going to read 10 different things aloud. As a group, we'll decide which column each one belongs in.

- How I respond when plans change
- Whether the person in front of me drives the speed limit
- How prepared I am for an opportunity
- What other people think about me
- Whether my favorite sports team wins
- The effort I put into something
- When an opportunity comes
- Whether my kids/pets/spouse cooperate when I'm already running late
- Whether I admit when I'm wrong
- How quickly a difficult season ends
- Whether the drive-thru gets my order right
- The outcome of something I've worked hard for

ASK: Which column do we tend to spend more energy worrying about?

TRANSITION: Joseph's story is filled with circumstances he could not control: what others did to him, how long he waited, and when his circumstances would finally change. As we read Genesis 41, pay attention to what Joseph does with the things that are in his hands when the moment he's been waiting for finally arrives.

READ IT:

Genesis 41:1-45 (NLT)

Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. 2 In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. 3 Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. 4 Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

5 But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. 6 Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. 7 And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

8 The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

9 Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh. 10 "Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. 11 One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. 12 There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. 13 And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."

14 Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. 15 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it."

16 "It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."

17 So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, 18 and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. 19 But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. 20 These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. 21 But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up.

22 "In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. 23 Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. 24 And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."

25 Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. 26 The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. 27 The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine.

28 "This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. 29 The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. 30 But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. 31 This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. 32 As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.

DISCUSS IT:

- Joseph couldn't control how long he waited, but he could control how he lived while he waited. What does it look like practically to "stay prepared" in a season when God seems slow or silent? What makes that difficult?
 - **ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Throughout the Bible, we can see evidence that waiting isn't simply an obstacle to get through but can be a toll God uses to shape His people. In Habakkuk 2, after bringing his honest questions and frustrations before God, Habakkuk says he will take his position and wait to see how God will respond. Waiting can become a place where we learn to listen to, depend on and allow God to reshape our hearts and character.
 - **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE:** **Habakkuk 2:1 (NLT)** *I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guardpost. There I will wait to see what the Lord says and how he[a] will answer my complaint.*
 - **ADDITIONAL QUESTION:** What can God develop in us through waiting that we might miss if He always answered immediately? Can you share a story where you've experienced this truth in your own life?
 - **ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** There's an interesting connection to Habakkuk's whole arc: he begins the book asking "How long, O LORD?" in 1:1, intentionally waits for God's response in 2:1, and ends in chapter 3 able to rejoice in God even if his circumstances don't improve. Waiting didn't merely get Habakkuk from a question to an answer; God used it to transform the posture of the person asking.
- We can be quick to turn to God when we feel powerless but just as quick to rely on ourselves when we feel capable. Joseph had every opportunity to impress Pharaoh, promote himself, or take credit for his gift, but instead immediately pointed to God (vs.16). Why can it be difficult to give God the credit when our abilities, hard work, or decisions also played a part in the outcome? What does genuine humility look like in those moments?
 - **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE:** **Isaiah 10:12-13 (NASB)** - *12 So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the arrogant pride of his eyes." 13 For he has said, "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this, Because I have understanding; And I removed the boundaries of the peoples And plundered their treasures, And like a powerful man I brought down their inhabitants..."*
 - **ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** In Isaiah 10, God confronts the ruler of Assyria (Sennacherib) about his false presumption that their victories were based on his own skills and strategies. God scoffs at his lack of self-awareness and confronts his pride through the prophet Isaiah's message. Like Sennacherib, we can sometimes believe that our success comes down solely to our own strength, wisdom, or ability.

- **ADDITIONAL QUESTION:** What does it look like to both fully depend on God for help and also work with all of our might? Can you think of what this might look like in a practical sense? (e.g., a work presentation, studying for a test, parenting your children, planning for retirement, or another situation you've faced before.)

- In Genesis 41:40, in response to Joseph's ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams and his wisdom to know how to respond to what those dreams revealed, Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all of Egypt. Since Joseph was a teenager, he knew that God had destined him for great things which would include leadership and authority, but he didn't know how it would all come to pass. How might God be using your current season, even the parts that feel difficult, confusing, or unrelated to your calling, to prepare you for what He has ahead?
 - **ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** There are times in our lives when God brings us back full circle to previous moments in our walk with Him. Whether it's Joseph being given another opportunity to interpret a dream two years after the cupbearer forgot about him, or God bringing Moses back to Egypt as a God-empowered deliverer rather than the man who had previously tried to take matters into his own hands, God sometimes brings us back to lessons we need to learn again or gives us a second opportunity to fulfill our calling. But this time, we are able to learn new lessons, make different choices, and recognize how far God has brought us along the way.
 - **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 8:2-3 (NIV)** *Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. 3 He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.*
 - **ADDITIONAL QUESTION:** In Deuteronomy 8, God reminds Israel, before they enter the Promised Land, how He used their years of wandering in the wilderness for some very important soul work. According to this passage, what are some of the things God was teaching Israel during their wilderness journey? Have you ever noticed a time when God brought you back full circle to a Scripture, a lesson, or an opportunity in your life where you were able to see it differently because of what God had taught you along the way?

APPLY IT:

Genesis 39:21 (NLT)

“But the LORD was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love.”

SAY: By the end of chapter 40, Joseph is still in prison, still waiting, still has unanswered questions and was forgotten by someone he had helped. Yet none of those things changed what was true: the Lord was with him. God doesn't promise that we will never experience pain, disappointment, or seasons we don't understand, but throughout Scripture He repeatedly promises His presence.

ASK: As you consider what you're currently walking through, where do you need to stop measuring God's presence by your circumstances and begin reminding yourself, “The Lord is with me here”?

PRAY:

- How can we be praying for you this week?