

## God Providentially Moves at Exactly the Right Time

Message 4 of 6 in the series: "Providence: The Story of Joseph"

**Providence** = "God's faithful and effective care and guidance of everything which He has made toward the end which He has chosen." Holman Bible Dictionary

### A. God providentially prepared Joseph to become a great leader in Egypt by guiding him through years of difficult circumstances and painful setbacks.

1. Providentially, at the age of 17, Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous older brothers and taken by slave traders from Israel to Egypt. "One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. 'Listen to this dream,' he said. 'We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!' His brothers responded, '**So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?**' And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them." Genesis 37:5-8 (NLT)
2. Providentially, Joseph learned how to manage resources in Egypt while serving as the personal attendant to Potiphar, the head of Pharaoh's secret service. "When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar... captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. **Potiphar noticed this... so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned.**" Genesis 39:1-4 (NLT)
3. After Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of attempting to rape her, he was providentially imprisoned with Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker who both asked Joseph to interpret their dreams. "Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, **just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream.**" Genesis 40:20-22 (NLT)
4. Providentially, the cup-bearer forgot about Joseph after he got his job back. "Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, **forgot all about Joseph**, never giving him another thought." Genesis 40:23 (NLT)

**Life Application:** "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:28 (NLT)

### B. Two years later, the cup-bearer providentially remembered Joseph because Pharaoh had some troubling dreams one night that none of the king's wisemen could interpret.

"Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. 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. Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up. 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. Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream. 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.** Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. 'Today I have been reminded of my failure,' he told Pharaoh. '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. One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. 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. And everything happened just as he had predicted...' 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." Genesis 41:1-14 (NLT)

1. It's significant that Joseph remained in prison until Pharaoh sent for him because the cup-bearer knew exactly where to find Joseph when the time came. "The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives." Psalm 37:23 (NLT)

2. God used every day Joseph was in prison to refine his character. “They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar. **Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the Lord tested Joseph’s character.** Then Pharaoh sent for him and set him free; the ruler of the nation opened his prison door.” Psalm 105:18-20 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We need to trust God’s direction and his timing. “Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for **just such a time** as this?” Esther 4:14b (NLT)

**C. Providentially, God enabled Joseph to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams and give him wise counsel regarding how he should respond.**

“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.’ ‘It is beyond my power to do this,’ Joseph replied. **‘But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease.’** So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream... Joseph responded, ‘Both of Pharaoh’s dreams mean the same thing. **God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do.** The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. 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. This will happen just as I have described it... The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. 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. This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. **As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.**” Genesis 41:15-17a, 25-31 (NLT)

1. Pharaoh’s wisemen couldn’t interpret Pharaoh’s dreams because God alone knows the future. “For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. **Only I can tell you the future before it even happens.** Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.” Isaiah 46:9b-10 (NLT)
2. Pharaoh needed to respond wisely to the information he’d received from God about the future, or the consequences would be catastrophic. “Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh’s storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. **Otherwise this famine will destroy the land.**” Genesis 41:33-36 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We need to respond wisely to the information we’ve received from Jesus about the future, or the consequences will be catastrophic. “Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. They will say, ‘What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.’ ...But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, **he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.** But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief.” 2 Peter 3:3-4 & 8-10a (NLT)

**D. Providentially, Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be Prime Minister of Egypt.**

“Joseph’s suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. So Pharaoh asked his officials, **‘Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?’** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours.’ Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt.’ ...**He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh,** the king of Egypt.” Genesis 41:37-41 & 46a (NLT)

**Life Application:** If we are faithful in small matters, God will reward us with more responsibilities at the right time. **“If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones.** But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities... And if you are not faithful with other people’s things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?” Luke 16:10 & 12 (NLT)

“So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and **at the right time he will lift you up in honor.**”  
1 Peter 5:6 (NLT)

**Life Application:** We must not give up. “So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. **At just the right time** we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.” Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

“**Keep on asking**, and you will receive what you ask for. **Keep on seeking**, and you will find. **Keep on knocking**, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” Matthew 7:7-8 (NLT)

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### **Connect Group Discussion Questions:**

Read Genesis 41, and then discuss the following questions:

1. Describe a time in your life when God provided a resource/opportunity/wise counsel exactly when you needed it.
2. Read Matthew 7:7-8 & Galatians 6:9. Why do you think God reminds us in many places in the Bible not to give up?
3. One of our core values at Centerpoint is Spirit-empowered living. What did this look like in Joseph’s life? (Genesis 39:2-4 & 21-23 & 41:37-40) What does it look like in ours? (Matthew 5:14-16)
4. Why did Jesus say faithfulness in handling small things reveals how we will handle larger responsibilities? (Luke 16:10-12) Why did Peter say that God would lift us up at the right time? (1 Peter 5:6) How did Joseph live out these principles? (Psalm 105:16-22) Why do you think these principles are so unpopular today?
5. How does it make you feel to know that in order to save Egypt from starvation God prepared Joseph to be a great leader? Why didn’t He just miraculously fill all of the grain silos?
6. After Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams and explained what God was going to do in the future, Pharaoh responded by getting ready. How should we respond to what God has revealed to us about the future? (2 Peter 3:3-14)
7. Quotations to consider:  
“Without a doubt, discovering destiny occurs at just the right time. It can’t be forced, and we can’t rush it. We typically cannot even imagine it. God takes the initiative to lift us up when he chooses.” Bill Thrall  
“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

Jesus in Matthew 6:33-34 (NLT)