

Genesis Chapter 39-40 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this section of Scripture is “God is still there”.
 - a) These two chapters are great ones to read when you are having a personal pity party.
 - b) When life appears to be at its worse, and you are having doubts about God, or when you are feeling abandoned by God, turn to Chapters 39 and 40.
 - c) If you think you’re life has troubles, read about Joseph’s. ☺
 - i) Imagining being sold into slavery because others hated you.
 - ii) Imagine being in jail for a long time on a false accusation.
 - iii) Imagine being falsely accused of a crime only because you refused to submit to sin.
 - iv) Remember many people have lived Joseph’s life. It is by studying Joseph’s character traits that we can have peace and joy through our circumstances.
2. Let me summarize the two chapters: Chapter 39 begins with Joseph being left for dead by his siblings. He is sold into slavery. He lives for years as a household slave. Because of his good character, he is promoted to head of the household. The wife of the boss thinks he’s cute and tries to seduce Joseph. He refuses to submit and she accuses him of rape. He is thrown in jail. Again, because of his good character, he is promoted within the jail system. Eventually he helps a person falsely accused of a crime get out. That person, after he is out, fails to remember Joseph, and Joseph spends two more years in jail until we get to Chapter 41 in the next lesson.
 - a) And you thought you were having a bad day. ☺
 - b) These chapters are reminders that we often don’t see the big-picture of how God is working in our life. We don’t get to “read the next chapter of our lives” as we are currently “stuck” in Chapters 39 and 40.
 - c) We don’t know what tomorrow is going to bring to our lives. In the meantime we like Joseph simply has to trust that God is working out a plan for our lives.
3. If I had to pick a half-of a verse to memorize in this lesson it is as follows:
 - a) “The LORD was with Joseph”. (Genesis 39:2a, NIV)
 - b) If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you can cross out Joseph’s name and put in your own name in your bible. Go ahead, I won’t tell. ☺
 - c) The point is that God is with you through the most difficult of circumstances. Further, God has a purpose to allow such circumstances to happen.
 - i) There may be lessons he is trying to teach you.
 - ii) God may be preparing you for some future event in your life.
 - iii) God may be preparing you so you can comfort others who will go through the same tragedy later in life.
 - d) If you can comprehend that “The LORD was with Joseph” through your life, I guarantee you can have a positive view of life through the worse of circumstances.
 - i) One thing you’ll infer from these chapters is Joseph had positive character traits despite the situations.
 - a) Joseph was promoted to the “head slave” of the household.
 - b) Joseph was promoted to the “head prisoner” in jail.
 - ii) Folks, you don’t get raised up in life by moping around all day feeling sorry for yourself. If people can see joy in your heart in the worse of circumstances, it is contagious. People admire that. They trust in you to do well.
 - iii) Yes, it was God blessing Joseph that gave him the promotions, but I also believe because Joseph was trusting in God through the circumstances, that it gave Joseph the attitude and perspective to get those promotions.

- iv) You never read of Joseph complaining about his circumstances, other than to give a plug to one guy to get him out of jail. That “plug” by the way, didn’t work and Joseph spent two more years in jail until God was ready to get him out.
 - e) With all of that in mind, let’s start on Chapter 39.
4. Chapter 39, Verse 1: Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.
- a) Chapter 39 is a continuation of the story from Chapter 37.
 - i) Chapter 37 told how Joseph’s brother’s sold Joseph into slavery.
 - ii) Chapter 38 was an “interruption” in the story to tell the saga of Joseph’s brother Judah. Chapter 38 shows the continuation of the Messianic line despite Judah’s sins. Chapter 38 is also meant to be read in contrast to Chapter 39. The sins of Judah are a stark contrast to the success of Joseph.
 - b) Potiphar was “the captain of the guard”.
 - i) The best comparison of this title that we can relate to is he was “head of the Secret Service”. The Secret Service is part of department of the U.S. Federal Government who’s primarily responsibility is to protect the President. The “captain of the guard” was the head guy in charge of protecting the leader (Pharaoh) of Egypt.
 - ii) Many archeologists believe that “Potiphar” was a title, and not a name.
5. Verse 2: The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, ⁴ Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. ⁵ From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. ⁶ So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.
- a) Here was Joseph now living as a stranger in a different country:
 - i) He probably didn’t know the language.
 - ii) He probably didn’t know anything about Egyptian culture and customs.
 - iii) He was probably purchased as a slave simply based on the fact he was young and could be used for his physical strength.
 - iv) One has to read this paragraph and realize this is roughly a 10-year time span.
 - a) Joseph was 17 the year his brothers sold him into slavery (Gen. 37:2)
 - b) Joseph was 27-28 by the time he left Potiphar’s house (Genesis 41:1, 41:46)
 - b) If you stare at this paragraph, the word that stands out over and over again is “LORD”.
 - i) Whenever God’s title “Jehovah” is used in the NIV Bible, it is placed in all capitals for emphasis, and called “LORD”.
 - ii) Despite being a stranger in a strange country, the emphasis is on the fact that God was with him the entire time.
 - iii) If you read through all the chapters on Joseph in Genesis, one thing you may notice is that you never read once of God speaking directly to Joseph.
 - a) There is no “And God said to Joseph” anywhere in Genesis.
 - b) That is amazing when you consider there is more text dedicated to Joseph than anyone else in Genesis. Genesis records God speaking directly to every other major character in Genesis other than Joseph. Why is that?
 - c) Genesis emphasizes how “God was with Joseph” and that “The LORD blessed Joseph”. It is almost as if God is blessing Joseph so much, direct verbal communication is not necessary.

- d) Further, the way God worked in Joseph's life is "more like" the way God works in our life. Most Christians don't receive audible messages from God. On the other hand, God is constantly blessing our lives and God is always in the background working on our lives the same way He does through Joseph.
 - e) Remember that Joseph was a slave in a foreign country. You never read of Joseph having a pity-party. Instead you can sense Joseph's positive attitude through all the circumstances of his life.
 - f) Don't get me wrong. I'm sure Joseph struggled at times. What was recorded in the text was not Joseph crying over his pain, but the fact that God was blessing Him and God was with Him. That text is there as a reminder to us that God is always with us.
 - g) This attitude of Joseph is a good reminder for us. We should be able to look back at our own and say, "Here is where God blessed me" and here is how God was with my life during the difficult times".
- c) Let's get back to the story itself. Let me summarize the paragraph:
- i) God was blessing Joseph to the point where Joseph became the head-guy in Potiphar's household. It got to a point where Potiphar didn't even have to pay attention to anything going on his house. The last line of the paragraph mentions that his only concern was the food he ate.
 - a) Hey, maybe Joseph wasn't a good cook, and that was his concern. ☺
 - b) I may be reading too much into the text, but Potiphar strikes me as a "hands off" kind of guy. Maybe he was the workaholic type, so that when he came home, he figured, "This Joseph guy has everything under control. I don't have to think about anything at home except what's for dinner."
- d) Let's look at Verse 2 again. It says, "When his master (Potiphar) saw that the LORD was with him (Joseph) and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did
- i) The text says that Potiphar saw God was blessing Joseph.
 - a) Was Potiphar aware of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?
 - b) A couple of possibilities: Maybe Joseph as he was living in the house, was explaining to Potiphar who God really was.
 - c) I suspect Potiphar, who being an Egyptian believed in many gods, thought, "I don't know much about this Jewish God, but whoever He is, He is helping Joseph and I'll respect this God for that reason.
 - ii) My main point is that Joseph was being a good witness for God.
 - a) You get the impression that Joseph had a positive attitude despite the fact he was wrongly sold into slavery. If Joseph was put in charge of the house, I suspect that not only did Joseph have good leadership skills, but a good attitude toward the whole situation. His secret was that Joseph was constantly "God-focused" as opposed to "situation-focused".
 - b) It doesn't matter if you are an employee, a subcontractor, or a company trying to win a contract; we all need to be good witnesses for God.
 - c) Remember that God wants everyone to be saved. That does not mean to ignore work so you can pass out "witnessing tracts". It means that you are the model employee. The boss is to think, "I don't know much about that religious stuff, but I have to admit that guy is doing good. Perhaps God is blessing him.
 - d) The "ideal" is that our boss, our client, our spouse, etc., can trust us in all we do because of our reputation. Remember that you are God's witnesses and therefore God cares about our reputation to the outside world.

6. Verse 6 (second sentence): Now Joseph was well-built and handsome,⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"
- a) Now the plot thickens. The text mentions that Joseph was physically appealing. Being a slave kept him in good shape and he was good looking. Now Potiphar's wife is attracted to Joseph and says very bluntly to have sexual relations with her.
 - b) There is lots of speculation as to why she did this:
 - i) Some suggest that Potiphar himself was a eunuch (cannot physically have sex). It is common for an Egyptian top servant to be a eunuch and maybe the Pharaoh gave Potiphar this wife as a servant. Since she couldn't have sex with him, she looked elsewhere.
 - ii) Another theory is that this is a "power-play". She was jealous that Joseph was in charge of the household and that included being in charge of her.
7. Verse 8: But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care."⁹ No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"¹⁰ And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.
- a) Here is Joseph being tested and tempted by Potiphar's wife.
 - i) Joseph's response is in effect, "I can't do this as it would make me a bad witness to Potiphar. God put me in this situation. Although I'm not crazy about the idea of being a slave here, I understand that God allowed this to happen for some reason, and I need to be a good witness for God. Further, adultery is a violation of the 10 commandments, so I'm not going to do this!"
 - ii) Compare this attitude and character of Joseph to that of Judah in the last chapter.
 - a) Remember Judah picked out a prostitute in the last chapter only to discover he had sexual relations with his daughter in law.
 - b) Now we read of Joseph "doing what was right" in the sight of God and ignoring the temptation at hand.
 - b) Notice how Potiphar's wife didn't take no for an answer.
 - i) Personally, this is why I see this as a "power-play". My view is she didn't like the fact Joseph was in charge and this was her way of getting back at her husband.
 - c) One has to remember that when we God blesses us, don't expect the world to say "Good for you, God is helping you, maybe I should inquire more about your God".
 - i) Instead, we often get the "Potiphar's wives of the world" trying to bring us down.
 - ii) People who don't live with the fear of God often want to bring us down to their level. It is as if she is thinking, "This Joseph thinks he is hot stuff. Joseph has fooled my husband, but I'm not impressed. Just watch everybody, I'll get him to have sex with me and then you'll see that he's no better than you and me."
 - a) A Christian principal is to expect persecution and temptation. If you are taking a stand for God, this causes others to feel guilty.
 - iii) On a similar note, it is a good idea to be on your guard when God is blessing your life. If you are taking a public stand for God, people are watching you and how you live your life. They want to see how you handle stress and temptation. If they see you are no better than anyone else is, it makes a bad witness for God. Further, when we do make a mistake, the best thing to do is to publicly acknowledge the sin and the offense. God does not expect perfection, but He does expect confession and acknowledgement of when we do wrong.

8. Verse 11: One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. ¹² She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.
- a) This was becoming a "cat and mouse" game with her, to the point of being an obsession.
 - b) Notice what Joseph does not do:
 - i) He doesn't sit down with her and tell her about God.
 - ii) He doesn't tattle tale to her husband.
 - iii) He doesn't say, "ok already, we'll have sex so you can leave me alone!" ☺
 - iv) Instead, Joseph runs!
 - c) There are times in tempting situations where God just wants you to run away.
 - i) "Flee from sexual immorality." (1st Cor. 6:18a NIV)
 - ii) "Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry." (1st Cor. 10:14 NIV)
 - iii) "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2nd Tim 2:22 NIV)
 - iv) "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7 NIV)
 - v) You see the pattern? The best way to deal with temptation is to run from it!
 - a) Temptation is a lot like "stirring up a hornet's nest". The best way to deal with it is to run away as opposed to stand there and try to avoid it.
9. Verse 13: When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, ¹⁴ she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. ¹⁵ When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."
- a) When Joseph refused to have sex with her, she told her husband that he raped her.
 - b) Notice what Potiphar's wife does not do:
 - i) "You know, that guy Joseph is more righteous than me. Maybe I should listen to what he has to say about his God."
 - ii) "Oh well, Joseph's not interested. Time to go hunt for another dude."
 - c) This was a blow to her ego and she wasn't going to let it die. Don't always expect a sinner to repent when they are confronted with their sin. Often it just makes them angrier because they are not interested in changing their lifestyle.
10. Verse 16: She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." ¹⁹ When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. ²⁰ Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.
- a) Being angry that Joseph wouldn't submit to her advances, the wife concocted this whole story of how he raped her.
 - b) Notice at the end of Verse 19, it says, "he (Potiphar) burned with anger".
 - i) Notice it does not say "he burned with anger at Joseph"
 - ii) That's the key. Potiphar isn't stupid. He knows his wife. I suspect that if she tried to seduce Joseph, then she probably tried to seduce others as well.
 - c) In a strange way, I can relate to Potiphar.
 - i) Potiphar strikes me as the kind of guy, who works hard all day and just wants "peace" at home. He found this Joseph guy who he could trust to run the house and everything went great when Joseph was in charge.

- ii) Now here's the wife who doesn't like the situation, and she goes and "messes up a good thing". Now Potiphar has to deal with the problem.
 - iii) Potiphar has to put Joseph in jail in order to "save face" in Egypt. The whole staff knows about the accusation. If Potiphar doesn't put Joseph in jail, word will get out that Potiphar allowed Joseph to get away with a crime.
 - d) Egyptian law called for the death penalty if a slave raped the wife of a powerful figure like Potiphar. In a sense, putting Joseph in jail was a merciful thing to do.
 - e) This has to be tough on Joseph. He did what was right, and it got him in jail.
 - i) Remember that God has a purpose for everything that happens.
 - ii) God allowed this sin and event to occur in order to get Joseph in jail.
 - a) If Joseph never got in jail, he would never get to meet the Pharaoh, which is coming up in a matter of verses.
 - b) If Joseph never got to meet the Pharaoh, Joseph would never rise to be the #2 man in all of Egypt.
 - c) If Joseph was never the #2 man in all of Egypt, his family may never have migrated to Egypt to trigger all the events of the Book of Exodus.
 - d) My point is Joseph was "not privy" to all of this information.
 - iii) All Joseph knew was he obeyed God; he did what was right, and all it got Joseph so far was to be thrown in jail.
 - a) Most people complain at this point and say sarcastically, "Gee, thanks God. I serve you loyally, and this is how you repay me!"
 - b) During those moments when we want to blame God and say it's His fault, remember that we, like Joseph don't know the end. All of the events of our lives are "God-filtered". This includes the sins committed upon us by others. It doesn't excuse the sin. It simply means that God allowed it to happen, ultimately for His glory.
11. Verse 20, second sentence: But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²² So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. ²³ The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.
- a) Now that Joseph was in prison, Joseph rises to prominence within the prison.
 - i) It gets to the point where the warden put Joseph in charge.
 - b) First of all, notice the similarities between jail and Potiphar's house.
 - i) In both cases, Joseph rose to the top position in that location.
 - ii) In both cases, the person in charge was so impressed with Joseph that they took a "hands off" role and let Joseph be in charge.
 - c) The text does not spend a lot of time stating what Joseph did to earn this respect.
 - i) There is little, if any mention how Joseph was a "godly man".
 - ii) The emphasis of the text over and over again is "The LORD did this".
 - a) That is Joseph's secret. His focus was upon God and serving Him.
 - b) Joseph served God by serving whomever Joseph had in front of him.
 - c) That is a great attitude for us. God gave us a job, God expects us to serve our boss. God gives you a wife or husband, God expects you to serve your spouse. God gives you children, God expects you to raise them right.

- iii) It is important to read these situations and realize this was not a “cakewalk” for Joseph. I’m sure that both Potiphar’s house and in jail, Joseph went through some rough treatment. There were painful moments through these years.
 - a) What you don’t read of is Joseph acting like a victim.
 - (1) If Joseph sat around feeling sorry he was a slave, or feeling sorry he was in jail, I guarantee Joseph would have never rose to prominence. Let’s face it, most slaves and the other prisoners hate the fact they are confined. Joseph’s boss (Potiphar, jailer) let Joseph rise to power because he “wasn’t like everyone else”.
 - b) In life, there are all times we feel like a slave or in jail. Some Christians are literally in that situation. One has to remember that inner-peace and joy comes from within and not from your circumstances. Because Joseph understood that God was in charge, Joseph was “far more free” than the other slaves, the other inmates, and I would also argue, his bosses as well.
12. Chapter 40, Verse 1: Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. ² Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them.
- a) I need to start by explaining the role of the “chief cupbearer and the chief baker”.
 - i) One was in charge of the king’s food, the other the king’s drink.
 - ii) The main job of these two guys is to make sure no one poisons the king.
 - iii) Both of these guys had daily contact with the king. They had a role of prominence as they had “the king’s ear” every day.
 - iv) The fact that they were both in jail probably indicates that the king got some bad food or drink, and the two guys in charge were put in jail until the king could do some investigative work and see who was responsible.
 - b) There is an old Jewish expression I like that goes “coincidence is not a kosher word”.
 - i) It just “happens” that these two guys were assigned to Joseph.
 - ii) It is another reminder that all the events of our lives are “God filtered.” God brings people into our lives for a reason. If you are not sure of the reason, simply be a good witness to them, and “watch”.
 - c) Notice the last three words of this paragraph: “He (Joseph) attended them”.
 - i) Joseph took care of their needs.
 - ii) Joseph didn’t say, “You were falsely accused too, huh? Welcome to the club” ☺
 - iii) Joseph became a good witness to God by being a servant to these two men.
13. Verse 4, second sentence: After they had been in custody for some time, ⁵ each of the two men--the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison--had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. ⁶ When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" ⁸ "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."
- a) So here were these two guys, and both had a bad dream.
 - b) Notice Joseph’s attitude in Verse 7, ““Why are your faces so sad today?”
 - i) There is no hint of “Morning jailbirds, rise and shine!” ☺
 - ii) There is no hint of, “Well, you ate all of that spicy food last night. So what if you had had nightmares. Who cares what you dreamed about anyway? ☺
 - iii) Joseph took an interest in them as Joseph served them.

- c) "Dreams" was something Joseph understood.
 - i) Chapters ago, and many years ago, Joseph told his brothers his prophetic dream how he would rule over them. That got Joseph into trouble.
 - a) You would think that past experience would get Joseph to keep his mouth shut about interpreting dreams.
 - ii) Notice also that the credit for dream interpretation goes to God.
 - iii) The only other dream interpreter you read about in the bible is Daniel. Daniel too gave God the credit for interpretation (Ref: Dan 2:28)
- d) This is a good time to discuss God and dreams.
 - i) First of all, I don't believe every dream we have is God inspired.
 - ii) Most of us can't recall the dreams we have.
 - iii) Bad dreams are often caused by an irritated stomach, or stress or a number of other factors.
 - iv) Further, the bible itself is the final authority on our actions, not our dreams.
 - a) If you dream something that violates a biblical principal, you trust the Word of God and not your dreams.
 - v) Now that I've got all of my disclaimers out of the way, ☺ one can make the argument that God uses dreams to guide our actions.
 - a) Joseph, the father of Mary, was guided by dreams a number of times based on what action he did. (Matthew 1:20, 2:12, 2:13, 2:19, 2:22)
 - (1) That Joseph got so many dream revelations I suspect he would say to Mary, "I can't take the trash out yet, I need to sleep some more. You never know when God has another message for me" ☺
 - b) The book of Acts is full of "visions" giving to people.
 - c) Acts also predicts that after the church was born, ""In the last days, (Christian Church era) God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." (Acts 2:17, NIV)
 - d) In summary, "God is God" and He can choose whatever method he wants to communicate with us. I am simply leery of dreams as a primary communication tool. I look to God's Word first. If a dream is "interesting" and has the possibility of being a communication by God, I will look for validation of that dream in other avenues, especially in God's Word.

14. Verse 9: So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me,¹⁰ and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes.¹¹ Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand."

- a) Let's summarize the dream: This guy (the "cupbearer") saw a vine in front of him with 3 branches. The branches brought forth grapes. This guy squeezed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup and then put the cup in Pharaoh's hand. That is the end of the dream.
- b) Before we get into the details of the dream, notice what the cupbearer did not say:
 - i) "Well, you say your god can interpret dreams. Big deal, why should I trust you?"
 - ii) "Hey, I can interpret dreams as well as the next guy. Leave me alone".
 - iii) The fact that the cupbearer even discussed this situation with the "Hebrew slave" Joseph shows how God is working on people's hearts.
- c) The cupbearer knew the dream was important and somehow, it affected his job.
 - i) The dream involved the Pharaoh and it involved his job of checking the wine.
 - ii) Remember that this guy's life was at stake. The Pharaoh could have him killed if he was found guilty of this crime. Telling Joseph the dream could be a sign of "I'm desperate to know the outcome of my future, and I'll talk to anyone about it."

15. Verse 12: "This is what it means," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days.
¹³ Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer.
- a) Let's summarize Joseph's interpretation: He states that the fact there were three branches refers to a 3-day period. On the 3rd day, Pharaoh will get you out of jail and you will have your old job back.
 - b) The interesting thing about these verses is you don't read of any commentary by the cupbearer. The text simply gives Joseph's interpretation and that's it.
 - i) There is no "thank you for your interpretation". It is as if the guy is thinking, "Well, that's good news. Let's see if Joseph's interpretation is correct."
 - ii) Whether the cupbearer realized it or not, that is the proper biblical response to future predictions. God wants us to test predictions to see if they come true. (See Deut: 13: 1:5 on this principal, or 1st John 4:1.)
 - c) There are wonderful symbolic ("word-picture") meanings to this section of Genesis.
 - i) Let's face it; we're discussing the words "wine", "bread" and "3 days". As a Christian, you can't read those words and not associate them with communion and the cross. Let me get through the rest of this section, and I'll come back to it.
16. Verse 14: But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵ For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."
- a) Joseph ends his dream interpretation sermon with a commercial. ☺
 - b) After he gives the wonderful news that the cupbearer will be restored, Joseph adds the idea of, "Oh, and after everything is ok again, put in a good word for me to Pharaoh that I was wrongly accused and get me out of this dungeon."
 - c) Notice Joseph was so sure that his interpretation was correct that he tells this guy that after everything is made right again, then put in a good word for me.
 - d) Bible scholars debate over whether or not it was right for Joseph to give this plug.
 - i) I don't have a problem with it. Joseph should not say, "Well, God allowed me here and I'm sure God will get me out." That may be true, but that's being a "victim" and having a pity-party. I don't have a problem with Joseph taking reasonable actions to get out of jail. ("Unreasonable" would be to break out).
 - ii) Joseph didn't know how God was going to work it out. Joseph was not privy to the next chapter when Pharaoh releases him.
 - iii) I believe in "pray for all things, but live as if you don't know the results". That still means to live along biblical guidelines. Without direct revelations from God, He expects us to pray daily, use the Word for guidance, and go about our business. We walk by faith that He is guiding us.
17. Verse 16: When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. ¹⁷ In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."
¹⁸ "This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days. ¹⁹ Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat away your flesh."
- a) Let's summarize the dream: The baker had 3 baskets of bread on his head. (How do you balance 3 baskets on your head? ☺) Birds were eating out of them. Joseph said the three baskets means that after three days, the baker will die and the birds will eat his flesh.
 - b) Getting back to Joseph, I hope there were a set of jail bars between him and the baker. ☺
 - i) Here was Joseph telling the guy that he's going to die in three days.
 - ii) You have to give Joseph credit for "hoos-pa" (i.e., "guts"). He told his brothers the dream of ruling over them despite the consequences. Now he is telling this baker of his death sentence with no apparent fear of consequences.

- iii) Unfortunately, being a messenger of God often means to tell people the bad news as well as the good news. The bad news is that God expects perfection and we are not perfect. The main purpose of all the Old Testament Laws is to drive us to Jesus to have a perfect sacrifice for our sins. It is only by God "living inside us" that we can even begin to live the type of life God desires for us.
- c) The head baker thought, "Well, if Joseph gave a positive interpretation of the last one, maybe I should give it a shot."
 - i) We'll read in two more verses that the baker was guilty and Pharaoh hanged him.
 - ii) It makes you suspect that the baker was guilty, and he was looking for someone to "ease his guilt" and give a positive interpretation despite that guilt.
 - a) The story of the "baker wanting a positive interpretation" is being repeated over and over again throughout modern history. There are plenty of churches out there to make you "feel good". There are plenty of pastors out there more than willing to tell you that you are "good people" and don't need to repent of your sins.
 - b) I am convinced that Satan's greatest lie is "You can get into heaven. You're a good person. You're good deeds outweigh your bad deeds". That is a false idea that has no biblical support. My point is that the world is full of people (as the bible calls them, "false-prophets") who want to hear lies to appease their guilt.
- d) I should also comment here on the symbolic meaning of "birds".
 - i) Joseph said the birds in the dream are birds of prey that feed off the dead body.
 - ii) Throughout the Scriptures, you will find that symbolically birds are "bad".
 - a) This does not mean we should go kill birds. ☺ It simply means that in bible word-pictures, be sensitive to the fact that just about every time birds are mentioned, it is a negative connotation.
 - b) I mention this because of something Jesus said, "(The Kingdom of Heaven) is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches." (Luke 13:19, NIV)
 - (1) What Jesus is saying in that parable is that as the Christian church grows, the negative part is that it will also become corrupt. The "birds" in Jesus' parable represent the false-prophets and false-believers that infiltrate the church.
 - (2) My point: "Birds are bad" as a word-picture throughout the bible.
- e) OK, now it's time for the fun part. ☺ The symbolic meaning of all of this stuff.
 - i) I mentioned earlier, that as a Christian, you can't help but notice words and phrases like "3 days", "bread", "wine", "death" and "restored to life".
 - ii) This has to be prophetic of Jesus in some way, doesn't it? (Of course, that's why I'm writing this stuff! ☺)
 - iii) First of all, let's talk about communion: What does Jesus say about wine?
 - a) "Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.'" (Matthew 26:27-29, NKJV)
 - (1) Jesus made this statement during a Passover dinner. This meal was commanded by Moses that all Jewish people eat in a specific manner with specific rituals every year for eternity. (See Exo. 12:14)

- (2) For those of you who know the details of the Passover ritual, there were four “toasts” or four “cups”. The third “toast” is called the “cup of trembling”. This is the one where Jesus announced his blood will be spilled. Jesus said in Verse 29 that he wouldn’t drink of the cup again (i.e., “the 4th “toast”) until he drinks it with God the Father in heaven. That 4th “toast” represents the ultimate victory.
- (3) If you read the account in Genesis, the word “cup” is mentioned three times. I don’t think that is a coincidence. It ties to the 3rd “cup”, i.e., the third “toast” that Jesus made.
- b) Here was this cupbearer with a 3-day proclamation, being “restored to life” after three days. All through the bible, “wine” is often a word-picture associated with “blood”, as in the communion ritual. It is also associated with joy and “new life”
- iv) Now lets talk about the bread guy. ☺ He had 3 baskets of bread on his head, and after three days, he was hanged.
 - a) Let’s look at what Jesus says about bread in the communion ritual:
 - (1) “And he (Jesus) took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19, NIV)
 - (2) The bread used in the Passover ritual is unleavened bread, which speaks of “purity” (i.e., no sin whatsoever).
 - (3) If you read all the accounts of Jesus comparing his body to bread (Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19 and 1st Corinthians 11:24), all four of them are short, one sentence statements.
 - b) Notice Jesus does not say, “eat this bread and it is symbolic of restoring my life again. Jesus does not say, “I’ll eat this bread again in heaven”.
 - c) Don’t get me wrong. I believe in the resurrection. The point of eating bread in communion is to remember Jesus giving his life to us. It is for us to remember Jesus as the “sinless sacrifice”. When Jesus discusses bread in the communion speeches, he doesn’t mention the resurrection when discussing the bread.
 - d) Which leads back to the baker guy. We have a reference to 3 baskets of bread, which Joseph interprets as 3 days. Then, we read of his death.
- f) For those who think I’ve jumped off the deep end on these theories ☺, consider this:
 - i) “I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitude’s, by the ministry of the prophets.” (Hosea 12:10, KJV)
 - a) A similitude is a “word-picture”. God speaks in word-pictures.
 - ii) “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:10b)
 - a) This means the focal point of prophecy is about Jesus.
 - b) There are a lot of other reasons for bible prophecy, but the primary purpose is to point to the events of the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah, which is Jesus. I am convinced that Joseph is full of prophetic word-pictures that tie to the death and resurrection of the Scriptures.
 - iii) Paul said, “I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses (who wrote Genesis) said would happen – that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:22b-23, NIV).

- a) When Paul says that “the prophets and Moses” predicted that Christ would suffer and rise again, where does it say that? You can’t find any blunt predictions like that anywhere in the Old Testament. It is by studying word-pictures (i.e., “similitude’s”) like this one about the cupbearer and the head bread maker that one sees the prophetic word-pictures that tie to Jesus.
- iv) This reminds me of a bible principal to use when you’re in trouble. ☺
 - a) Ever come to bible passage where you are not sure what it means? There is a rule called, “Put Jesus in the middle”. That means to attempt to see if that particular Scripture is a word-picture of some event tied to Jesus. Now this does not always work, but you would be surprised how many confusing passages “now make a lot more sense” seeing it from that perspective.
 - v) I hate to stop when I’m on a roll, but there are a few verses left to go in Genesis. ☺
- 18. Verse 20: Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: ²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand, ²² but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.
 - a) You can summarize these three verses in a few words: Joseph’s prediction came true.
 - b) The Pharaoh had a birthday party. He brought in both guys for the party. He probably apologized to the cupbearer, or at least said he was innocent. Pharaoh then pronounced guilt on the baker and had him hanged.
 - c) The Pharaoh was making a point about this hanging the baker. He publicly pronounced guilt upon the baker as a warning to anyone else thinking of wanting to harm him.
- 19. Verse 23: The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.
 - a) Well, so much for Joseph’s “commercial advertisement” to get him out of jail. ☺
 - b) We will read of the cupbearer remembering Joseph, but not for another two years, as we will read in the opening verse of the next chapter.
 - c) The fact that the cupbearer “forgot” cost Joseph another two years in jail!
 - i) The moral of that lesson has to do with waiting on God’s timing.
 - ii) We can give all the “advertisements” we want to get us out of our plight, but ultimately, it still comes down to God’s timing and not ours.
 - d) This verse, along with the start of the next chapter is a reminder that we never know when things are going to change.
 - i) I’m sure Joseph was down at this point. He thought, “Hey, everything happened as I stated, and all that has to happen now is for the wine guy to tell about me, and I’m free.” Well, Joseph sat in the jail for another two full years.
 - ii) What Joseph didn’t know was “two years and a day later”, he would be promoted to the top man in Egypt except for Pharaoh himself.
 - iii) What’s my point? My point is you don’t know what’s around the next bend. You don’t know what God has planned for you today or tomorrow. God was working on a plan for Joseph’s life, and Joseph couldn’t speed up that plan despite his best sales pitch to the wine bearer.
 - iv) When things appear bad and no hope in site, remember that Joseph’s life changed in a day, coming up in Chapter 41. The God that loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life is quite aware of all the things you are going though and there is a purpose for it. Remember that everything you do is “God filtered”.

20. Let's close in prayer: Heavenly father, sometimes life puts us in a situation where we don't see the end in sight. We feel like a "slave" or a "prisoner" to our present situation and don't see any hope. During these times, help us to remember the story of Joseph, and the fact that we don't know what lies ahead in our lives. But you do! Teach us the lessons you want us to learn from these situations and prepare our hearts, mind, body and soul for whatever you are planning for us. In the meantime, help us to have a good attitude and serve whoever you put in front us. Help us to be good witnesses for you at all times. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.