

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

GENESIS 38-40

The movie “[Hoosiers](#)” tells the story of a 1950s High School basketball team. Despite the tiny enrollment of their school, the team and its formerly disgraced coach overachieve to win the Indiana state championship.

But in the midst of that story, the movie tells another story... For this second-chance coach takes on an unlikely assistant, *the town drunk*. The head coach wants to give his friend another chance, too.

But as the team soars, the assistant coach crashes. In a play-off game he stumbles into the gym plastered and crazed, and shouts at the ref. It’s a cringeworthy moment. His behavior is awkwardly embarrassing! He humiliates the town, especially his son.

Here it is...

And this is the best way I can explain Genesis 38. Joseph’s story begins in Chapter 37 and continues with Chapter 39, yet sandwiched in between is another cringeworthy story. In the midst of Joseph’s victorious life, *we see his brother, Judah, stumble onto the stage and embarrass the whole team... that’s Genesis 38.*

God chose a team - a faith-filled family - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s twelve sons. Through this team salvation will come to the world. And as we’ll see, Joseph’s life represents that team at its best... But every team, every family, even God’s family, is not without embarrassment - shameful and vile moments.

Genesis 39 is about Joseph, *God’s team at its best*. But before we get there, Chapter 38 reminds us of God’s grace. God is willing to identify with people who embarrass Him. He saves them even *at their worst*.

Verse 1, “**It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and went in to her.**”

Judah was the fourth son in Jacob’s family. *The first three made strategic blunders.* **Reuben** seduced his father’s concubine. **Simeon** and **Levi** were violent men who wiped out the whole town of Shechem. Thus, sin disqualified the first three from the position of *family’s firstborn*. And in antiquity, the firstborn was the family leader, an heir who had special privileges. **In Jacob’s family the fourth born became firstborn by default.**

Yet just because Judah assumed leadership, doesn’t mean he was a good leader. He does what both his father and uncle were encouraged not to do. He marries a

Canaanite, an idolater, an unbeliever. This is always a mistake. For remember, “**When you marry an unbeliever you get the devil as your father-in-law.**”

Judah settled for less than God’s best, married an unbeliever, and set himself up for problems. And if you’re a single Christian, please don’t repeat his error.

Verse 3, “**So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er.**” He named him after **the er-ror** he made marrying an unbeliever. “**She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. And she conceived yet again and bore a son, and called his name Shelah. He was at Chezib when she bore him.**”

Now the real problems begin, “**Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er... was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him.**” *And why?* We’re not told. Apparently, Er made a serious *err-or*! He offended God. Maybe he got involved with an evil that harmed and endangered folks around him. For mercy sake, God took him out.

Verse 8, “**And Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother."** A common custom in antiquity was the **Levirate Marriage**. The Hebrew term “*Levir*” meant “**brother-in-law.**” So when a man died without an heir it was his brother’s responsibility to marry the widow, and raise up an heir to take over the dead man’s holdings.

In an agrarian world where most people lived off the land, and in a patriarchal society where women were not always protected and treated kindly, this was a merciful custom. In fact, in Deuteronomy 25 **Levirate Marriage** is codified and included in God’s OT Law.

But Onan was disobedient. We’re told, “**But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother.**” He refuses to support a child that’s not considered his own son, so he deceives his father. He uses Tamar sexually; then just before impregnating her, he withdraws and spills his seed on the ground.

And implied in the Hebrew is he does this not once, but over and over. Onan has no respect for women, especially Tamar. He refuses to take on the family responsibility she’s due. His only concern is his own sexual gratification. He’s a misogynist. As the saying goes, “**He wants the milk without buying the cow.**”

Verse 10, “**And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also.**” God must’ve took Onan’s unwillingness to sire a son personally. As the firstborn, Judah’s lineage was vital. Later, we’ll see that God’s promise of a Savior - the Messiah - to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will now pass through Judah’s loins.

And Judah's firstborn was Er, Onan’s deceased brother. This meant Onan’s

reluctance to sire Er's son was an insult to God's covenant. *To God a serious sin.*

"Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown." For he said, "*Lest he also die as his brothers did.*" Judah's third son is still a kid, not yet of marriageable age. So Judah tells Tamar to go home and wait until he grows up. *But he has no intention of Shelah ever marrying Tamar.* He thinks she's part of the reason his two older boys kicked the bucket. He's not going to risk a third son! Maybe she'll just remarry.

"And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house. Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite." Again Judah hangs out with the wrong crowd. His wife dies and he turns to Hirah, his idolatrous father-in-law. And this Canaanite's influence rubs off on him. Every teenager needs to realize, "*Bad company never produces good morals.*"

"And it was told Tamar, saying, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." So she took off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife." Tamar has been double-crossed. She believes it's time to get what's coming to her. She wants an heir, and she concocts a scheme to get what she wants...

Verse 15, "*When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot (I'm sure that was the plan), because she had covered her face. Then he turned to her by the way, and said, "Please let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.*" This shows the moral condition of Judah. His wife dies, and before the poor gal's body gets cold, he's soliciting a prostitute.

"So she said, "*What will you give me, that you may come in to me?*" She's asking what's he willing to pay.

"And he said, "*I will send you a young goat from the flock.*" So she said, "*Will you give me a pledge till you send it?*" She knows from firsthand experience Judah isn't much of a promise keeper. "*Then he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" So she said, "Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand."* These were important items. A signet ring was the means by which a man signed contracts and did business. The cord was also personal property, the equivalent of his signature. This would be like giving her your credit card number.

"Then he gave them to her..." A man driven by lust is bound to make careless mistakes. "*And (he) went in to her, and she conceived by him. So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood. And Judah*

sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand, but he did not find her.”

Judah wanted to retrieve his signet and staff, but the woman had gone. “Then he asked the men of that place, saying, “Where is the harlot who was openly by the roadside?” And they said, “There was no harlot in this place.” It’s interesting the term “*harlot*” here refers to a “*cult prostitute*.” Canaanites worshipped fertility gods, and sex or reproduction was part of the worship. These harlots actually raised money for the temple. Evidently, Tamar had posed as *a temple call girl*.

And he returned to Judah and said, “I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this place.” Then Judah said, “Let her take them for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her.” Judah figures he’s tried. It’ll all go away. *Yet sexual sin seldom just goes away.*

“And it came to pass, about three months after (Tamar’s pregnancy is now beginning to show), that Judah was told, saying, “Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she is with child by harlotry.” So Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!” Judah is outraged, livid... *This wicked girl has shamed the family name!...* What a blatant hypocrite!

“When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, “By the man to whom these belong, I am with child.” *And guess what she put on display?*

“And she said, “Please determine whose these are - the signet and cord, and staff.” Here’s where you wish we could’ve seen the look on old Judah’s face... “So Judah acknowledged them and said, “She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son. And he never knew her again.” It may take a few months, or even a few years, but as the old adage puts it, eventually “*Your sins will find you out.*”

Verse 27, “Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins were in her womb. And so it was, when she was giving birth, that the one put out his hand; and the midwife took a scarlet thread and bound it on his hand (marking the firstborn), saying, “This one came out first.” Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly, and she said, “How did you break through? This breach be upon you!” Therefore his name was called Perez..” which means “*breakthrough.*”

Again the younger precedes the older. The point is, God’s choice isn’t base on human criteria, *like birth order*. “Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand.” Here, the older is born second! “His name was called Zerah.” Or “*rising light.*”

And this becomes a common theme in God’s dealings with mankind. We’ve talked

about the ancient **law of primogeniture**, or the firstborn. That the first son born into the family was superior to the other siblings.

Yet over and over God flips the order. He blows up our assumptions about power and privilege. He chooses *the younger* over *the firstborn* - *Isaac not Ishmael, Jacob not Esau, here Perez not Zerah*. God loves to upset society's expectations of position and privilege. He abolishes human power structures, and elevates the disenfranchised and disadvantaged. In Luke 22:26 Jesus describes promotion in God's Kingdom, "**he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.**"

And fast forward 1800 years to the Christmas story, the birth of our Lord Jesus. It begins in Matthew 1, with a genealogy. And a marvelous entry appears in verse 3, "**Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar.**"

Amazingly, Judah and **this story** of selfishness, prostitution, vindictiveness, illegitimate twins - this whole sordid story becomes a branch in the family tree of the Savior *It's a testimony to God's grace*. That God can take our blunders and failures and use it for good.

Genesis 39, "**Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt.**" Remember, where the story of Joseph left off in Chapter 37. His jealous brothers threw him in a pit and sold him to a slave-trading caravan headed for Egypt. Afterwards they dipped his coat of many colors in goat's blood and feigned his death to his father, Jacob.

Joseph is just 17 years old. He's never lived outside his father's tents. Now he finds himself in a seedy section of Egypt's capitol. He's in the slave market, on the auction block. Rich Egyptians are pawing all over him. They're treating Joseph like a head of livestock.

"**And Potiphar,**" the name means "**devoted to the sun.**" "**Ra**" the sun-god, was chief of all Egypt's idols... He was also "**an officer of Pharaoh.**" The word *can* mean "**eunuch**" - a castrated male. Most Oriental kings insisted on their highest officers being eunuchs. This assured that no hanky-panky would go on between the king's court and his royal harem. It's possible Potiphar became a eunuch to advance in his career... And he was "**captain of the guard, an Egyptian**" or "**chief of police.**" Potiphar could've been the head of Egypt's secret service - maybe even the state's executioner.

Put it all together and here's the picture: *Joseph is working for an idol worshipping Egyptian, who holds a high ranking government post, and who's sold out to climbing a corporate ladder.* Potiphar "**bought (Joseph) from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.**"

Verse 2, "**The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in**

the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand.” Notice the secret of his success, “the LORD was with him.” Joseph had been rejected by his brothers, and treated cruelly, and uprooted from home, and forced into slavery, yet he refused to cop an attitude. He could’ve sulked, and complained, and become bitter over his plight... but he never once did.

He accepted his circumstances, and trusted in God. He saw himself as a victor, not a victim... *And how are you dealing with the hand you’ve been dealt?* Here’s a great quote, “Never think that you could do something in life if only you had different circumstances assigned to you. What we call hindrances, and obstacles, and disappointments, are probably God’s opportunities.”

Joseph’s life was splattered with what we’d call disaster, but *God’s providence* and *Joseph’s piety* combine to turn every tragedy into a stepping stone.

Joseph’s topsy-turvy circumstances are proof of what Romans 8:28 teaches us, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Verse 4, “So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority.” Potiphar promoted Joseph - made him manager of all his affairs.

“So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field. So he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.” Potiphar completely trusted Joseph with all the details of his household and finances. All Potiphar looked at was the dinner menu.

“And Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.” This is how Genesis 29 described Rachel. Joseph inherited his mom’s good looks. He’s in his mid-20s - his physical prime. He’s got *inviting eyes, wavy hair, broad shoulders, strong biceps*. Imagine, a Jewish movie star, a Hebrew heartthrob. Joseph is a **holy hunk**. *And he catches the eye of Mrs. Potiphar.*

“And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” And here’s the pilot episode of *Desperate Housewives Of Ancient Egypt*. A cougar, an older woman who’s bored, affluent, and lust-filled targets Joseph for conquest. Egyptian women were notorious for their romantic escapades and affairs. Cleopatra seduced kings and Caesars. Here, Potipharina, makes a pass and propositions Joseph.

It's interesting, we're told Joseph was good looking, but nothing is said of Mrs. Potiphar's appearance. We know she was Egyptian, and ancient Egyptians were the first to use cosmetics. Egypt was known for its make-up and perfume. Skin-softening oils, sunblock, eye-liner, eye-shadow all started in the land of the Nile.

Besides powerful men love to marry beautiful women, and beautiful women are attracted to powerful men. You'd think this couple would be no different.

A faithful Christian man once confessed, "Every evil that comes to me is packaged as a good." This is why ugly isn't a temptation. It's safe to assume that Mrs. Potiphar was a knock-out herself. Someone did say, "We don't know if Mrs. Potiphar was "best dressed in Egypt" or "worst dressed," but when she tried to seduce Joseph she was definitely "least dressed."

There was no doubting her intention when "she said, "Lie with me." The Contemporary English Version renders it, "Make love to me." The New English puts it, "Have sex with me." The International Standard Bible portrays her words as more playful, seductive, even nonchalant, "Come on! Let's have a little sex!" In Hebrew it's a single word, "shakab," which means "lie."

Remember, verse 1 tells us Potiphar was an "officer of Pharaoh" or possibly a eunuch. But the question arises, "Why would a eunuch bother to marry? And why would a woman marry a man who was a eunuch?"

This leads me to believe that Potiphar chose to become a eunuch after he was married. I can't prove it. It's just a suspicion. But it's possible Potiphar sold his virility for a higher position in pharaoh's court.

And what a slap in the face this would be to his wife - to put *career promotion* above *her affection*. For any spouse this would be an insult! **Never put career or other secular pursuits ahead of your spouse. Neglect their needs - and they'll be tempted to go elsewhere.** Don't become an emotional eunuch to your spouse.

Potiphar's ambitions slighted his wife. She's unhappy, unsatisfied. And now Leonardo DiCaprio has taken over as man of the house... *she goes after him.*

Verse 8, "But (Joseph) refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This was NOT a spur of the moment reply. Joseph had *pre-decided*, in advance before he was ever faced with the situation.

And this is the best way to navigate *a temptation situation*. **Pre-choose** what's important to God and to you. If you don't, in the moment it might *feel* right - you could

empathized with the tempter's plea - or could get overcome by peer pressure. But Joseph **pre-chose**.

This is how Daniel responded when he was told to eat the king's food, "(He) **purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself...**" We all need to **pre-decide**.

Today, we live in a world of rationalizations. We even redefine our terms... It's no longer "*adultery*," it's an "*affair*." Marriages are "*open*." Divorces are "*creative*" and "*victimless*." Adulterers are "*significant others*." What the Bible calls "*fornicators and sodomites*" are simply "*partners...*" J. Allan Peterson describes how we've glamorized adultery, "*Affair, what a nice-sounding, almost inviting word wrapped in mystery, fascination, and excitement. A relationship, not sin.*"

One psychologist has even coined the term, "*healthy adultery*." Hey, there're a million hurting, bleeding hearts who'll testify there's nothing healthy about it.

Listen to the words of a wife who was victimized by her husband's adultery, "*My husband and I have been married for thirty years. I was a virgin bride and have been a faithful wife my entire life. A young woman (our daughter's age) came on to him and he took her to bed. He was so guilt-ridden and miserable that he told me about it the next day. I forgave him, did not mention it to a soul, and he never saw her again. He believes no harm was done. She thinks no harm was done, but she destroyed me. I'm now unable to grow old gracefully.... I cry for hours when I am alone.*"

A bond between two souls was violently torn apart. Trust was shattered. The privacy of a relationship was violated. Their bed was suddenly invaded. And a woman is now injured... *Adultery does that and more...*

And it's not just the betrayed spouse who's harmed. Often we think of adultery as a sniper's shot. It injures just one victim, but that's not true! Adultery is more like a pipe bomb blast - the damage is wide spread, indiscriminate... *Kids are betrayed, friendships are sabotaged, extended families get double-crossed, a dark cloud is cast over the church, future generations are deprived of a legacy of trust and commitment - nothing is ever the same. And worst of all, adultery is a sin against God. Joseph tells Mrs. Potiphar, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*

But Potipharina refuses to take "*no*" for an answer. "*So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day...*" She applied a full court press. To this woman, Joseph was a conquest. Who knows what she did to get his attention. Day after day after day, she tried to lure him in...

Yet "*he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.*" This is impressive. Joseph is a normal, hormonal young man. Often *she tempts him*. She presses him when he's tired, when he's vulnerable, when he's discouraged. At times he *feels* like giving in, yet

resists!

I'm afraid **many believers are virtuous only because they lack opportunity.** If they were baited day in and day out like Joseph it wouldn't take long for them to cave in. Convictions, integrity, purity were priorities for Joseph, and they need to be priorities for you and me.

And here's one more point, when you hear, *"Well, everybody else is doing it."* Realize, that's a lie. It's simply not true. **Some** may be doing it - it could be **many** are doing it - even **most** may be doing it - **but everybody is not doing it!** Joseph didn't, and there are still Joes today who don't... *Let's all be a Joseph!*

Finally, after days, weeks, perhaps months of trying to woo Joseph to bed, Mrs. Potiphar sets a trap. Verse 11, **"But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside..."** She'd given all her servants the afternoon off. The house was empty.

"That she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." Once again a coat plays a major role in Joseph's future. Suddenly, they're alone, she grabs Joseph, and starts pulling off his clothes. Joseph has to jerk himself from her grasp, to escape. **"But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside."**

Sometimes temptation is so fierce the only option is **to run - to flee!** Vacate the premises. Remove yourself logistically from the source of the temptation. This is what Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:22, **"Flee also youthful lusts..."** Sometimes the only option is to separate yourself physically and logistically from the source of your temptation. You have to do whatever it takes.

"And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside." You've heard the phrase, **"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."** A rejected Mrs. Potiphar becomes vindictive. She falsely accuses Joseph of attempted rape, and claims his coat is proof.

Verse 16, **"So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me..."** You hear the bitterness toward her husband. She's blames him for introducing Joseph into her house. **"So it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside. So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused."** Potiphar was mad, but I don't think he was angry with Joseph, but rather at his wife.

He knew this gal, and was sure she was lying. She's soiling the reputation of a good man; yet Potiphar can't prove it. She's forcing him to take action he doesn't want to take... If Potiphar had really believed his wife's charges Joseph would've been executed. A prison sentence is proof he thought she was lying. **Potiphar wants to save Joseph, but he still needs to save face.**

Verse 20, **"Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison."** The wording suggests he put Joseph in a special prison.

Rather than hard labor this was a minimal security prison - only for the king's political prisoners. Again, Potiphar was showing compassion toward Joseph.

"But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Everywhere Joseph goes, God blesses him. **"And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him."** Even the prison warden trusts Joseph's integrity. **"And whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper."**

We know from piecing verses together that Joseph served Potiphar for more than a decade. Now in one moment more than ten years of faithfulness goes up in smoke. Joseph is right back where he started...

He could've thrown a huge pity party. He could've gotten angry or bitter toward God. But no matter how low he goes, He's still able to lift up his eyes to God.

One Sunday I asked a brother here at church how he was doing. He was snarky. He said, **"Ah, medium well."** I told him, **"Jesus wants us to be *well done, good and faithful servants*."** If you're only medium well, He might just throw you back on the fire." And that's what God does with Joseph. He's throwing him back on the fire. The refining, God wants to do in Joseph, isn't finished.

Chapter 40, **"It came to pass after these things that the butler..."** A butler in antiquity was more than a male maid. He was the king's cupbearer, his personal wine taster, a trusted aid. He was head of the royal guard, and the king's security. **"And the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.** Both the royal butler and baker fell out of favor with the pharaoh.

"And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while." Both *butler* and *baker*

were strategic posts in the royal court. If the king's enemies wanted to assassinate him the easiest method was to bribe one of these two men.

What they did to anger the king we're not told, but it's no accident they ended up locked down in prison on Joseph's watch... For though Joseph didn't recognize it at the time, God's providence was at work arranging people and circumstances to accomplish His will.

“Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation.” One night, two dreams. “And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad. So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, “Why do you look so sad today?” And they said to him, “We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.” Joseph's statement is provocative, *“Do not interpretations belong to God?”*

And it's true, God can and does speak through dreams, but that doesn't mean every dream is from God. Dreams can come from four sources: [God](#), [Satan](#), [your psyche](#), or [last night's pizza](#). We need to be able to discern the source. Don't discount your dreams, but when you dream pray for an interpretation.

Verse 9, “Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, “Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. And Joseph said to him, “This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler.” Joseph's interpretation: *in three days you'll get your old job back.*

And Joseph adds, “But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.” Joseph tells the butler he himself is an innocent man, and asks him for a favor... *“Please, mention my plight to the Pharaoh.”*

The baker also has a dream, “When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, “I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head. In the uppermost basket there were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh,

and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head." So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you." Though it's not recorded, I know the baker's reaction to Joseph's interpretation. He said, "Can I get a second opinion?" After hearing Joe's interpretation the baker had a hard time *keeping his head on straight*.

So here's the summation of Joseph's two interpretations: *in three days the butler will get ahead; while in three days the baker will lose his head*.

And that's what happens, verse 20, "Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them." Birthday parties are usually joyous, happy times. *But not so in the Bible*.

Only two birthday parties are mentioned in Scripture. One is here, while the other is Herod's birthday, where Salome danced before the king, and asked him for the head of John the Baptist. When you find a birthday party in the Bible somebody always loses their head.

Verse 23, "Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." And this is a tragic verse. Joseph can't get a break. The butler's dream was **fulfilled**, but Joseph's dream of freedom is **forgotten**.

Imagine, all the times Joseph could've gotten discouraged... His brothers *shafted him*, literally, they threw him in a pit. He was sold into slavery, falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, now forgotten by the butler.

But all the while God is at work perfectly positioning Joseph for a strategic and vital purpose. William Cowper once wrote, "Behind a frowning providence there shines a smiling face." Joseph doesn't see God's hand in his life, but God was there nonetheless.

I mentioned last week that not only was Joseph's life an example of God's *providence*, but it's also a *picture* and *prophecy* of Jesus. And here, the plot thickens...

Joseph was sent to Shechem by his father to check on his brothers. *Jesus too was sent into this world by His Father in heaven to visit His Jewish brothers*.

Joseph's brothers rejected him, and wanted to kill him. *The Jewish leaders treated Jesus the same way*.

Joseph ends up in prison. *Jesus ends up on the cross - numbered with the*

prisoners. Joseph interacts with two jailbirds. There were two thieves on the cross.

Joseph is falsely accused. He's punished because of someone else's sin. *Jesus was also innocent of wrongdoing, and died for the sins of a lost world.*

Potiphar sentenced Joseph - *as Pilate did Jesus.*

Joseph is remembered by what happens to a butler, (a wine taster), and a baker. *Jesus is remembered when we come to the Lord's Table to drink the wine and eat the bread of communion...* Joseph's salvation comes through the wine taster. *Our salvation comes through what the wine represents - the blood of Jesus.* All fascinating parallels between Joseph and Jesus.

Next week we'll cover Genesis 41-43.