

Sermon Discussion Questions | What is Truly Great by Destin Garner

Scripture Passage Genesis 41: 1-57

September 7, 2025

www.rpc.fm/sermon-library

Have various members of your small group read Genesis 41 aloud prior to discussing the questions.

Icebreaker: How do you define success in this life? And/or how would your family/friends say YOU define success?

Questions:

1. What do we learn about the character and nature of God in Genesis 41? Think back through this sermon series... how does the life of Joseph continue to point us to Jesus Christ?
2. What surprises or challenges you from this chapter? Did Destin mention anything you hadn't thought about prior to hearing this sermon?
3. How many times does Joseph mention God in his response to Pharaoh's request, found in Genesis 41:16-32. What does this reveal about his perspective on gifting, faith and trusting God?
4. After interpreting the dream, Joseph offers a solution to Pharaoh's problems in Genesis 41:33-40. What life lessons can we learn from what Joseph does and doesn't say in his response?
5. Destin shared three mistakes we often make regarding God's purpose and our possessions; what are they and which one do you struggle with the most? Discuss.
6. What do the names mean that Joseph gave to his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim? Can you relate to either of these names? (Genesis 41:50-57)
7. When you reflect on a difficult time in your life, can you look back now and see what God teaching you? Share what you can from that time.
8. How have you too, had to wait on God's timing &/or provision? What did you learn from that season?
9. How can our small group help you deal with discouragement you may be facing now? What are some practical steps we can take to pray and prepare now (both personally and as a small group) for 'seasons of famine' &/or hard times that may be ahead?

For next steps

1. Journal prompt - have you strived for God's grace only to find it's still free? --What habits or patterns in your life do you need to consider that point to earning rather than receiving His free grace? What keeps you from fully surrendering and recognizing that with, "... an empty hand and a humble heart...", you can simply take His gift?
2. Prayerfully consider - It's clear in Genesis 41:50-52 that what Joseph's brothers did hurt him... Think about a painful situation in your childhood. How did that shape the way you live your life? Have you surrendered that pain to the Lord for spiritual healing? If not, talk to the Lord about it.
3. Prayerfully consider: is there any area of life you need to reconsider success &/or greatness socially, vocationally, religiously, privately, etc.? How is God calling you to seek to glorify Him more in various areas of life?

Destin Garner Sermon Notes What is Truly Great? (Gen 41)

Going back a few thousand years to Gen 41, we are going to see three incredible examples that help us ask and answer the question everyone has to wrestle with: What is truly great?

Catch you up on the Joseph story - Jacob shows favoritism / Joseph is bratty / Brothers are jealous / Want to murder / Settle for selling into slavery / Sold into Potiphar's house / Potiphar's wife makes a few passes / Morally upright, man of integrity says no / She frames him, falsely accuses him / He's thrown in prison / Warden, like Potiphar, let's Joe lead / Cupbearer & Baker thrown in prison / Both have dreams / God gives Joseph interpretation / Baker, you're going to have your head cut off / Cupbearer you will be restored / Don't forget about me / Happens just as Joe interpreted / But the cupbearer did not remember Joseph.

41:1 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream:

Just when it looks like Joseph's deliverance has come, the cupbearer forgets him.

Our culture would say, "If you're not moving up, you're falling behind. This isn't success, this isn't greatness, this is waste of time, I could be doing something great." Without God, that's probably true, but with God, WAITING is never WASTED.

1. GOD'S TIMING IS GREATER THAN OUR TEMPLATE

We all have a template for our life? Married, Kids, Make Partner, Empty Nest, Retire, Die.

Joseph, had a template – He wanted to be sprung right then, immediately.

But what if he had? Gets out, goes about his way - then when Pharaoh's dream comes, would the cupbearer even know where to look for Joseph? This wasn't what "the world" would think is great, but it's right where God wanted him, for just the right time

Greatness isn't in our template, it's waiting well and trusting in God's greater timing.

What about you? Do you feel stuck. Like why am I here? I had dreams of being great. Desires to do great things? Like Joseph, I've tried to do the right thing and got punished for it, set back. Tried to lead well but not going anywhere or as fast as I would like.

Take heart in the fact that, "God doesn't just want you to make an impact - he wants you to make maximum impact" (may keep you waiting for just the right time). God's never late.

Remember - The circumstances of our service do not determine the value of our service.

"For Joseph, serving God in the context of slavery or prison does not negate the fact that he was still serving God - that is what is truly great. When we understand the bigger picture of God's redemptive purpose, we know that he uses all things and every circumstance to bring about his desired ends - God is not the God of "big" things; he is the God of all things."

Pete Scazzero (I think) – You most impactful decades of ministry: 60s, 70s, then 50s.

What if we really believed that and lived like that were true - what would that change today?

20-40s Wait Well & Get Prepared / 60s-70s don't check out (God's time > Our Template).

Pharaoh has dreams of skinny cows eating the fat cows and the sickly head of grain swallowing up the healthy heads of grain. No one can interpret, then the cupbearer goes, Doh, and says, hey boss there's this guy, who I totally forgot about, who interpreted my dream correctly. Get him up here. Joe's like, "No one can interpret that dream, but God will give you the answer" (v16) Tell him the interpretation and then goes a step further and says, "need a wise and discerning man, to oversee Egypt, take 1/5 crop each year, store it up for the famine." Pharaoh says, "that's you bud - I see the "spirit of the god's on you"

Genesis 41:41-45

"Chapter 41 appears to be the big payoff we've been waiting for. He has remained faithful, and God is rewarding him with fame, fortune, and family. Why do we hear Hollywood theme music when we picture Joseph standing next to Pharaoh? And why do we tell our children that this is what their faithfulness will bring? No, my friend, I think we've got it all wrong."

Wrong Master - The irony is that Joseph is still as much of a slave in chapter 41 as he was two chapters earlier (langue is almost identical to what is used when Joseph is in Potiphar's house. More importantly, his master is a pagan who is worshiped as a god.

Wrong Identity - Other name changes in Genesis, but in each instance, it was God who gave the name change reflecting covenantal significance. Joseph's name change, however, goes in the opposite direction. Zaphenath-paneah probably has something to do with pagan deity and just as with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah (Dan. 1:6-7), this name change has to do with masking, and/or altering Hebrew identity.

Wrong Marriage - Go back to Gen 24, Abraham made his servant swear not to take a wife for his son from among the Canaanites. Gen 28 where Isaac repeats the same to Jacob. Not to marry a pagan but a God-fearing Yahweh worshipper. Why in Gen 38 such a mess with Judah went down to marry a Canaanite woman and how that all went bad. Hagar, Sarah handmaiden, who Abraham has a child with to try to hurry up the promises of God (again on the timing) and that was a train wreck. Joseph has broken with patriarchal tradition in marrying an Egyptian woman.

Wrong Prosperity - Ring, chain, robe - accouterments of secular nation and pagan gods.

Genesis 41:50-52 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On. 51 Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." 52 The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

Hebrew names reveal his loyalty to God, by identifying with the people of the covenant.

Both Hebrew names - not a nod to heritage; but identifying as Hebrew among Egyptians.

Names would remind sons of Yahweh in the pagan world in which they would grow up.

Manasseh: "one who causes to forget...suffering in my father's home"

Don't truly forget - showing he's closed the door on all the harsh treatment he has been exposed to over the last thirteen years. It no longer has a hold onto him. See God's Purpose.

Ephraim - For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. “Joseph has the finest clothes, jewels, chariots, houses, and lands at his disposal. He has the best foods the land of the Nile had to offer, the finest entertainment, and more. He is living a life of opulent wealth beyond anything he would have experienced as the son of a shepherd. However, he calls this the land of his affliction. In doing so Joseph goes beyond identifying with the covenant community—he flat-out rejects Egypt and all it has brought him.”

Fruitfulness = is not all the stuff of Egypt, not just him having a son...

Fruitfulness is God’s glorious purpose - to be the vehicle of salvation for many.

2. GOD’S PURPOSE IS GREATER THAN WORDLY POSSESSIONS

A. Don’t Mistake Goods for Greatness

“The fact is, no matter how good things get in this world, it’s all Egypt!”

The American dream is not the Christian dream. The American Dream will TEMPT us with the wrong master and the wrong identity. There will never be enough gold chains, fine linen, praise, or possessions to satisfy the deepest longings of your heart.

B. Don’t Mistake Egypt for Eternity

We’re strangers on Earth. This world is not our home. We’re citizens of a different kingdom. Have you fallen in love with the accouterments of Egypt, with the American dream?

Are worldly possession and secular platforms how you define greatness?

C. Don’t Mistake Platforms for Purpose

“God’s universal kingdom involves imperial power, and Joseph must know how to use it, without abusing it. For Joseph, royal power is dangerous, but not evil.” We are NOT to pursue power, position, or prosperity as an end all be all, but USE all that that Lord GIVES.

Your purpose in life and the only path to true satisfaction and GREATNESS is:

Loving God with all that you are, while making more and better followers of Christ.

Greatness isn’t what Egypt gives you, but what God does through you.

56 When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. 57 And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

3. God’s Storehouse of Grace is Greater than Joseph’s Storehouses of Grain

A. Sin is the famine that threatens to kill you: Severe famine coming to the world and the world coming to Joseph to buy grain is a symbol that points to our sin and Jesus as savior.

B. No amount of effort can save you: They might work as hard as they pleased, but it was no use working where money and wages could not buy a piece of bread. They might dig and toil and till the soil,

but in famine, the land yields nothing. Such is the famine which has fallen on our entire humanity that there is no possibility of your salvation in any way by your own doings.

C. You must acknowledge your need: If there's anybody here, who thinks they are exceedingly good, righteous, excellent, and can get to heaven by their own works, the granary is not open and there is nothing for you. But if there is a poor soul here that has nothing of their own to trust in - no good works, no good feelings; if you feel that you are utterly lost - then and only then, are the granaries open to you.

D. God's granary of grace is sufficient to meet your need: The Lord Jesus by His life and death filled all the storehouses. What heaps of grace, what stores of heavenly food, He gathered with the sweat of His very soul. Gethsemane heaped up the bread of Heaven, and Calvary tells how the body He gave to bleed and die became the world's food. God granaries are as deep and boundless as our sins. Not only is there sufficiency in Christ, but all-sufficiency—no measuring, no limit. Poor needy souls, however ravenous, will never exhaust the store of sovereign grace.

E. The heavenly storehouse of grace is open to all: Joseph opened the storehouses to all, to his own people and all the earth's people. Some came from near at hand, but if they had not come that little way, they would have perished. So too, some are near the kingdom yet risk dying outside it. People in Egypt as well as Canaan and Arabia all had to get corn from Joseph; and so it is with Christ—no matter the distance, you must come to Him for the bread of life, or you will perish.

F. The grace of God is free of charge: The moment you preach Jesus Christ, the sinner begins to fumble to see if he has not got a shilling's worth of merit somewhere, and when he finds he has not, he puts his hand into the other pocket to see if he cannot find at least sixpenny worth of good feeling. When he feels nothing of the kind there, then he begins fumbling in his waistcoat to see if he has not got at least a halfpenny-worth of something or other that can recommend him. Now, as long as ever he does that, he cannot deal with Christ. The terms of Christ are everything for nothing. That is Christ's bargain — all things freely given to the one who, with an empty hand and a humble heart, will simply take.

What is truly great? Living in God's timing, for God's purposes and saved by God's grace.