

Study Questions _Ice breaker - If you were to make a documentary about your life, what would be your favourite scene?

1/ How can God use the disappointments, mistakes and rejections in our lives?

2/ Joseph was in prison for years before he was released. God's timing was perfect. Describe a time in your life when God's timing was perfect.

3/ Why is servanthood so important in the life of the Christian? In what ways can we be servants? What part can you play in the vision that we are developing at Viewfield?

4/ In what ways did Joseph show compassion in the prison? How can we show compassion to others even when we are going through difficult times?

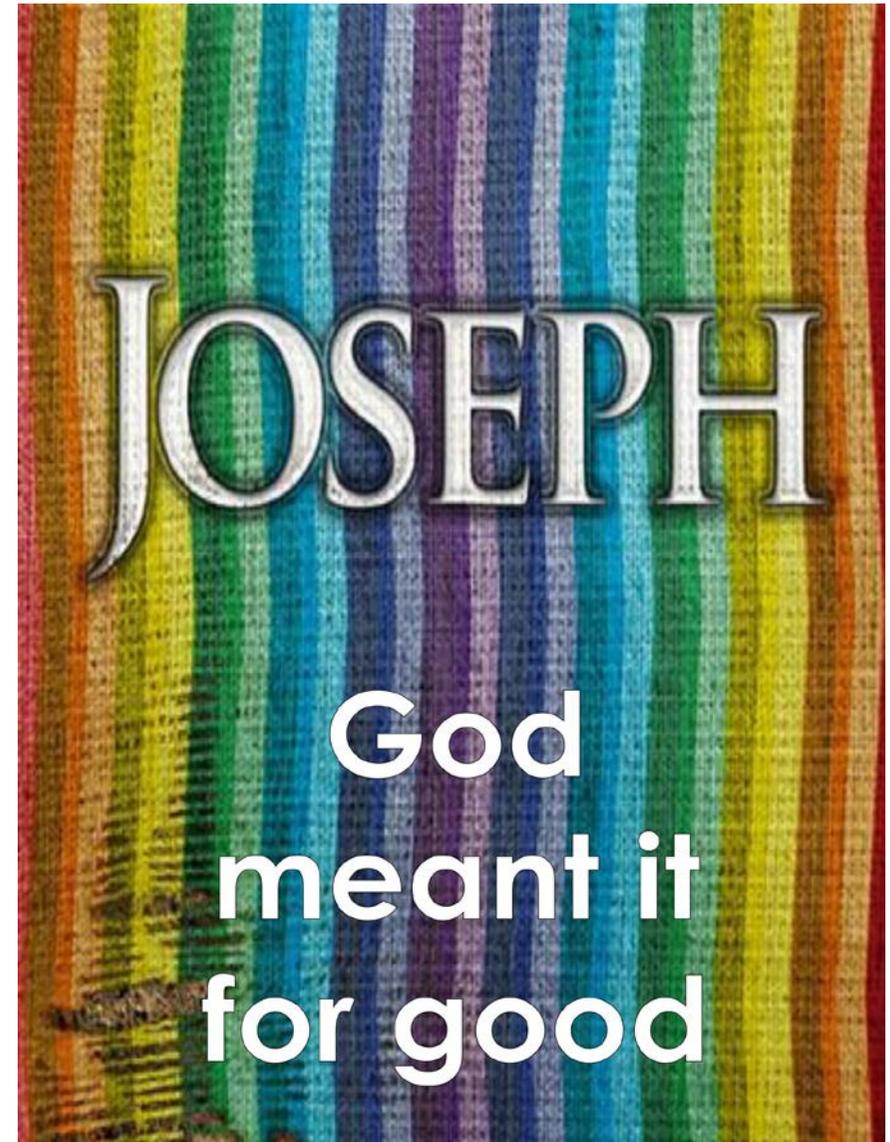
5/ Joseph gives God the glory in v8. How can we glorify God in our lives?

6/ Are we willing to boldly speak the truth in love to others?

7/ Can you describe a time in your life when someone let you down? How did it feel?

8/ How do you trust God in the prison experiences of life?

This week: Find a practical way to bless someone this week through a random act of kindness.



Viewfield Baptist Church, Dunfermline

Sermon 8- Sunday 14th April

"When the going get's tough" Genesis 40

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“When the going gets tough” Genesis 40

Winston Churchill was a man who has been enshrined in the history of Great Britain. He was not just a great politician but also a great orator. He once said: *“Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”* Each new day, each new year lies before us like an open book. Regardless of what successes or failures have come and gone, we don't know how God will choose to use us in the future. It could be that the disappointments and rejections of the past were just what you needed to prepare you for what's coming. Rest assured, God will use you, as you yield to His timing and His purposes.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). God's timing is perfect. He will not fail us.

This was certainly true for Joseph. I am sure during some moments in the story of his life he wondered what God's purpose was in it all. Yet he trusted in God. We see the end of the story and understand that God was working out his providential will, for Joseph, his family and for the nation. We left the story last week with Joseph having been falsely accused of rape and consequently wrongly imprisoned. However, even in those difficult circumstances God was with Joseph and God blessed Joseph.

Chapter 40 begins in v1 with the phrase some time later. It would be easy to skim over that phrase. Joseph's imprisonment and suffering was over a long period of time. The point I am clearly trying to make is that our timing is different to God's timing. At the right time Joseph would be released from prison into a position of great authority. We must trust in God during the difficult times believing that his timing is perfect.

Let's reflect on how to cope in difficult circumstances by considering Joseph's life in the prison.

1/ Joseph showed endeavour despite his difficult circumstances. V1-3

We are told that Joseph was imprisoned. We were told in Chapter 39v21-23 that Joseph found favour in the eyes of the prison warden, that Joseph was put in charge of all those who were held in the prison, and that he was made responsible for all that was done there. He was faithful and committed to running the prison and one day would be running the country as Prime Minister.

We are told that Joseph is joined in the prison by two other prisoners (v1-4). It is no coincidence that these men are brought to the same prison as Joseph. The events that follow will confirm that even in these difficult circumstances God's hand is in all that is happening.

Joseph worked hard despite his difficult circumstances.

2/ Joseph showed compassion despite his difficult circumstances v4-19

Joseph had time for the needs of others despite his difficult circumstances. In v4 we are told that these two prisoners were assigned to Joseph. They were under his care. We are told that the cup bearer and the baker both have dreams. **READ v4b-5.** We are told in **v6-7** that Joseph genuinely cared and was full of compassion for the men. They were traumatised by their dreams. **READ v6-7.**

He had time for others despite his difficult circumstances. In **v8** they express that they both had dreams but there was nobody to interpret them. God has prepared Joseph for this moment. Joseph was in the right place at the right time. It wasn't a coincidence - it was a God incidence. If Joseph had not been in these difficult circumstances, he wouldn't have had these opportunities. In **v8b** Joseph gives God glory. **READv8b.** Joseph immediately makes it clear that he does not have the independent ability to interpret these dreams apart from God's gift and help. So Joseph says “tell me your dreams”. The men tell him the dreams and Joseph speaks what God had told him with boldness but also with compassion.

3/ Joseph showed confidence despite his difficult circumstances v20-23

Joseph showed a confidence in God despite his difficult circumstances. That Joseph's faith remains strong is clear from his response to the cupbearer, **in v14.** “Remember me”. **Read v14-15.** All in all it takes thirteen years in slavery and prison before Joseph is elevated to the position he was destined for.

Nowhere in the text does it tell us that Joseph gets discouraged or despairs. However later in the story we are told how Joseph pours out his heart and weeps when he is reunited with his brothers. **READ Gen 43v30, 45v2.** This fact tells us that Joseph had a rich emotional life; he was no hard man, and he felt deeply. He had a confidence in God but it can be assumed that there were emotional struggles during this time of suffering. The chapter ends with the words **v23: “yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.”**

People often let us down, don't they? However, in this story there is one great truth. God had not forgotten Joseph. He was working out his providential will. If you feel as if God has forgotten about you and your needs, don't give up. God's timing is perfect. He will not leave you nor forsake you.

Joseph trusted in the Lord even during the dark and difficult times. When his circumstances change and he is remembered by the cupbearer, after Pharaoh has two dreams he needs interpreted, things begin to change. It is clear that his trust is in God, as he says to Pharaoh in v16: *“I cannot do it, Joseph replied to Pharaoh, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.”* Trust in the Lord. The darkest moment is just before the dawn.