

PPT Title

Pharaoh's Dreams

Main Point: God's timing is perfect.

Key Verse: *God makes everything happen at the right time.* - Ecclesiastes 3:11a CEV

Props: Cup and bread from last week; two calendars.

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Say: Last week, we read about two Egyptian men who were thrown in prison with Joseph. **Ask:** Who can remember who these men were? *The cupbearer and the baker.* **Say:** Right, there was Pharaoh's official drink taster (**Show the cup**), and his "top chef" (**Show the bread**). Joseph was highly respected, even in prison, so Potiphar gave him the job of taking care of these men. Each man had a dream about their own future, but they did not understand what the dreams meant. God told Joseph what the dreams meant, and of course, they came true just as Joseph foretold. The baker was killed, and Pharaoh forgave the cupbearer. Before the cupbearer left prison, Joseph asked him for one favor. Joseph asked him to tell Pharaoh about him so he could be set free. **Ask:** Did the cupbearer tell Pharaoh about Joseph? *No!* **Say:** The cupbearer forgot all about Joseph. But God did not! God never forgets His children.



We pick up our story TWO years later. **Teacher:** Flip through your two calendars as you talk. Joseph was **still** in prison, day after day, week after week, month after month. And remember, he had never even done anything wrong.



PHARAOH'S DREAMS (Genesis 41:1-13)

Say: *When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream. In his dream, he was standing by the Nile River. Seven cows came up out of the river. They looked healthy and fat. They were eating some of the tall grass that was growing along the river.*



After them, seven other cows came up out of the Nile. They looked ugly and skinny. They were standing beside the other cows on the riverbank. The ugly, skinny cows ate up the seven cows that looked healthy and fat. Then Pharaoh woke up.

He fell asleep again and had a second dream. In that dream, seven heads of grain were growing on one stem. They were healthy and good. After them, seven other heads of grain came up. They were thin and dried up by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up. It had been a dream. - Genesis 41:1-7



Say: As we learned last week, dreams were very important at that time, especially in that part of the world. Pharaoh became worried when he woke up from his dreams. He wanted someone to explain what they meant. So he called for all the magicians and wise men in Egypt, but no one could interpret the dreams. **Ask:** Who do you think could interpret Pharaoh's dreams? *God - through Joseph.* **Say:** There was one person in Pharaoh's palace who was **living proof** that Joseph could interpret dreams correctly.



Finally, the king's chief cupbearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh. "Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning. There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. And everything happened just as he had predicted. - Genesis 41:9-13a NLT



So Pharaoh sent for Joseph.

Here is where we start to see just how God had been in control during Joseph's entire life. It was not by chance that Joseph was taken to Egypt, or sold to Potiphar, or accused by Potiphar's wife, or thrown in prison where he would meet the cupbearer. It took years, but God worked everything together so that Joseph would meet with Pharaoh this day (Romans 8:28). These events were caused by people's sin - God did not cause or encourage the sin! But only our completely GOOD God can take things that start out bad and use them for good.

God was waiting for just the right time to release Joseph from prison. God could have thrown the prison door wide open whenever He wanted to. But God had a purpose for Joseph in prison. Sometimes we can't see everything God is doing. It has been said, "When you can't see God's hand, you have to trust His heart." We may never know all that God was doing with Joseph, but we know that God was growing his faith, and God was waiting for the perfect time to release Joseph. The timing was perfect for Joseph, Pharaoh, and everyone in the land.

Application: It is the same in your life. God loves you, and He is ALWAYS at work in your life for His glory and your good (Jeremiah 29:11). It may take a long, long time for you to see the good that God is doing. But you can trust that God's timing is perfect!

JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH'S DREAMS (Genesis 41:14-40)

Say: Finally, Joseph stepped out of the dark, musty-smelling prison. He probably squinted his eyes against the sunlight as he was taken to Pharaoh's palace, breathing in the fresh air along the way. He was even allowed to shave his unkempt beard and put on new clean clothes before he was taken before Pharaoh. Joseph must have felt like a new man!



Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream. No one can tell me what it means. But I've heard that when you hear a dream you can explain it." - Genesis 41:15

Say: Let's not forget how unusual it was for a Pharaoh to get advice from a slave and prisoner! God had made it clear to Pharaoh that Pharaoh was not all-knowing. Even if some people thought Pharaoh was a god, clearly he is not! Now he needed Joseph's help.

"**I can't do it,**" Joseph replied to Pharaoh. "**But God will** give Pharaoh the answer he wants." - Genesis 41:16

Say: Joseph did not take credit for being able to interpret dreams. He knew that his gift of interpreting dreams came directly from the Lord. Joseph was humble, and he pointed Pharaoh to the all-knowing God. Did you know that God makes a wonderful promise about being humble? God promises to honor those who are humble (Matthew 23:13, James 4:10).



So Pharaoh told his dreams to Joseph. He told him about the seven healthy cows that were eaten up by the seven skinny cows. And Pharaoh told Joseph about the second dream where seven healthy pieces of grain were swallowed up by seven thin, dry pieces of grain.

Joseph told Pharaoh that both dreams had the same meaning. In the first dream, the seven healthy cows were a symbol for the coming seven years. In those years, Egypt would thrive. There would be more than enough of food to eat and water to drink. But the seven ugly, skinny cows were a symbol for the following seven years. In those years, there wouldn't be enough food to eat. The people would be very hungry, to the point of starving.



The dream of the good grain and shriveled-up grain was just like the first. The seven good pieces of grain stood for the seven years with plenty to eat, and the seven dry pieces of grain stood for the seven years of hunger. The seven years of famine would be so terrible that people wouldn't even remember the good years when there had been plenty to eat. Joseph explained:

God gave the dream to Pharaoh in two forms. That's because the matter has been firmly decided by God. And it's because God will do it soon." - Genesis 41:29-32

Say: God gave these dreams to Pharaoh so Pharaoh would know what was about to happen. There was a terrible famine coming, but in His grace and mercy, God sent His servant, Joseph, to warn Pharaoh (Amos 3:7). And when God sends a warning, He also sends instructions (Genesis 6:13-21, 1 Kings 17:1-4). God had a plan to provide food during the seven years of famine. Because Joseph abided in (or remained with) God, he could hear God's plan very clearly.



Joseph told Pharaoh to choose a wise and understanding man, and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. And Pharaoh should appoint officials under him. During the seven years when there was plenty of food, they should store up one-fifth of the food that was grown. They should put this extra food in big storehouses. Then when the famine hit the land, the Egyptians could use the grain that was stored up. That way, the people would not starve (Proverbs 30:24-25). Isn't that a wise plan?

Pharaoh thought that the plan was very wise. He thought about whom he should put in charge of the land. Listen carefully to what Pharaoh said next:

So Pharaoh said to (his officials), "The spirit of God is in this man. We can't find anyone else like him, can we?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "God has made all of this known to you. No one is as wise and understanding as you are. You will be in charge of my palace. All of my people must obey your orders. I will be greater than you only because I'm the one who sits on the throne." - Genesis 41:38-40

Say: Can you imagine the surprised look on Joseph's face? Joseph never imagined that Pharaoh would choose him to do such an important job. Next to Pharaoh, Joseph would be the most powerful man in all of Egypt. Just a few hours before, he was a slave and a prisoner who lived in dungeon! God can turn any situation upside-down! Remember God's promise about humble people? God promises to honor those who are humble. Joseph had lived a humble life, serving Potiphar and serving the men in prison. He was humble before Pharaoh, and now he was being honored. God ALWAYS keeps His promises!

JOSEPH IN CHARGE OF EGYPT (Genesis 41:41-57)

Say: Pharaoh made an official announcement that Joseph was in charge of Egypt.



Then Pharaoh took his ring off his finger. It was the ring he used to stamp all of the official papers. He put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes that were made out of fine linen. He put a gold chain around his neck. He also had him ride in a chariot. Joseph was now next in command after Pharaoh. - Genesis 41:42-43a

A King's ring was a symbol of his power, and Pharaoh had given his ring to Joseph. Now, Joseph had the power to give orders that all the Egyptians must obey. Pharaoh



also gave Joseph fancy robes to wear. Does this sound familiar to anyone? Pharaoh even gave Joseph a wife. Joseph was thirty years old when all of this happened.



For seven years, the land produced tons and tons of food, just as Joseph had said it would. Joseph traveled all over Egypt and made sure the extra grain was being stored. Joseph stored up so much grain that he couldn't even keep a record of it anymore. It was like grains of sand on the seashore. Joseph was a hard-working, loyal official for Pharaoh (Colossians 3:23-24).

During these good years, God blessed Joseph with two sons. Joseph named his first son Manasseh, which means forget, because the Lord caused Joseph to forget all of his troubles. Joseph named his second son Ephraim, which means fruitful, because God gave Joseph so many blessings in Egypt.



Finally, the seven abundant years in Egypt came to an end. **Ask:** Was this a surprise to the Lord? **No.** **Say:** Because Joseph abided with God, and listened to God, it was not a surprise to Joseph or Pharaoh either. When the Egyptians started getting hungry, they came to Joseph and bought grain. The famine was so severe that other countries also ran out of food. People from every country came to Joseph to buy grain. God is so good! His plan provided plenty of food for everyone who needed it.

Application: There is nothing that can happen in your life that is a surprise to God. When you trust His plan, and obey His voice, He will provide everything you need, even in your most difficult times.

GOD'S PLAN & PROMISES (Genesis 12:2-3)

Say: God kept His promise to honor anyone who is humble when he put Joseph in charge of Egypt. Let's look at some other promises that God had made many years before, to Joseph's great-grandfather, Abraham. **Ask:** Can anyone remember the promises that God made to Abraham? *Listen for answers.* **Say:** Let's read the first promises God made to Abraham:

PPT Verse

*I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. **I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.** - Genesis 12:2-3 NIV*

Abraham did nothing to deserve these wonderful promises. God gave them by His grace. God promised to make Abraham's family grow and grow and grow. God would bless Abraham's family like no family had ever been blessed before. God would bless any person or any country that blessed Abraham's family. But anyone or any country that was mean to Abraham's family would be punished. And the most special promise was that all people on the earth would be blessed through Abraham's family.



As our story unfolds, we'll see that God kept each of these promises. Today, we can see that God blessed Pharaoh because Pharaoh blessed Jacob, just as God promised He would. Pharaoh became famous and incredibly respected because his land was the only nation that had food while every other nation was starving. Just think how smart Pharaoh must have seemed to all the other nations! Also, Pharaoh ended up with great wealth and property because he followed God's plan. And the most important blessing for Pharaoh was that God revealed Himself to Pharaoh. God showed Pharaoh that He cares about people and He is the great Rescuer who always has a plan to help us. God showed Pharaoh that He is full of grace, blessing Pharaoh even though Pharaoh did not deserve it.



Say: So, things finally turned around for Joseph. **Ask:** Do you think it was hard for Joseph to wait in prison for two whole years after the cupbearer promised to help him get out of jail? **Say:** It may have been hard to wait for God's timing, but just think about this: If Joseph had been released from prison two years earlier, he would not have been around to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. All the people in Egypt and the surrounding countries would have starved to death! Joseph would have starved to death! It was God's perfect timing that allowed Pharaoh to meet Joseph when Pharaoh needed help. God's perfect timing caused Pharaoh to listen to Joseph, to learn about God, and provide food for the nations.

Application: Raise your hand if you are really good at waiting. Sometimes it is really hard to wait. It is hard to wait for your birthday, and for Christmas. It is even harder to wait for rescue when you are in a really difficult situation, like Joseph. But you can ALWAYS trust God's timing. Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait for the Lord. Be strong and don't lose hope. Wait for the Lord." Remember that God's grace gives you the power to do what He wants you to do (Titus 2:11-12). When you feel like you can't wait for one more minute, ask God to give you the grace to wait for His perfect timing.

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PPT Main Point

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