



## Lent Devotional Week 4 Wednesday, March 18 through Tuesday, March 24

### Wednesday, March 18 Moses

From Exodus Chapter 4:8-13 – Moses having a conversation with God about leading His people out of Israel:

*The LORD said, “If they do not believe you or do not respond to the first sign, they might believe because of the second sign. If they do not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you are to take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry land.”*

*But Moses said to the LORD, “Please, LORD, I have never been eloquent, either in the past or more recently or even since you started speaking to your servant, for my mouth and tongue are slow and clumsy.”*

*So the LORD said to him, “Who made a mouth for people? Or who makes someone mute or deaf, able to see or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go, and I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you will speak.”*

*But he said, “Please, LORD, send someone else.”*

When I first read this, I felt heartbroken. Moses is talking direct to God! Moses is given miracles to perform and the assurance that God will be with him every step of the way. And he tries to turn it down! How could he do that!

Probably all of us have parallel stories we can share where it was obvious that God wanted to send us on a mission and we responded with, “Lord, please send someone else.” It is always so much easier to judge what is going on in someone else’s life, especially when we see the final outcome. But when we don’t have that hindsight in our own lives, it is much harder. Especially when God uses the mission to refine us along the way. Even for Moses, it wasn’t a smooth

journey of just marching in and taking God's people out of Egypt. There were many long and difficult obstacles to overcome that were so discouraging.

Prayer - Father, we want to say "Yes!" to you even before you ask the question. But you reach into the hidden and difficult parts of our heart that need to be changed and redeemed, and the reality is that we find ourselves saying, "Send someone else!" Help us to have the faith and courage to keep taking that next step with you through those tough assignments, knowing that you are with us each and every step. Amen

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## **Thursday, March 19** **Joseph – Part 1**

*"Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.*

*Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."*

*His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Genesis 37:3-8*

It is easy to look back with hindsight, especially at someone else's life, and think, "What a stupid thing to say!" The Bible stories are fascinating because they tell the story of real people, with all their flaws, imperfections, and sins, and how God used them in powerful ways if they stayed faithful to Him despite their poor choices and mistakes. This is the story of Joseph, who was the great grandson to Abraham, and the son of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob (Israel) who had a total of 12 sons. These 12 sons went on to become the 12 tribes of Israel, and God's chosen people, the children of Israel.

Prayer – Father, we often don't act wisely and instead make poor decisions. We say what we should not say, or don't say what we should say. Despite that you forgive us, love us, teach us, and guide our paths. Thank you that *in all things You work together with those who love You to bring about what is good.* Romans 8:28

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## **Friday, March 20** **Joseph – Part 2**

Joseph's brothers hated him so much that they planned to kill him, but instead sold him into slavery. He ended up being purchased by a high official in Egypt named Potiphar. Joseph did the

best he could in this environment in which he landed, and God blessed his efforts such that Potiphar put him in charge of everything. But then Potiphar's wife took interest in Joseph.

*"Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"*

*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. 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?" Genesis 39:7-9*

Although Joseph did the right thing and fled, things did not turn out well for him:

*"One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 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.*

*She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."*

*When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. Genesis 39:11-19*

Joseph was faithful to God, did all the right things, and ended up in prison. Joseph would have every reason to lose faith and be angry with God. But Joseph kept the faith and kept doing the best he could in each environment in which he landed.

*"But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. 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. 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" Genesis 39:21-23*

And though things still looked static and not optimal for Joseph, his story was not complete. The best was yet to come!

Prayer – Father, sometimes we feel that the world is unjust and cruel. And it is, and we sometimes blame you for it. Sometimes we feel that we are in a prison and there is no hope for us. The story of Joseph shows us that even in the darkest dungeons of life, you are there with us,

loving us and taking care of us. Keep us faithful and true to you, knowing that indeed, the best is yet to come. Amen

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## **Saturday, March 21**

### **Joseph – Part 3**

We pick up the story where Joseph has been unjustly and unfairly accused, and thrown into prison. God blessed him in that environment, but it was still a prison. The potential for freedom and release finally happens one day when Joseph interprets the dreams of two of the other captives, the chief cupbearer and the baker. Joseph prays for direction from the Lord and correctly predicts the meaning of the dreams such that the cupbearer will be set free and the baker will be executed. Joseph asks the cupbearer to remember him when he is set free, so as to help him also be freed.

*The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him. Genesis 40:23*

Does this describe your life? In a metaphorical prison, forgotten, and with no end in sight? How can you possibly be of service to God in this sort of situation? Interactions are severely limited, the routine is the same every day, with the same people, and in the same environment. The potential for change, for freedom, for hope, is just not evident.

The Psalms echo this feeling through the centuries. Even Jesus quoted this one as He was dying on the cross.

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?  
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest. Psalm 22:1-2*

Prayer - Father, sometime it feels like we are in a prison with life's circumstances and emotions that are doing battle for our heart. It can be so hard to wait and not know what might be next in our story. There is no hope outside of you. These stories give us hope and confidence that you are right there beside us even when it feels like we are alone. Help us to be assured that wherever we find ourselves, there you are as well. Amen

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## **Sunday, March 22**

### **Joseph - Part 4**

Joseph hung out in the prison environment for two more years. Why that long? Only God knows the answer. The story continues with all sorts of new drama and interactions within the perfect timing of the Lord. We can never see that perfect timing from where we sit in life. The choices we make in the prisons of our lives can make all the difference in the next chapters of our stories.

All Joseph could do was just be in this environment and cast his hope on the Lord and appreciate the blessings that the Lord provided in this particular situation. Joseph had choices. He could be miserable and angry and lose faith, or he could give thanks to God for the blessing He was given in this limited environment, make the best of it, and continue to have faith and wait upon the Lord.

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

Pharaoh, the title for the King of Egypt, actually had a couple of dreams. When Pharaoh tried to find someone to interpret them, the Cup Bearer finally remembered Joseph, who was called from prison, cleaned up, and presented before Pharaoh. Joseph told him that the Lord could interpret the dreams, and so after praying again to the Lord for the interpretation, went on to explain the meaning of those dreams. He told Pharaoh that the dreams portrayed 7 good years of plenty and then 7 years of terrible famine. Joseph then suggested a plan to stock up during the 7 years of plenty in order to survive the 7 years of draught.

*"Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." Genesis 41:39-40*

Now suddenly, after all this time, Joseph was in the place of highest honor and power in all the land, second only to Pharaoh.

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1*

Prayer - Father, we can become so easily discouraged in this life, and sometimes having faith is really hard. Help us to feel encouraged that you are in control and will bring redemption in the stories of our lives and in this world, in your perfect timing. Help us to "wait upon the Lord" with faith, with confidence, and within your peace. Amen

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## **Monday March 23**

### **Joseph – Part 5**

Joseph carried out his plan and stored up huge quantities of food for the upcoming famine. The famine occurred as predicted and Joseph then sold grain and food to all the people in the land.

*"So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.*

*Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground." Genesis 42:5-6*

The prophesy of Joseph's childhood dream had been fulfilled. The dream that caused his brothers such anger that they sold him into slavery was being played out. Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. Joseph questioned them to see into their hearts after all these years and he saw sorrow and regret. Joseph had the power to have them executed or to deny them food, but instead he forgave them and was overwhelmed with love, especially when he learned that he had a younger brother who he had never met.

*"Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence." Genesis 45:3*

*"Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance." Genesis 42:4-7*

This must have been a lot for Joseph's brothers to take in. The great sin and secret of what they had done to Joseph had been heavy in their hearts for many years. They had admitted to that earlier in Joseph's hearing.

The brothers were remorseful for their sin against Joseph, and Joseph had a heart to forgive them. For Joseph had watched first hand for many years how the Lord had used every tough circumstance to bring about redemption for himself and his entire family. The story has a happy ending with Israel (Jacob) being reunited with his favorite son, who he thought had been killed so many years ago.

*"As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time." Genesis 46:29*

Prayer - Father, we can make such a mess of our lives that it all seems hopeless. But you love us with an amazing love and will step right into our mess and work through it for our good and to your glory. Thank you for this amazing gift of love and grace. Amen

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## Tuesday, March 24

### Joseph – Part 6

Joseph had a beautiful role model of forgiveness and reconciliation to follow in his Father, Israel (Jacob) and his uncle Esau. Read the story of Jacob and Esau for background – Genesis 25:19-34 and Genesis 27.

Jacob and Esau were the sons of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham. Jacob got Esau to sell his birthright away during a time of stress for Esau. Then when their father was about to die, Jacob also took Esau's blessing by pretending to be Esau.

*“Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”*  
Genesis 27:41

Jacob had to flee to other relatives in a distant land to escape the wrath of Esau. After many years when they each had established separate lives for themselves, Jacob met Esau out in the desert and was terrified of what would happen, because Esau had become very powerful in his own right. But there was forgiveness between them and they reconciled together as their children watched. Joseph was one of those children.

*“Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.”* Genesis 33:1-4

Would the story of Joseph and his brothers have been different if they had not watched forgiveness in action, and had that as a role model in their lives?

Prayer- Father, we are seeing that what we say, what we do, and the choices we make affect not only our story but the stories of others and future generations. It can be very hard to forgive the wrongs and injustice that we encounter in life. It can be especially hard in our own families where expectations and emotions run high. Thank you for being the ultimate role model for us. We can forgive because we have been forgiven. Amen