

Obedient Love

Dorinda was standing behind her table at her mother's nursing home garage sale. The active 60 year old was one of 12 vendors who had set up on this gorgeous morning. Dorinda had retired early from her job after being unfairly laid off. She learned only two months later that her company hired a woman half her age.

She did not heed the advice of many to sue her old boss. Dorinda had spent the past six months working at her house and volunteering at the nursing home. While she was financially solvent, Dorinda's checkbook had slimmed down, and she missed working with the public.

The activities director walked up and suddenly asked Dorinda what new things she would like to see the residents at the home do. "What about having a fashion show, a carnival, or taking them out to an oldies concert?" Dorinda said.

"Those are great ideas! I believe this is fate," said the director. "Would you be interested in replacing me? I am retiring in two months. You have been working with us for the past six months, and you have many great ideas. Your business degree and background make you an excellent candidate, and the staff and the nursing home administrator love you!"

"I could see you even more!" exclaimed Dorinda's mother.

"I think you will be pleasantly surprised at how much the job pays," continued the director. "What do you say?"

"I say yes!" said Dorinda. "I didn't come here for a job, but to be a blessing and help out."

Dorinda's mother thanked God in her heart.

1. *Is obeying rules, regulations, and laws difficult for you? Explain your answer.*

2. *Why are you more apt to obey someone you love?*

3. *Why does being confident in God's love for you make it far easier to be obedient to His commands?*

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams

Genesis 41:25-32, KJV

25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Genesis 41:25-32, NIV

²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. ²⁷The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

²⁸"It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, ³⁰ but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. ³¹The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. ³²The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon."

Genesis 40 details two dreams Joseph interpreted concerning Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker while they were in prison with him. In Genesis 41, Joseph was brought out of prison to interpret a pair of troubling dreams Pharaoh had (vss. 1-7). Neither Pharaoh nor his most trusted advisors could fathom the meaning of the dreams, but the king's cupbearer remembered his encounter two years earlier with Joseph. Pharaoh sent for Joseph to interpret the set of dreams. When questioned, Joseph credited God with revealing the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams (vss. 9-16).

The first dream showed seven healthy cows, followed by seven sickly cows. The second dream involved seven heads of full-bodied grain, followed by seven heads of withered grain. Pharaoh saw the ugly cows devour the healthy cows, and the shriveled grain consume the thriving grain (vss. 17-24).

The God whom Joseph worshiped and served—despite about 13 years of hardship and isolation (compare 37:2; 41:46)—was using him to disclose to Pharaoh what God would soon do (41:25). The seven fat cows and plump heads of grain both represented seven years of prosperity. In contrast, the seven gaunt cows and withered heads of grain represented seven years of severe famine so widespread and horrific that all the prosperity would be forgotten and wiped out due to the devastating effects of the famine. Pharaoh's seeing two versions of the same dream was God's way of signaling that the matter was divinely decreed and would soon occur.

4. *What reason did Joseph give for Pharaoh's two dreams?*

5. *To what circumstances did Pharaoh's dreams point?*

Joseph's Advice to Pharaoh

Genesis 41:33, 37-40, KJV
 33 Now therefore let Pharaoh
 look out a man discreet and

Genesis 41:33, 37-40, NIV
³³And now let Pharaoh look
 for a discerning and wise man

KJV

wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

NIV

and put him in charge of the land of Egypt."

³⁷The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.

³⁸ So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰You 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."

Because God was sure to act as He had declared through Joseph, he urged Pharaoh to take immediate action to find someone who had good judgment to head a nationwide grain program. This person would gather the excess food and grain during the seven abundant years and stockpile the food in various cities throughout Egypt (vs. 35). Pharaoh would thus ensure that there would be enough food to eat when the seven years of famine came. To do otherwise would bring about widespread starvation and the eventual ruin of the nation.

As the royal court deliberated who should be appointed to oversee the entire operation, Pharaoh openly wondered whether they could find a more suitable person than Joseph, someone in whom resided "the spirit of God" (vs. 38). Since Pharaoh accepted Joseph's statement that God had revealed to him the meaning of the dreams, Joseph was therefore the wisest person in Egypt, so he would be the national overseer.

For Joseph to direct the project, he would manage the household of Pharaoh and have charge over all his officials

and inhabitants. Only Pharaoh would rank higher than Joseph and retain supreme authority over the kingdom.

6. What recommendation did Joseph make to Pharaoh?

7. What pivotal decision did Pharaoh make?

Joseph Begins a Family

Genesis 41:50-52, KJV

50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.

51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

Genesis 41:50-52, NIV

⁵⁰Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On.

⁵¹Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵²The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

During the seven years of abundance, Joseph married Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, an Egyptian priest who served at On, a shrine for the worship of Ra, the sun-god.

Before the famine came, Asenath bore Joseph two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. "Manasseh" (vs. 51) possibly means "he who brings about forgetfulness." The term sounds like and possibly is derived from a Hebrew verb that means "to forget." Most likely, "Ephraim" (vs. 52) means "to bear fruit" and is derived from a verb that means "twice fruitful" or "double fruitfulness." The name reminded Joseph that in a land where he had endured so much "affliction" (KJV), God had made Joseph fruitful.

8. What did Joseph's two sons' names indicate about the time he had spent in Egypt?

Joni Eareckson Tada

On a warm summer day in 1967, a 17-year-old girl dove into the Chesapeake Bay and fractured her vertebra, paralyzing her from her shoulders down. This athletic teenager, who was named after her father, an Olympian himself, discovered that she could never in the same way ride horses, go hiking and swimming, and play tennis as she had before the accident.

In her autobiography, *Joni*, Joni Eareckson admitted that she wallowed in depression, entertained suicide, and cried out in anger against God. Nevertheless, she still clung to her Lord Jesus, and in her struggles her faith deepened so that anyone who has met her is immediately struck by her humility, courage, and kindness. As years have gone by, God has blessed her with a husband, a gift for painting with her teeth, and a ministry that includes more than 40 books, several musical albums, and a film about her life and in which she starred.

In obedience to Christ, Joni founded the Christian ministry Joni and Friends in 1979. This organization has ministered to tens of thousands of people. Its radio programs have received numerous awards, and she has served on the National Council on Disability, as well as sitting on other boards that deal with the disabled.

Joni, however, is not alone in rising above hardships and setbacks to express a dynamic faith in Christ. Countless faithful believers have put their trust in God as they obeyed the demands He has placed on them. And in so doing, God's guidance has set them on a path full of the blessings only His love can provide.

9. *Have you clung to God's love through a great hardship? Explain your answer.*

10. *Why is giving up on God's love not the best option?*

11. *Why is the path to God's best life for you found in obedience to Him?*

Abide in the Lord's Will

Joseph would not have been in a position to save his family had he not experienced so many adversities. His story reminds us that God does have a plan for each of His children, a plan that abounds with His love and blessings.

► *How could you be more obedient to the Lord this coming week? Write some things here you could do each day of the coming week. At the end of each day, describe what you did and how your obedience displayed God's love to yourself and others.*

KEY VERSE

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

—Genesis 41:39-40, KJV

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, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

September 14 through September 20

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 51:1-12—Have Mercy on Me, a Sinner.
- Tues.** Luke 23:9-15 —Pilate's Judgment of Jesus, "Not Guilty."
- Wed.** Genesis 42:1-5—Brothers Sent to Egypt to Buy Grain.
- Thurs.** Genesis 42:26-28—Joseph Returns Money with Grain.
- Fri.** Genesis 42:29-34—Joseph Questions Motives of Brothers.
- Sat.** Genesis 42:35-38—Jacob Vows Not to Send Benjamin.
- Sun.** Genesis 42:6-25—Joseph Confronts Brothers for Past Behavior.