

Women's Bible Study – Fall 2008

Overcoming: A Life Well Lived

The Life of Joseph from the book of Genesis

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Overcoming a Perilous Future – Genesis 40:23- 41:40

Jann Wright



God often provides me with object lessons for the topics I teach. Sometimes I approach topics with a bit of apprehension because I am not always eager to learn the lesson that may be laid out before me. Several years ago I remember very clearly preparing to teach Philippians 4:6,7. The verses read, “⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”. The command to not be anxious seemed to be followed by a near tidal wave of events, all anxiety provoking. These each required the daily, if not hourly practice of not being anxious.

Today's/tonight's lecture is no exception. An object lesson was placed squarely in my path. My cousin, who is my 99 year-old grandmother's sister's daughter, recently came to Mayo for an evaluation. I had not seen her since my mother's funeral 15 years ago. She is a wife and a mother to two adult children, and a recent grandmother to two very young grandchildren. She had been healthy for years, but in the last year and a half had had a host of concerning symptoms including a dramatic weight loss. She was diagnosed with a rare genetic rheumatological disease called amyloidosis, a condition in which the liver makes an additional protein. It sounds rather benign and it is for decades, until eventually this protein begins to build up in vital organs.

She came to Mayo to begin the process for a liver transplant; an eventuality she expected to be in the intermediate future. She was planning ahead, getting her ducks in a row, so to speak. Surprisingly, she learned she will need to accelerate the process and quickly get on the list for a liver transplant. This is necessary as her heart is now showing damage from the protein build up; and if not treated soon, she will require both a heart and liver transplant. That is a more difficult combination to obtain, especially complicated by her blood type. That is a rather sobering illustration to ponder when contemplating a lesson on Overcoming a Perilous Future.

Review

Our scripture passage this morning/evening is found in Genesis Chapter 41. It has been two weeks since our last lecture, so let's take a few minutes to review. Our central character, Joseph, at the age of 17 had been sold by his brothers into slavery. He had been taken to Egypt and there purchased by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Even as a slave, the Lord was with Joseph and He made all he did prosper, so much so that Potiphar entrusted Joseph with all the responsibilities of his household.

Things seemed to go well for a while. There was just this glaring issue regarding Potiphar's wife. She repeatedly tried to lure Joseph to sleep with her. One day she became more brazen and caught him by his garment and demanded that he sleep with her. He refused and fled; but not before she managed to strip him of his garment and scream for the servants. Joseph was thrown into prison, falsely accused of attempted rape.

In prison we are again told that the Lord was with Joseph and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison so that he committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners. One day on his appointed rounds Joseph encountered two prisoners, the King's former Baker and Cupbearer. Apparently Joseph was astute enough to notice that one day they were downcast. Upon further inquiry, Joseph learned that each had had a dream and there was no available interpreter. So Joseph interpreted their dreams. The interpretation for the Cupbearer was favorable, in three days he would be restored to his former position of honor in the King's Court. The Baker however, learned that he would be executed in three days. Joseph respectfully asked the Cupbearer to remember him when he was released; but ²³ The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him. Can you imagine? How could you forget something that important? And he just didn't forget for a few days, but for a few years.

Joseph's Perilous Future

So Joseph continues his stay in prison, his future is perilous. Webster's¹ defines peril as: exposure to risk of harm or loss. It's synonymous with danger. We could further expand our understanding by noting some characteristics of a Perilous Future. As I have considered my cousin's health issues, my mother-in-law's recurrent lung cancer and Joseph's situation in prison, I think there are several common characteristics of a Perilous Future.

Characteristics of a Perilous Future

The first characteristic is **uncertainty**. There is uncertainty regarding the future. What will happen? When will it happen? How will it come about? There is uncertainty about the timing and specifics of future events. Joseph must have wondered: Will I ever get out of prison? Will I ever see my family again? Will I die here?

This uncertainty was in sharp contrast to his perception at age seventeen when he was living at home. He was receiving preferential treatment from his father. Some of his older brothers had damaged their opportunities for leadership due to their inappropriate and rash behaviors. He had been given a dream indicating a future with an important distinguished role. Taking all these factors into account it seemed reasonably certain that a prosperous, successful, and fulfilling future awaited him. However, in an instant all that changed.

¹ "Peril." Webster's II New College Dictionary. 2001.

The second characteristic of a perilous future is the **risk of a poor outcome**. In the midst of difficult circumstances, and an uncertain future, there is concern that the outcome will be poor, undesirable, or even disastrous. It would be hard to envision how Joseph at this point could conceive of anything but a poor outcome to his situation. He had already suffered a string of poor outcomes.

A third characteristic of a perilous future is a **sense of powerlessness**. There is a feeling that you just don't have a lot of control over your situation. You can't do a lot to change your circumstances. That certainly described Joseph. He had done what he could; but there were a limited number of actions that he could take.

Perhaps today you find yourself in a perilous situation that meets all these criteria. Perhaps you are a mother trying to raise several small children and some days you just don't see how you're going to make it through. The time demands, the sleep deprivation, and the incredible responsibilities leave you completely overwhelmed.

Perhaps you are in a marriage where the honeymoon flames of passion and love have been replaced by silent indifference or, worse, a state of constant hostility. Perhaps you are in a difficult health situation. You or someone very close to you is suffering with a chronic disease or received a frightening diagnosis. Perhaps you are undergoing surgery or chemotherapy or radiation treatments.

Perhaps the perilous circumstance is with a child or grandchild who is making poor choices that will impact them for the rest of their lives. Perhaps your perilous situation is a financial one. You are looking at the stock market losses from the last few weeks and wondering how you will pay for college or retirement. Perhaps you need to sell a home and you are confronted with a very depressed real estate market. Perhaps you have a lot of debt and don't see any way to be financially solvent. Perhaps you or your husband have lost your jobs or been forced to take a job neither of you want. You wonder how you will even cover your basic needs. Perhaps your perilous situation is more closely aligned to Joseph and you have some involvement with the prison system that you never anticipated and certainly never wanted.

We don't have to look too deeply into our own lives or into the lives of those around us to see that a perilous future is a common reality. It is not an ancient concept recorded in the Bible and yet foreign to us. It is real, painful, and very contemporary.

Scripture Passage

Two long years have passed since Joseph's request to the cupbearer to remember him. Thirteen years have passed since Joseph was first sold into slavery. Time seems to have just crept along; but now events will move at an astonishing speed. Please open your Bibles to Genesis chapter 41 beginning with verse 1. We will read all the way to verse 40. I know it is a long passage; but I strongly believe that when we come to Bible Study, the most important thing we do is to read the Bible. And so even if you get

nothing else from this morning/evening, you can say the Word of God is read and revered in this place.

¹ When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, ² when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. ³ After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. ⁴ And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

⁵ He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. ⁶ After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. ⁷ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

⁸ In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. ⁹ Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. ¹⁰ Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. ¹¹ Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. ¹² Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. ¹³ And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged. "

¹⁴ So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. ¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." ¹⁶ "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

¹⁷ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, ¹⁸ when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. ¹⁹ After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰ The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. ²¹ But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up. ²² "In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. ²³ After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. ²⁴ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me." ²⁵ Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶ The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. ²⁷ The 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. ²⁹ Seven 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. ³¹ The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. ³² The 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. ³³ "And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. ³⁵ They should collect all the food of these good

years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. ³⁶ This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

³⁷ The 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" ³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰ 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."

The Nation's Perilous Future

Wow! We almost have to reread the passage to confirm the astonishing changes that have occurred in Joseph's life. Previously, in a single day, he went from a favored son in a wealthy family to a slave. Now, in a single day, he moves from being a prisoner to being second in command of the most powerful nation in the world. Joseph's concerns will shift as well. Now instead of concerns about his own perilous future he will leap to the international stage and accept the responsibility to provide for a nation and a world that will be starving. God had a plan for this young man that was beyond anything he could imagine. The plan was for his good and for his family's good, and for the nation's good.

The Dream

Let's look at a few details from the passage, beginning with Pharaoh's dream. Notice that dreams have played an important role throughout these chapters. Now, it is the occurrence of a dream by the highest monarch in the land that sets in motion a rapid turn of events.

Dreams are a frequent occurrence in the Bible. God spoke through dreams to his servants and to Pagan Kings. God can still speak through dreams to whomever he chooses. It does seem to be the case that in particularly spiritually dark places in the world that God does use this method of communication more frequently than among Christians in the United States. Perhaps it is because this is a necessary communication tool to reach those who do not have the benefit of the Written Word of God in their own language. However, dreams will never contradict scripture. We should have a healthy respect for dreams given the Biblical record and yet not put too much emphasis on them or overvalue them.

With this particular dream, it was the occasion of Pharaoh's birthday. We know that because earlier in Chapter 40 we were told that it was the occasion of Pharaoh's birthday when the Baker and Cupbearer were brought out of prison. Now two full years have passed, so it is likely that it was on the night of the King's birthday when he had this dream.

In Pharaoh's Dream he was standing by the Nile. The Nile is the longest river in the world measuring 4,160 miles. Egypt became the major breadbasket in the Ancient Near

East because the predictable flooding of the Nile provided water to allow for the growing of crops such as wheat.² Suddenly, seven beautiful, healthy, and large cows come up out of the river. They were grazing on the banks of the Nile. According to Commentator Henry Morris, "The cow was the emblem of Isis, the revered Egyptian goddess of fertility."³ Then seven ugly, thin, and ill fed cows emerged from the river and shockingly ate up the seven fat cows.

The second dream moved to a pastoral setting, grain fields. There was one stalk of grain and on it seven ears of wheat. They were plump and healthy; but then seven thin and wind beaten ears of grain appeared and swallowed them. Pharaoh awoke with a start. He was troubled at his dreams and their meaning. After all, he was seeing an attack on the very wealth and prosperity of Egypt and he knew it. He was also seeing a serious vulnerability of the gods he knew.

The Interpretation

Pharaoh immediately sent for the magicians and wise men of the land to interpret his dreams. Both the Egyptians and the Babylonians maintained what was known as "dream books".⁴ These were used to document past dreams and interpretations and then catalogued as part of the empirical scientific evidence used to interpret dreams. None of these aids were apparently helpful in interpreting Pharaoh's dream.

Finally, the Cupbearer remembered Joseph. He quickly tells the King of his experience in prison with Joseph. The King immediately sends for Joseph. This gives us some insight into the distress of the King. He is actually turning from the leaders of the land, and sending for a foreigner, a Hebrew, a criminal, to come straight from the prison to the throne room. Can you imagine the scene? Henry Morris puts it like this, "Finally, Joseph stood before Pharaoh, an impecunious young foreigner, a slave for thirteen years, in the presence of probably the most powerful monarch in the world! Joseph, however, was there because of God's providence; and his God was the very Creator of the world, before whom Pharaoh himself was but dust."⁵

A very different Joseph stands before Pharaoh than the young man of seventeen who impetuously told his brothers and father of a dream in which they would all bow down before him. Joseph is now a man of 30 who has been thoroughly tested and trained by God and now he is ready to assume leadership responsibilities of which he could have never dreamed.

Joseph is not an expert in dream interpretation as those in the Near East understood it. He has no dream book, and so he asks God for the interpretation. He then explains to the King that the seven fat cows and the seven plump ears of grain both symbolize the

² Gangel, Kenneth O. and Bramer, Stephen J., Anders, Max (ed). Holman Old Testament Commentary: Genesis. Holman Reference: Nashville, Tennessee 2002, 339.

³ Morris, Henry. The Genesis Record. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Michigan 1976, 576.

⁴ Walton, John H. The NIV Application Commentary. Zondervan, Grand Rapids Michigan 2001 page 672.

⁵ Morris, Henry. The Genesis Record. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Michigan 1976, 576.

same thing, seven years of incredible prosperity. The seven ugly cows and withered ears of grain in the same way symbolize seven years of famine that would be so disastrous they would wipe away even the memory of the years of prosperity. Joseph continues by suggesting that a wise man be appointed to save 1/5 of the produce during the years of prosperity so as to prepare for the years of famine.

Strategies to Overcome a Perilous Future

It is indeed a most interesting convergence of circumstances as we approach this lesson. There are many in our Women's Bible Study, in our Church, and in our Community who as individuals find themselves as Joseph did in the midst of a perilous future. We as a nation are also faced with many difficulties. In the last few weeks, we have seen major mortgage lenders go bankrupt. We have seen major insurance and financial institutions follow the same route. The stock market has seen the biggest swings in value in over twenty years. Those who have faithfully saved and invested are looking at portfolios with huge losses. We have an Upcoming Presidential Election with a choice between two men with very different approaches to addressing the future.

There is no better time to seek God. There is no better time to turn to the Word of God to understand how we are to cope with such difficult times both from an individual perspective and also from a national global perspective. So what do you do when you are facing a Perilous Future?

1. Be Patient

I realize that sounds simplistic and much easier in theory than in practice; but when confronting a perilous future we must be patient because the alternatives are not helpful. We either proceed forward with a patient expectation of God's care and provision or we choose to become anxiety ridden, bitter, and hopeless.

Be patient and consider the heroes of the faith who endured patiently before us. Consider Joseph who waits. He doesn't give up. He doesn't turn his back on God. He doesn't walk away from his faith. He doesn't become bitter. Consider Moses who spent 40 years in the desert, tending sheep. Consider David who was appointed to be King at a young age and yet was not recognized as King throughout Israel until 15 years later.

Be patient and consider that God has a purpose for us even in our waiting and his purpose is good. Deuteronomy 8:2-5 ² Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

Jeremiah 29:11 ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah's life was not easy; but God had good plans for him. We have to keep in mind, though, that our perspective is not the same as God's. We look at the immediate, at the events right in front of us, and naturally look within the parameters of our lifetime. God is looking at all of human history from beginning to end. That is why sometimes something that does not seem good to us now; may seem good when we can look back on it from the vantage point of history.

Be patient and consider that like Joseph your circumstances can change quickly and unexpectedly. God can do the unexpected and the seemingly impossible. Don't give up. You don't know how close you are to being elevated above your circumstances.

2. Be Obedient

During our patient wait we must be obedient. Joseph demonstrates this well. When he is confronted with a perilous future he is obedient. He performs his duties with excellence and integrity. He keeps himself sexually pure. Joseph is humble.

We can practice obedience while we wait as well. We have a lot of advantages of knowing what obedience looks like that Joseph did not have. We have the 10 Commandments, we have the lives of the Old Testament Saints, and we have the model life of Jesus Christ. We have the New Testament. We know what obedience is; but we must practice it under pressure.

My husband and I and our family went to the theater to watch the new movie, Fireproof; produced by Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia. Fireproof is a story about applying the principles of obedience to a marriage that seems beyond hope. You will find it of interest that it is the husband in this case that is trying to save the marriage. Granted he has a lot to be sorry for; but you can't help but be on his side as he practices patient obedience. Obedience doesn't guarantee an easy life or good circumstances; sometimes it seems like just the opposite; but we must persevere. God will reward a life of obedience. John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

3. Be Prepared

While we are waiting and obeying we also need to be preparing. Whatever our circumstance, there are always some things over which we have control, even if it's just our attitude. In many of our circumstances there are lots of things over which we have control. We can exercise that control and prepare.

We can prepare spiritually by spending time with God and his Word. We can make daily Bible Study a priority. How else are going to know how God intervenes in history? How He interacts with his people? How He trains them for greater service? What His promises are? What His provision is? What the future holds?

We cannot know these things unless we read about them in his Word. God has given us instruction regarding overcoming a perilous future. How sad if we never take time to read His instructions. We can prepare spiritually by spending time talking with God. We can bring him our fears, our anxieties, our hurts, our disappointments. We can ask him for strength, for wisdom, for comfort, for provision, and for assurance of our salvation.

We can help prepare others. Commentator, Matthew Henry whose commentary was originally written in 1706 wrote, "Note, It is the wisdom of parents not to bring up their children too delicately, because they know not to what hardships and mortifications Providence may reduce them before they die. Jacob little thought that ever his beloved Joseph would be thus bought and sold for a servant".⁶ We need to give careful thought to our role in the preparation of the young people under our care.

We can prepare our finances. We can set aside a portion of our income during prosperous times to help carry us through the lean times. This was the proposal recommended by Joseph, and it seems certainly inspired by God. This is a strategy of our church. Perhaps some of you read about it in *Ridgelines*. "Before construction began for our new building, the Elder Board recognized that the first years after the conclusion of the capital campaigns would be "lean" years as we would have a mortgage payment and a bigger facility to support, so the "Joseph Plan" was suggested. This involved storing up resources in the general fund while we didn't have a mortgage for these current lean years".⁷

4. Give God the Glory

As we face perilous circumstances, we must Give God the Glory. There will be moments even in the most difficult of places where we will glimpse the favor and mercy of God. Joseph encountered this periodically and we will likely as well. This may be one of our greatest tests because in those moments we must remember to give God the glory and avoid the temptation to grab credit for ourselves.

When Joseph appeared before Pharaoh, Pharaoh began the conversation by saying, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." Joseph in a profound display of maturity that demonstrates just how much he has grown in 13 years; does not use this moment to bargain for his freedom or to negotiate anything that would benefit himself; instead he humbles himself and gives Glory to God. ¹⁶ "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.

⁶ Henry, Matthew. Commentary on the Whole Bible. 1706. Crosswalk.com Bible Study Tools.

<<http://www.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/MatthewHenryComplete/mhc-com.cgi?book=ge&chapter=37>.

⁷ Foley, Mark. "What is our current financial status?" Ridgelines October 4-5, 2008: 7.

5. Remember the Vision

Finally, we must remember the Vision. I came across this strategy when one Commentator mentioned the fact that Joseph's vision must have given him comfort and encouragement during those long years in prison. I found myself saying, what vision? And then I remembered. Oh Yes, the dream where Joseph saw all of his family bowing down to him. The Dream revealed a future and a hope.

In the Bible God has provided many visions that reveal a future and hope; and provide comfort for us on our journey. John 14:1-3 ¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Revelation 21:1-4 ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

This lesson is quite a paradox because you see on the one hand all of us have a perilous future. Jesus said in John 16:33 ". . . In this world you will have trouble". But at the same time, all who are Christians, have an eternal future that is not at all perilous. Let us close with these words from 1 Peter 1:3-9:

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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Questions: e-mail us at wbs@autumnridgechurch.org

Discussion Questions for Overcoming A Perilous Future

1. From the lecture, discuss some of the characteristics of Joseph's circumstances that made his future perilous. Which of these do you think was the hardest for him?
2. Are any of those circumstances happening right now in your life? Which is the hardest for you?
3. Joseph took some actions in his very difficult situation that contributed to overcoming a perilous future; from the lecture what were some of them? Which of those actions do you find hardest to take in your own life? Why? How could you develop the ability to take some of those actions?
4. What were some evidences that you saw in this passage of God's presence in Joseph's difficult circumstances?
5. Name something from the lecture that you will take and apply to your life.

Study Questions for Overcoming A Perilous Future

1. Read Genesis 40:23 - 41:40.
2. Outline the Main Events in this Passage.
3. What were the main aspects of Pharaoh's dream? What was the interpretation of the dream?
4. What specifically about Joseph's situation made his future seem perilous? (Review Chapter 39:20-40:22) What were some broader themes that made his future seem perilous? (Example: Uncertainty)
5. Do any of those specific or general characteristics of a perilous future apply to you right now? To any one of your immediate circle of family or friends.
6. What are some specific things we learn about God from this passage? Give specifics and references.
7. What are some actions that Joseph took in this passage that contributed to overcoming a perilous future? Give specifics with references.
8. Choose one of the actions (in question 7) to work on to help you overcome difficulties in your own life. How specifically could you work on that action in your own life?
9. Select three verses from the New Testament that give you a picture of who you are in Christ.