

Revealed
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Genesis 41:14-21, 33-37

Opening: Let's talk about things God would NEVER say. Now we know that God would never lie, never say anything impure, wicked, cruel, or unloving. Basically, God would never say anything that would contradict His perfect character. My question is about things God would never say as circumstances and events in life unfold?

As we look at this morning's text we're talking about God's plans for His people. We're sort of building on the testimony that Susan and I gave last week. We said scripture has a lot to say about plans in life:

- Proverbs 16:9 tells us we can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.
- Psalm 37:23 says the Lord directs the steps of the godly and delights in every detail of their lives.
- Proverbs 19:21 says we can make plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.
- We also said, God's plan for our lives is rarely a straight shot it's a journey.

Let's take a quick poll: When you take a trip for fun do you a) insist on detailed plans or b) take off and play it by ear in terms of routes, stops, hotels, etc.

- As we look at this chapter in Joseph's life, we will think about God's plans for us.
- When it comes to His plans for His people, God gives promises not blueprints, roadmaps, or five year plans.
- Why do you think God doesn't give us an advance copy of His plan for our lives?

The point: In His sovereignty, God doesn't give us an advance copy of His plan for our lives. In fact, sometimes He allows delays, detours, and dead ends in our journey. In those situations, He wants us to do three things: Surrender to what He has in mind; trust that His plans are better than our plans; and obey what He has revealed in scripture. If Christ-followers will surrender, trust and obey, God will reveal the way.

When we last left Joseph, he had been falsely accused of attempted rape and thrown into prison. **Genesis 39:21–22 (NLT)** said, **21** But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. **22** Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison.

In Genesis 40 Joseph interpreted the dreams of two prisoners, Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. The cupbearer promised to put in a good word Joseph with Pharaoh but he forgot that promise and two years went by. In Genesis 41, Pharaoh was troubled by strange dreams and looking for someone to interpret their meaning. It was then that the cupbearer remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh, "*I know a guy!*"

14 Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. **15** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it." **16** "It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."

- Pharaoh told Joseph his two dreams:
 - Seven fat cows, seven scrawny cows, the scrawny cows ate the fat cows.
 - Seven healthy ears of corn, seven sickly ears, the sickly ate the healthy.
- Joseph turned to God to interpret the dreams:
 - Seven years of "great plenty" followed by seven years of famine.
 - God has decreed this and it **WOULD** happen for sure.
 - Then Joseph offered Pharaoh a plan straight from God:

Genesis 41:33–37 (NLT) — **33** "Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. **34** Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. **35** Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. **36** That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land." **37** Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials.

- Impressed by Joseph and sensing that the "Spirit of God" was on him, Pharaoh made him his second in command to carry out the plan. After years of languishing in prison, Joseph was promoted from prisoner to Prime Minister.
- Joseph had experienced delays, detours, and what felt like dead ends. He was sold into slavery, he was thrown into prison, now he was called before Pharaoh.
- What did Joseph do every time he experienced a delay, detour, or dead end?
- In slavery, in prison what did Joseph do and how was he rewarded?
- Ever hear the expression, "*Bloom where you are planted?*" It's NOT in the Bible! What does it mean? How would it apply to Joseph?
- Paul said to be content in whatever situation we find ourselves. (Phil.4:11-13)
- He said we should make the most of every opportunity. (Eph. 5:16, Col. 4:5)
- Paul also wrote we should "lead the life the Lord has assigned" us. (1 Cor. 7:17)
- The exception: When we find ourselves in a situation unpleasing to God (ie. working in a sinful situation requiring compromise) we should "uproot" and move.
- Joseph did his best to improve the places God placed him, even terrible places.
- What can Joseph teach us about the attitude we should have in tough situations?
- When God allows an interruption to our plans in life it can feel like being on a journey and experiencing delays, detours, and what seem like dead ends.
- Let's look at each of those situations and learn from Joseph's example.
- **Delays** – When we are in traffic, and everything bogs down how **SHOULD** we respond (as opposed to how we feel like responding?)

- When it feels like God has allowed a delay in our plans, just like in traffic jams, we should relax and stay the course. We may be delayed but at least we are safe and sound as we wait. Perhaps the delay is God's protection or preparation.
- Joseph sat for two years waiting for that cupbearer to tell Pharaoh about him.
- **Detours** – Sometimes detours are our fault and sometimes not our fault at all.
- How might a detour in a trip be our fault based on something we've done?
- Sometimes detours in our life come because we didn't follow the map. We chose our own route. In spiritual terms we call that sin or disobedience to God.
- Examples: David's affair with Bathsheba and Peter's denial of Christ.
- In both cases when they repented (turned around and got back on the prescribed route) God restored them and used them. He turned a detour into a re-launch.
- Sometimes detours come even if we are doing our best to be obedient to God.
- A prime example is Joseph being sold into slavery and falsely accused.
- Though the detour wasn't Joseph's fault, God allowed it for reasons that were not evident. In slavery and in prison, Joseph trusted God and did what was right.
- When we suffer, what seems to be a setback or a detour we should ask God to reveal any disobedience on our part and if there is any confess and repent.
- If God doesn't reveal sin on our part, we should trust His plans for a "re-route."
- **Dead Ends** – Sometimes our situation can be so bad we feel like it's the end.
- Truth: For followers of Christ every ending is really a beginning. Let me repeat that for emphasis: If we've trusted Christ, every ending is really a new beginning.
- That is what we see with Joseph. All hope seemed to be lost but God wasn't through with Joseph. In fact, His plan for Joseph was just beginning.
- Things like job loss, financial setbacks, broken relationships, illness may feel like a dead end but God can turn it into the beginning of wonderful new chapter if we trust Him. Even physical death is not the end for a Christ-follower, it's the beginning of the eternal life God has promised for those who trust Him.
- How can I be so confident that God makes endings into new beginnings?
- **Isaiah 43:19 (ESV)** — **19** Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
- **Isaiah 46:9–10 (NIV)** — **9** ...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. **10** I make known the end from the beginning... 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.' (That's the sovereignty of God)
- God will replace delays, detours, and dead ends and with His divine direction. How can we learn God's divine plan for us?
- The subject of discerning God's will is a deep topic but here are some thoughts.
- Firsts, we should ask for His guidance in prayer, study His word for direction, listen to the voice of His Holy Spirit, pay attention to open or closed doors, and seek the counsel of godly people who want what is best for us.
- As a part of that search for God's will, here are three things always required:
 - **Surrender** – The first step in seeking God's perfect will is to surrender to whatever He has in mind and be determined to follow His lead and trust His timing.
 - As the hymn says, "*Have thine own way Lord ---Thou art the potter, I'm the clay.*"

- **Trust** – Decide in advance that in any delay, detour, or dead end we will trust that God loves us and will turn the situation to our good and for His glory. (Romans 8:28)
- One day Joseph would say to his wicked brothers: *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.”* **Genesis 50:20 (NLT)**
- We should have that same trust in God no matter our circumstances.
- **Obey** – If we are seeking God’s perfect will should do what we should always do, live in obedience to His commands no matter our situation.
- Joseph didn’t get bitter, he made things better. He trusted and obeyed.
- **Proverbs 3:5–6 (ESV) — 5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. **6** In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
- Other thoughts?

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- God gives promises not blueprints, roadmaps, or five year plans.
- In His sovereignty, God doesn’t give us an advance copy of His plan for our lives.
- Instead, He wants us to do three things:
 - Surrender to what He has in mind.
 - Trust that His plans are better than our plans.
 - Obey What He has revealed through scripture and through His Holy Spirit.
- When Christ-followers face delays, detours, and dead ends in our life’s journey, God will turn those frustrating situations into the fulfillment of His perfect plans.
- Remember, when we surrender, trust, and obey, God will reveal the way.