

NORTHEAST HOUSTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

SERMON – Stewardship Pt 2

Topic: A Faithful Steward

Scripture: Gen 41:26-32

02/12/2006

Genesis 41:25–32 (NKJV) ²⁵ Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one; God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do: ²⁶ The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one. ²⁷ And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. ²⁸ This *is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do. ²⁹ Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; ³⁰ but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. ³¹ So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe. ³² And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Quote: “life is 10% of what happens and 90% of how we react to what happens.”

How Do You Get to Heaven?

"If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale, and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into heaven?" I asked the children in my Sunday school class. "NO!" the children all answered.

"If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into heaven?" Again, the answer was, "NO!"

"Well, then, if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children and loved my wife, would that get me into heaven?" I asked them again. Once more they all answered, "NO!"

"Well," I continued, thinking they were a good bit more theologically sophisticated than I had given them credit for, "then how can I get into heaven?"

A five-year-old boy shouted out, "You gotta be dead!"

Many of you are familiar with the story of Joseph, the one that had a coat of many colors and was sold into slavery by his brother and ended up in the house of Potiphar as the chief steward of the house. When approached by Potiphar's wife Joseph tells of the extent of his stewardship.

Gen 39:8-9 ... "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you,..." NKJV

Later he was falsely accused and put into prison for several years.

He had a God given gift for the interpretation of dreams. This cause him to be brought to pharaoh for Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret. Joseph interprets the dream and is made the chief a steward over all of Egypt.

Besides this being a good lesson on the faithfulness on Joseph and the deliverance of God, there are some very important lesson for us today concerning good stewardship.

1 Faithfulness – Joseph was faithful even as a child.

Gen 37:12-14 Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am." 14 Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. NKJV

His father trusted Joseph to bring to him a faithful and true report. Joseph at an early age demonstrated faithfulness over a few or a small thing. Remember the reward promised by the Lord in the Matt 25 story.
Matt 25:23 23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' NKJV

We see that faithfulness pay off when Joseph, by the providence of God, become the steward/ruler over the whole house of Potiphar. He remained faithful to his stewardship position but more importantly he remained faithful to the commands of God. I believe if we are faithful to the commands and expectations of God it will carry over in to every area of our lives.

In spite of what looked to us as unfair treatment, and it was, Joseph and we could only see what was happening in the present. At the time Joseph was put into prison none of us would have wanted to trade places with him.

Application: There will be tough time that will come into our lives. We can become bitter about it or we can focus on how we can become better by it. If we cannot see how we can become better then let us focus on holding on until a change comes.

Quote – "life is 10% of what happens and 90% of how we react to what happens."

The story gives us an idea on how Joseph responded to this very negative situation that he himself did not cause. Often the trouble we find ourselves in is the trouble we caused ourselves. This was not the case with Joseph, he was innocent, he was faithful to his master/employer and maintained his faithfulness to God.

I would think that being in prison was a very low point in Joseph's life. Sometimes that is where we meet God. That is where we have a tender heart to receive Christ. God has been known to break many people only to build them into much better people.

When trouble comes into many of our lives, we get angry with God for letting it happen to US. Or we may feel that God has forgotten about us. We forget that we do not know the future but God does and if we are faithful to God, He will never be found less faithful to us. Let me read to you what is written.

Gen 39:21 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. NKJV

God will never leave His own, Jesus will never leave His own and the Holy Spirit will never leave us.

John 14:16–18 (NKJV)¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows

Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

*Matthew 28:19–20 (NKJV) ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; **and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**” Amen.*

Trouble will get in our way but Jesus will fix it after a while.

In God’s own time Joseph was released and became the chief steward over all of Egypt, because he was faithful in all the other things.

Application: God is aware of our faithfulness or lack of it all the time. It is God that can stir or change the heart of man it is our duty to remain faithful. We all must have what I call strengthening scripture. One of mine is:

*1 Thess 5:16-18 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; **for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.** NKJV*

If my conscious is clear and my relationship with God is clear then what God is allowing me to go through is only for my good. If it is a lesson, He is teaching me I want to hurry up and learn it. If it is chastisement then don’t want to repeat of it. But it may be, like Joseph, the way to elevate me to a greater or better position or place.

The next lesson in this story is for us to UNDERSTAND that we cannot see the future.

The Future is uncertain

God had gifted Joseph to interpret dreams not to tell the future. Be careful of those that claim to do so. God gave the dream to Pharaoh for he was the only one that could do something about it. But He gave it to him without understanding.

Look at this picture. You have a good person in prison that has the gift of interpretation but without a dream you don’t need interpretation. You have a ruler with a dream but without interpretation all you have is a dream. Now interpretation is part of understanding but with nothing to interpret there is nothing to understand. The dream was one thing, the interpretation was another and when they two came together there was understanding.

No matter how powerful you are or may become you may still lack understanding. No matter how gifted you are or may become, you still may lack understanding.

What’s the point – YOU cannot do everything alone, by yourself, without help, without advice, without a helping hand, without humbling yourself to listen to what someone else has to say.

The understanding of the dream tells of 7 good years of plenty and 7 bad years of famine. Young people please learn this, old folk live like you know this.

“GOOD TIMES WILL NOT LAST ALWAYS AND NEITHER WILL BAD TIMES.”

For some this lesson is hidden in the scripture hidden within the interest in the supernatural interpretation of dreams. As Christian steward of what God has given us, be it known that the seasons of plenty will not last always.

Whether we call it economic inflation, economic depression, company layoff, company or personal bankruptcy, a serious health problem, a serious legal problem, a theft, a war, a shut-off of the oil supply or even a mistake in mismanagement, there will be some lean years in our lives. It could happen when you are young or old.

The lesson is to prepare for it.

What Joseph did.

- 1 He recognized the signs of the coming famine (trouble)
- 2 He had a plan.
- 3 He set aside a portion of what he had.
- 4 In the lean years he rationed its use. He did not waste or use it up all at once.
- 5 He made it available to others at a fair price bringing and increase to Pharaoh.

In our personal financial world, most of the dreaming is about acquiring things which leads to spending, not saving. But dreams are not the key it is understanding. What good is a dream without understanding? I have had many of them.

We call Solomon the wisest man but that is not what he asked God for.

1 Kings 3:10-12 10 The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, **but have asked for yourself understanding** to discern justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, **I have given you a wise and understanding heart**, NKJV

Proverbs = 54 time mentioning "understanding."

Proverbs = 50 time mentioning "wisdom."

At the very least understanding is as important as wisdom. It is wise to seek understanding.

Back to our financial word.

- 1 Understand the times and know that lean years are coming.

Every day on the news we hear about the instability of oil, nuclear proliferation, the cost and potential of war, jobs being outsourced, cheap labor crossing our borders, corporations claiming bankruptcy, major corporations shutting down operation and laying people off by the thousands. Some of us are looking at retirement with a reduced income.

- 2 Make a plan about what and when you will purchase and your savings goal. We have become a consumer society, give it to me know. This generation has the lowest savings per-capita than any time in our history. We know of the "baby-boomer generation", there is "generation x", today there is "generation debt." The debt of the average American is staggering. We discussed last week how this affect your availability to serve God. Instead of bringing God an increase we cannot give Him back any portion of what He has given us. In effect we create a debt.

How did I make that reach? It is not hard. Those of us that have children and we give them an allowance when they are older, we give them, as best we can, security. If they want a car and can't pay, who has to pay? If they run up a credit card and get into debt over their heads, who has to pay? We are God's children and when we get in over our heads through poor stewardship, who do we call upon to get us out. CASE CLOSED.

- 3 Set aside a portion of what you get. Set aside for God and set aside for yourself. Most of us are working for more than one company. We work for the company that we report to and we work for many different credit card companies. We need to start working for ourselves and returning some **T**ime, **T**alent and **T**reasure back in the service for God.

4 Use wisely what you have. Ration your spending in the good years and in the lean years. Since I have been out of work, I do not spend on everything that I used to. I try to stretch my gas; I try to watch what I purchase.

5. Be willing to share but don't give too much away. Have you ever known anyone that did not have it to give or much to give and they give what they have to someone that doesn't need it? If a person is in need and they can exchange something or pay something for what you have then they should do so. I am not talking about withholding from those truly in need but you know the type of people I am referring to. Those that can work but choose not to.

As with Joseph, the spirit of God is giving us understanding and understanding comes with knowledge. In Proverbs the next most used item to have is knowledge. Proverbs = 42 times mentions "knowledge."

We are steward for God with all the resources, the bounty of the earth and sea. Stewards of His gifts of **T**ime, **T**alent and the **T**reasure we have. Steward of the Gospel He has given us to spread to other.

Let us strive to be free of the enslavement to the moneylender so that we can be better servants to God and bring to Him an increase.

*Proverbs 22:7 (ESV) ⁷ The rich rules over the poor, and **the borrower is the slave of the lender.***

END