

THE FAITH TO DREAM

LESSONS FROM JOSEPH



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By Shakeena Howard

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is filled with life lessons that when understood will provide the right guidance we need. Every situation we experience has a Bible story we can learn from, and this book focuses on the lessons we can learn from Joseph, a man who is easily the definition of God's favor and providence.

Joseph, the son of Israel, is undeniably a man of integrity and unwavering faith in God. His heart was pure, and this made him in tune with God in every way. Even at that, he seemed to have suffered unnecessarily; he was betrayed by his brothers and sold as a slave, then became a prisoner, but his faith in God remained strong. Because of this, he was able to rise to glory and become the second in command of all of Egypt.

On the surface, it could be a story of grass to grace, but it is way more than that. His story is not a straight path to success. No, it is filled with numerous twists and turns, up and downs, trials, and temptations, and most importantly, his constant trust in God.

What can go wrong when God is by your side? According to Joseph's story, a lot! But his story teaches us the most vital lesson: no matter what situation you find yourself in, keep trusting in God, and He will make you victorious.

There are a lot of lessons to learn from Joseph, but in this book, we will cover four vital lessons:

- Actualizing the dreams God has shown you.
- Remaining faithful in trying times.
- Living to show forth God's Glory.
- Forgiveness as a path to remain with God.

These lessons from Joseph will show how God's providence works for his people. As you read this book, may your mind be open to applying the lessons in your life as you accept that God has created you for his Glory, and He will work everything out for your good.

***Lesson 1: Don't tell anyone Your Dream or Vision Until after it
has come to pass.***

Have you ever told someone a dream or vision? But wished you hadn't? You were trusting and thought to your self surely, I can tell them. They perhaps may have been a brother or sister or a close friend. You told them your inner most secrets and thoughts. Only to be mocked and ridiculed, or even have harmed.

For most people, dreaming is as essential as breathing. When life gets hard or rocky, you hold on to that dream that's going to be actualized. A dream could be big or small, it could be being able to afford your rent, getting into a good school, flying first class, buying a house, or even starting your own company.

While you dream, it is important to keep in mind that not everybody has to know your dreams and visions. Not everyone may be ready to handle your blessings. Proverbs 10:14 tells us, the wise don't tell everything they know, but the foolish talk too much and are ruined.

Telling people that you want to buy a \$1,000,000 home. Or, that you want to be an employer of more than 300 people. There will always be people ready

to put you down, ready to say you're being unrealistic, and gaslight you into believing that you're wrong.

Here, Joseph's life teaches us an important lesson.

Joseph was highly favored from the very beginning. He was the first son of Rachel, who was Jacob's favorite wife, and that favoritism was passed on to him. And it was obvious. Out of the 12 sons Jacob had, he gifted Joseph alone with a robe of many colors, and Joseph was close enough to his father to report the misbehaviors of his older brothers.

With this, it is not hard to see why his brothers would hate him. They were born of the same father and yet they weren't treated the same. Each day, his brothers' hate for him grew, but Joseph seemed oblivious.

In addition to being the favorite child, Joseph was also a dreamer with proven abilities. His dreams were not based on probability; they were revelations and everything he saw came to pass. Now, Joseph had two dreams whose interpretations were his brothers bowing to him.

Was Joseph foolish for telling his brothers his dreams when it was obvious that they hated him? Maybe, but we all see that everything that happened led to the fulfillment of his dreams. Joseph's brothers had always hated him, but they only plotted to kill him after he revealed his dreams.

People may not like you, but they would never show it until you become more of a threat to them. They consider themselves to be in competition with

you and it's fine as long as they're in the lead, but once they see a sign that you're moving ahead, and actually turning those dreams into a reality, they start looking for ways to get rid of you.

When you tell them that you plan on buying that house, or starting that new business that they told you would fail, or even worse, that you're succeeding at it, watch their reactions. They could fake happiness in your face and turn around to plot against you or steal your ideas.

Hatred clouds the mind. It makes brothers kill brothers, and sisters backstab sisters, all to no end. And like most things hatred and jealousy isn't always obvious, it can simmer for a long time before it reaches the boiling point. It can turn brothers into murderers who don't realize how wrong they were until it is too late.

After tossing Joseph into the cistern, his brothers sat down to eat their meal like nothing had happened. That's because in their mind, they have planned to get rid of him for a long time and were happy to have it over and done with. It wasn't an impulsive act; they had clear plans and evidence to show their father.

As we dream, it is important to know not to overshare. We barely know ourselves, so how can we mere humans know what others have in mind? As the bible says in Jeremiah 17:9, the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

We have heard of workplace betrayals where people steal credit for ideas, and where the ideas of young entrepreneurs are stolen by bigger companies.

What should be done when we dream?

Take it to God. Not everyone is blessed with the dream interpretation abilities that Joseph has and it might be hard to discover the next step to take to actualize your dreams. When you give your dreams to God, you're asking him for direction and you will get it.

Do not overshare. To avoid counting eggs before they are hatched, and telling your dreams to the wrong people, share sparingly, and watch reactions. See the people who shut down your ideas and say you're dreaming far, and those who support you. You'd be surprised to find out that strangers can be more supportive than friends and family.

In conclusion, it is important to protect your dreams. The greater your dream, the greater hate you get, and not everyone will have your best interests in mind. When people can see that you're destined to be better, you appear as a threat to them, but that shouldn't stop you. God gave you those dreams and you should keep them well. Even if you've failed before, never stop dreaming. Dreaming keeps us moving and stops us from just existing. And as we can see from this very story of Joseph, those who have tried to stop your dreams will one day congratulate you.

Lesson 2: Remain Faithful to God even during times of persecution.

Can you remain faithful in trying times?

God's plan is always sure, and he keeps his promises. We know that and have seen his work, but sometimes it can be hard to remember that God's time is always right.

Isn't it funny how the human mind works? You could be having the best week and forget to thank God for his providence, but when something bad happens, you get angry at God. Why did God let my world crash down? Why has God forsaken me? Why me?

In trying times, it is easy to forget all the wonderful things God has done and keeps doing for us. It feels like it's truly the end and there's no coming back up. In times like those, it is imperative to remember God's faithfulness to people who trust in Him.

Joseph had truly been through a lot. He was a seventeen-year-old who grew up favored by God and his father, but hated by his brothers, the very people who should have been on his side. His life did a complete 360; he went from being the son with a mighty dream to a slave in a foreign land.

Which seventeen-year-old wouldn't protest at the complete change in environment and status? Instead of working halfheartedly, Joseph put in his all to work for Potiphar and God was with him. Joseph didn't question God, but instead, put in his all and gained favor in Potiphar's sight. And his master made him the overseer of his house and all that he had.

It could be a direct story here. He had just overcome a trial and had been appointed as a trusted servant, but the good times didn't last long before temptation came swooping in. Potiphar wasn't the only one seeing Joseph's progress, his wife had begun to eye the good looking young servant and was set on sleeping with him.

Sexual desire is a temptation that is hard for even the strongest men in God to resist. He had managed the finances of Potiphar's house without stealing anything, but how many can say no to sexual desires? Joseph refused to sin against God and to betray his master who had favored him by sleeping with his wife, but Potiphar's wife accuses Joseph of rape and he gets sent to jail.

This wasn't the dream he had. His dreams were of great success, not ending up in a strange land or in prison. It was truly an unfair situation that he had done nothing to deserve. If only Potiphar's wife had left him alone... if only his brothers hadn't sold him off... if only he hadn't told his brothers his dreams... if only his father hadn't shown his favoritism...

People let every bad thing they've been through influence their lives and use it as an excuse for turning against God, but rather than dwelling on the numerous what-ifs or allowing the trials he had been through harden his heart, Joseph remained faithful and continued to trust in God. And in turn God continued to favor him and everything he did in prison.

His circumstances didn't make him hide his gifts. Joseph helped in interpreting the dreams of prisoners. When he interpreted the dreams of a cupbearer, in return, the cupbearer promised to help get him released. As with most people, the cupbearer forgot his promise to Joseph, but God never forgets.

When the Pharaoh has a troubling dream that no one can interpret, the cupbearer finally remembers Joseph. The pharaoh calls for Joseph who interprets the dream and he is upgraded to Pharaoh's right hand man.

This sounds like a great success story, but it wasn't a straight line. Joseph gets freed from Prison at thirty. Remember, he was just seventeen when he was sold off as a slave. How easy is it to keep trusting in God's promises after thirteen years of endless struggles?

Joseph was a man of integrity who had followed God's will, remained faithful, and still had to spend thirteen years suffering. Most of us believe that when God shows us a dream, it is suddenly a clear path to success. No

one wants to suffer for thirteen years because we think, “If it’s meant for me it will come easily,” but that’s not always the case.

Joseph’s story teaches us that even the most faithful face trials upon trials that require complete patience and trust in God and his plans for us.

In times where you begin to doubt God’s presence in your life and think, “surely God wouldn’t let this happen to me,” rather than lose faith in God, move to lay your troubles at his feet, hold on to your faith, and wait for God’s time because it will surely come.

Rather than expecting your dreams to come into reality immediately, remember that growth takes time and that there’s a reason for everything. A trial you had to go through to not make bigger mistakes later. A dream you had to tell people and get hated for. Temptations you had to resist to prepare you for bigger temptations. Trials you had to go through to remain humble and realize that you can only trust in God.

There’s been a lot of layoffs recently. These people who were probably happy to have landed good jobs after years of studying and preparing only to have their dreams halted. It is easy to feel like there’s no going back up. Even easier to get angry at God for allowing bad things happen to you, and ask questions like, “Out of 10,000 people why did I have to be laid off even after all my contributions?”

Remember that God knows everything. He knows the ideal scenario that will lead to you achieving your dreams. Joseph's dreams of glory couldn't have been achieved while tending to his father's sheep, or even at Potiphar's house. God planted Joseph in prison to meet the cupbearer who would recommend him to Pharaoh. Joseph was able to see the incoming famine, and was no longer the naïve seventeen-year-old who wouldn't have known how to advise the Pharaoh on steps to take.

Joseph's story teaches us an essential lesson on faithfulness. It isn't easy, but when the end isn't clear, it is important to keep God closer than ever. Let's strive to stay assured in God's timeline and move at his pace to get to our dreams.

Lesson 3: Show Up & Show Out

How long do you plan on fading into the background? Rejecting every opportunity to stand out and draw attention to yourself.

Getting sudden attention can be scary, and the expectations of people might feel burdensome, but it's important to stay strong against fear. Fear will whisper thoughts in your head and make you feel like you're not good enough, or deserving of the opportunities that God has presented to you. Fear will make you shy away from presenting your ideas. Fear will make you remember all the times you have failed and use it as an excuse to stay on the ground, an excuse to not be ambitious.

Fear is an enemy of success.

Joseph had every reason to be afraid. His road to success had been halted time and time again. This should have turned him into a fearful man who was afraid to dream, afraid to showcase his God-given talents, afraid to lead, afraid to even trust God's promises, but that wasn't the case.

We are created to showcase the glory of God and He will turn every situation you find yourself in into an opportunity to showcase His glory. As long as

we continue to keep our sights on him trusting that he is with us, then we are assured of his glory.

Joseph's faithfulness to God made him a blessed figure. Joseph, a Hebrew slave gained favor over other Egyptian servants. Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph and made everything he touched prosperous, so he promoted Joseph. God allowed Joseph to grow as a leader in Potiphar's house. He had been put in charge of Potiphar's household and maintained his life of integrity. We could say that it was a test. If Joseph had fumbled in the position he was given, he wouldn't have grown to glory. Fear would have made him reject any attention his master would show him, but Joseph refused to give in.

In prison, Joseph applied the leadership skills he had gotten from Potiphar's house and gained favor in the warden's eyes. Showcasing his God-given talents in prison allowed him to gain favor in the eyes of the warden and made the chief cupbearer encounter him. When Pharaoh was in a predicament, the chief cupbearer remembered how Joseph had accurately interpreted his dreams. Hearing this, Pharaoh summoned Joseph and asked if he could interpret his dreams. Fear could have stopped him from talking to anyone in prison or even showing his gifts, the very gifts that led to him being sold, but Joseph didn't give in.

In the presence of Pharaoh, the leader of Egypt, and the highest man of influence Joseph had been before, he still didn't give in to the fear of saying

something that would anger the pharaoh. Instead of focusing on that fear, Joseph laid his trust in God, as he had done all this time and he replied, I cannot do it by my power, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.

Pharaoh proceeded to tell Joseph his dream, and Joseph interpreted it to be God's plan for seven years of harvest, followed by seven years of famine, and proceeded to provide advice on how the harvest from the years of plenty could be preserved to make up for those years of famine. This plan sounded so good that Pharaoh placed Joseph in charge of his palace and people, over all his wise advisors.

How much longer will you allow fear to stop you from showing up?

There are a lot of times when we refuse to show up for the battle. We allow the spirit of fear to keep us stuck in the same position, afraid to take risks that are meant to lead to the actualization of our dreams. But when you trust in God, you will hear him guiding you to his glory, and when that opportunity comes, you have to show up and show out.

You have gone through trials and temptations without renouncing your faith, you have chosen to hold on to God, and so you must remain prepared to show up when God prepares your life-elevating opportunity.

Joseph was a slave. He went through so many obstacles but remained favored in every station, even in prison. Everyone from Potiphar, the prison, the prisoners, and even Pharaoh could see God's work in Joseph. Seeing this

prompted everyone he encountered to show him favor. Stop hiding. Show forth the Glory of God in everything you do.

As children of God, we are set apart from others by default. We are proven vessels for God's plan to be actualized. God put in place a situation that only he could resolve; Pharaoh had many wise men yet only Joseph through God could interpret his dreams. You might not have Joseph's dream interpretation powers, but that is no excuse to remain hidden.

Joseph's dreams had led to hatred, enslavement, and disdain, but he never gave in. We could see him steadily keeping his eyes on God, having full trust in His plans, and that ultimately leads to his success. How many times have we turned our eyes away from God? Assumed that he has left us for dead and forgotten that he has seen us through the most difficult times?

It is important to remember that God has equipped us for every situation we are in, He knows what we stand to gain, what we're going against, and how best to prepare us for our mighty dreams. He has given us the power to stand up even in fearful situations.

The next time you're allowed to lead, speak up, present an idea, or even just share your opinion, do it! People might think you're showing off, and you are. You are showing forth the glory of God as you should.

Lesson 4: Forgive Them

How do you forgive those who have hurt you? It is easy to gain haters when you dream of success. Big dreams attract haters and turn even friends into enemies. These so-called friends can gather to plan for your failure and might succeed at first, but when God is with you, there's no way to stop God's plans for your life.

You've gone through the rocky stage of losing friends, facing trials and tribulations, and finally showcasing the glory of God in your life. Now, what happens to those who wronged you when you needed their support the most? Do you forgive them or do you keep their wrongdoings in mind?

Joseph had been wronged. His brothers despised him for being their father's favorite son. It's not like he asked Jacob to make him the favorite son and show clear favoritism. Joseph telling his dreams to his brothers who despised him showed how pure his heart was. He knew he would never plan any evil for his brothers and trusted that they too wouldn't plan evil against him. Yet, they failed him. They had thought to kill him at first but settled on selling him as a slave. They had given no thought to how he would fare in a foreign land. All that was in their mind was that they had gotten rid of

Joseph the dreamer and stopped him from reaching his dreams of glory. How would a slave proceed to rule over them?

Of course, they didn't know that they were bringing him even closer to his dreams. Because God was with him. We know that Joseph had continued to put his trust in God and see God's work in his life; God had allowed him to find favor in his master's sight. And even Potiphar could see that his household was prosperous because God was with Joseph.

Joseph didn't let his brothers' betrayal harden his heart or fill him with bitterness. Even when Potiphar's wife framed him after he refused to fall into temptation, causing him to lose his position and get thrown into prison, Joseph's good-hearted nature remained.

He didn't lament in prison or blame God for claiming to love him and still sending endless trials his way. No, he continued to put his trust in God and he gained favor even in prison. He accurately interpreted the dreams of fellow prisoners, the chief cupbearer, and the baker. And things went accordingly; the baker was killed and the cupbearer regained his position. Joseph had asked the cupbearer to remember him after he was set free, but he didn't.

The cupbearer's failure to remember Joseph didn't make him give up on God and believe that the enemy has the upper hand. It is easy to forget that God has seen the ending to everything you're going through and has arranged

everything to finally work for your good. Joseph's life was a roller-coaster, but he had the cheat code: he knew that when life gets rocky, you hold on to your faith in God; faith and trust that he will fulfill the promises he has made. God knows our heart desires and all the struggles we'll have to go through to reach that point.

The chief cupbearer finally remembers Joseph's accurate dream interpretation during the Pharaoh's time of troubling dreams. And he recommends Joseph. For the first time in years, Joseph steps out of the prison and is presented to the leader of Egypt. Pharaoh says that he had heard of Joseph's talents, and Joseph proceeds to give Glory to God first by acknowledging that his talents are God's. he says,

Joseph was able to interpret the dreams God had shown Pharaoh which showed seven good years of plenty, followed by seven years of lack, and proceeded to advise on how to sustain supply through the famine. Pharaoh, a leader with wise advisors heard what Joseph had to say and could see that he was a wise man with God by his side and hence appointed him in charge of the palace and people.

You could argue that Joseph could have gotten to dreams of glory with hatred in his heart, but we know the truth. Hatred clouds the mind and makes everyone seem like they're the enemy. Hatred hardens the heart against people and mutes the voice of God. If Joseph had allowed his heart

to be hardened, he would have fallen to temptation, and never gotten to the prison where he would meet the cupbearer.

We don't know if Joseph ever got to meet Potiphar or his wife again, but Potiphar was an official in Pharaoh's house, so their paths probably crossed. Would Joseph exact revenge on Potiphar's wife? That's unlikely because Joseph could see that his being in prison had to happen to lead to the fulfillment of his dreams.

Years later, Egypt was the only nation prepared for the famine and people would come there to buy food. Joseph recognized his brothers when they saw them, but they couldn't recognize him. Never in their wildest dreams could they imagine that the slave had grown into the second in command of Egypt.

When Joseph reveals that he is their brother, they were terrified, but he reminded them that he knows that their selling him was God's plan. He asks for his father to be brought and presents his family before Pharaoh. However, after the death of their father, his brothers begin to worry that Joseph will repay them for the wrong they had done to him. Joseph reassures them of their position in God's plans by saying that even though they had intended to harm him, God had turned it for good.

Who would have expected Joseph to welcome his brothers with open arms? They were in the ideal position for him to take revenge, but he chose to

forgive them and keep his heart free from hate. We go through a lot of betrayals, trials, and temptations, but since God ordained it and allowed those things to happen, we should trust that God will turn those situations for our good.