



+ **YOU**

Sermon Series: How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls
To be used with Session 4: The Pitfall of Hard Times

Sermon Title Possibilities: The Lord Will Make a Way, Somehow

Scripture: Genesis 41: 28-32, 47-54

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study "How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls," use this sermon outline. Amid hard times if we trust in God, He will see us through. Proverbs 3:5-6 declares, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight." In this passage, we will see how Joseph's continued trust in God, took him from prison to Pharaoh's palace.

Introduction: Being falsely accused of a crime (Gen. 39:7-19), Joseph was unjustly imprisoned for at least two years (Gen. 41:1). But the same God, who made him successful in Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:1-6), also made him successful in prison (Gen. 39:21-23). Pharaoh became angry with his chief cupbearer and baker, threw them in prison, and Joseph became their personal attendant (Gen. 40:1-4). Both had dreams that no one could interpret but Joseph. Joseph interpreted their dreams, and both dreams came true (Gen. 40:5-22). Joseph's only request was, when the cupbearer was released, that he would mention Joseph to Pharaoh so that he can be freed as well. Yet, the cupbearer forgot all about Joseph (Gen. 40:23).

In his song, "Stand," Donnie McClurkin sings: "What do you do when you've done all you can, and it seems like it's never enough? And what do you say when your friends turn away and you're all alone? Tell me, what do you give when you've given your all and it seems like you can't make it through? Well, you just stand when there's nothing left to do. You just stand, watch the Lord see you through. Yes, after you've done all you can, you just stand." Psalm 37:5 says, "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act." In what ways does God act on our behalf when we trust in Him?

1. He makes a way out of no way. (vv. 1-14)

It had been two years and the cupbearer had forgotten all about Joseph. It appeared that Joseph would be imprisoned for life. But William Cowper said, "God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. "Pharaoh had a dream, and just like the cupbearer and the baker, no one could interpret it (1-8). That's when the cupbearer remembered Joseph (vv. 9-13) and Pharaoh sent for him (v. 14).

One definition of "providence" is God's intervening care for His people as He accomplishes His purposes. It is often referred to as "the hand of the Lord." Job 12:9, says, "Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done

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this?” Travis Green wrote: “You made a way. When our backs were against the wall, and it looked as if it was over. You made a way. And we’re standing here only because You made a way.” This was clearly God’s hand moving in Joseph’s life.

2. He gives us what to say. (vv. 15-32)

Joseph made it clear that God would answer Pharaoh (v. 16). Jesus said, “...don’t worry beforehand what you will say, but say whatever is given to you at that time, for it isn’t you speaking, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11). Even Pharaoh, who wasn’t a believer in Israel’s God, recognized that the Spirit was working in and speaking through Joseph (vv. 38-39).

However, not worrying beforehand doesn’t mean we shouldn’t prepare (v. 14). It doesn’t mean that God hasn’t already prepared us. Joseph’s answer to how Pharaoh should prepare for the famine (vv. 33-36), was born out of Joseph’s administrative experience in both Potiphar’s house and the prison. Not worrying beforehand simply means that when the moment comes to speak or act, we trust God’s presence more than our preparation or our experience.

3. He promotes us. (vv. 37-44)

It’s God who exalts the humble (Matt. 23:12). He exalted Joseph in Potiphar’s house (Gen. 39:1-6) and in prison (Gen. 39:21-23). He exalted Joseph over all of Egypt. Joseph demonstrated his humility by acknowledging that he did not possess the answers, but God did (vv. 16,25,28). Pharaoh publicly acknowledged that Joseph was being exalted because the Spirit of God was in him, and God has made all of this known to him (vv. 38-39). Even the name that Pharaoh gave Joseph, Zaphenath-paneah, “the god speaks and he lives,” was a constant reminder to Joseph that God had exalted him.

The only reasonable response to God promoting us is to praise Him. Hannah praised God in prayer: “The LORD ... humbles and he exalts ... He seats them with noblemen and gives them a throne of honor” (1 Sam. 2:7-8).

4. He prospers us. (vv. 45,50-52)

If we believe that God is working through Pharaoh, then God blessed Joseph with a wife (v. 45). Proverbs 18:22 declares, “A man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.” God favored Joseph by blessing him with two sons (v. 50). Psalm 127:3 says, “... children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” When we trust God, He can make us “forget our hardships,” meaning, the hardships we’ve been through do not compare to the blessings we currently have. He can make us forget the people who have wronged us through the people who have blessed us (v. 51). He can make us “fruitful in the land of affliction (v. 52).”

Conclusion: About 13 years had passed since the time Joseph was sold into slavery until his promotion in Egypt. But through it all, Joseph continued to trust God and his trust was rewarded. When we trust God, the Lord will make a way somehow. “Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!” (Psalm 27:14).

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