



WEEK FOUR: IN THE WAITING

BIG IDEA:

*God's timing is always perfect,
even when it doesn't match ours.*

THE BIBLE

Genesis 40, Ecclesiastes 3:1,11
Philippians 2:4, Hebrews 13:16, Gal 6:2,
1 Peter 4:10-11, Gal 6:9

ME (Orientation)

Series Slide

I can't think of another time when I've been more **angry and upset with God**.

Have you ever been mad at God before? Have you ever shaken your fists at the heavens or churned inside with **quiet rage** at the divine?

It's rare that my prayers are just **complaints directed at God**, but I'll never forget when I prayed and asked God to get off His butt and help me. Seriously, that's a prayer I prayed ... **Those kinds of prayers you never forget praying.**

Now, you might wonder why I was so upset with God. But in my defense, at the time, **I felt like I was doing everything right, and God wasn't showing up for me.**

Let me explain. At the time, I had been the Student Pastor of a church in Indianapolis for four years. It was clear that God had brought me to that church and to those people, but after **four years** had gone by, **something changed**. The Holy Spirit seemed to be releasing me from that place, and I began to sense God asking me to step out in faith.

So, **without another job lined up**, or another church to serve in, I stepped down and stepped aside so that someone else could lead. Then Leah and I began to search for a new church to serve.

It was a big step of faith for us because we had just brought **our first-born son into the world**. Quitting my job without anything else lined up didn't make very much sense, but we wanted to be faithful to God. So, while I looked for a church, I worked the **third shift in a warehouse** overnight to make sure we could at least pay our bills. It wasn't much fun ... but it was **full of faith**, and I was confident God would bless us.

As I began to look for churches to serve in, I found a lot of success. Here's what would happen: I would interview with a church, and they would walk me through their process. Each church was a little different but mostly the same. The final step, when things got down to just **two candidates**, was always visiting the church, being around the students, and teaching a lesson.

Each time I did this, I thought it went really well, and would imagine them calling me and asking me to come and be their next Student Pastor. The first time that this happened, I got the call, and I found out that **they went with the other guy**.

I was a little disappointed, but I was interviewing at a number of churches, so I didn't get too discouraged. After the **second and third time**, that I got the call about them choosing the other guy, I started to get a little frustrated.

It seemed like every weekend; we were traveling and staying in hotels and meeting new people in new towns, **hoping that they would pick us over the other guy**. But calls 4 and 5 were the same ... they liked us ... we didn't do anything wrong ... they just liked the other guy better.

I was heartbroken. So, I cried out to God and told him that He owed me ... that he needed to do something ... and that I would appreciate it if he could get off his butt and help me.

The sixth time I got the call, and they told me they chose the other guy ... **I'd had enough**. I felt like the puppy that no one wanted to adopt from the pound.

The seventh time I got the call ... if I'm honest, I was a little bit numb. I expected them to say, they wanted the other guy ... but after seven rounds ... and nearly a year on the calendar, **Pendleton Christian Church** asked if I would come and serve as their Student Pastor.

And here we are, 13 years later, and when I look back, I can't thank God enough for putting me in Pendleton. **It's been a perfect place to raise my family and serve in the Ministry.** It's been a wonderful place to use my gifts and to be a part of something bigger than myself.

And here's the even crazier part of the story ... the part that I think God did just to remind me that His timing can be trusted.

Remember how I got here ... 6 churches saying they would rather have the other guy? That journey started an entire year before I ended up in Pendleton ... take a guess where the first church that chose to go with other guy was located ... (PAUSE). That's right ... right here in Pendleton.

You may not always understand it ... it may not always make sense to you ... **but God's ways ... and His timing can always be trusted.**

WE (Identification)

Today, we are continuing our sermon series **Unbreakable**. If you're joining us for the first time, this series has been studying the life of Joseph in the book of Genesis.

Joseph's story is an incredible one, full of twists and turns, excitement and disappointment, high moments and low moments ... and even though Joseph experiences some things that we may never experience, I think **we all can resonate with his story at some level.**

Because we all know what it's like to end up in a pit. We all know the feeling of ending up in places we wish we wouldn't have ended up in, and we are all too familiar with the feeling of **wanting good things to happen in our life NOW** ... not later.

We want God to get busy fixing our problems and putting our world back together ... what we don't want to do is **WAIT**.

But what if **the important part** of what God is doing is what happens during the waiting? What if there is a right way to wait and a wrong way to wait ... while you are in the pit?

GOD (illumination)

If you weren't with us last week, let me remind you of where we find Joseph in the story. After his brothers threw him in a pit and sold him into slavery, Joseph found himself in the house of one of the most important men in Egypt. Things went so well for Joseph that his master put him in charge of everything and entrusted Joseph with running his affairs while he was away. And **everything Joseph did was successful** because God was with him.

In our reading last week, we learned that because Joseph was young, handsome, and successful, his master's wife tried to seduce him, but Joseph spurned her advances. She was so upset by this rejection that she told her husband that Joseph tried to take advantage of her, and this **accusation put Joseph behind bars**, stuck in prison in Egypt.

Before this incident ... things were looking up for Joseph ... but then they came crashing back down again. Joseph had to wonder when God would deliver him and how long it would take for things to turn around for him. And as we closed chapter 39, this is what we read:

Slide1_Genesis 39:20b-21

But while Joseph was there in the prison,²¹ the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

Slide2_Genesis 39:22-23

So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.²³ The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

This is not the first time we are told that **God was with Joseph**. It's a truth and reality we have already highlighted a few times in the series.

Even in some of Joseph's darkest days, God was with him. And I'm sure that gave Joseph some comfort, but I **doubt it relieved his desire to find a way out** of that jail cell and back to his family.

So, while Joseph is in prison, waiting for God to redirect his circumstances, something happens. He's literally **an inmate running the prison** for the warden and because of his position he learns of some very interesting information.

Slide3_Genesis 40:1-3

Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt.² Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,³ and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined.

Slide4_Genesis 40:4-5

⁴The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time,⁵ each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

In chapter 40, we learn that two men who work closely with the king conveniently end up in prison under Joseph's care (convenient for Joseph, not for them).

We also learn that they have been under Joseph's care for some time, meaning that **Joseph got to know them**, and they likely got to know each other. And if their experience with him was like everyone else's, then they probably loved Joseph ... because everywhere Joseph went, people loved him.

Then, in verse five, it says that it just so happened that both of these men had strange dreams on the same night.

ASK: For those of you who have been with us this whole series ... when you hear that they had dreams, what do you immediately think of?

(JOSEPH HAS DREAMS / INTERPRETS DREAMS)

There seem to be a lot of coincidences happening in this story, or maybe it's more than that ... maybe there is a divine appointment that's about to play out.

Slide5_Genesis 40:6-7

⁶When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected.⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?"

Slide6_Genesis 40:8

"We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

In other words, Joseph says to them,... God can interpret dreams ... share them with me, and let me see what He says about them.

This is as divine of an appointment as you can find in the scriptures. Is Joseph in prison for these men? Or are these men in prison to meet Joseph? The answer is ... **Yes.**

So naturally, wanting to know the meaning of their dreams, they begin to tell Joseph what they saw, and the cupbearer tells Joseph first.

Slide7_Genesis 40:9b-11

He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me,¹⁰ and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes.¹¹ Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand."

Slide8_Genesis 40:12-13

This is what it means," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days.¹³ Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer.

Upon hearing the dream, God gives Joseph the ability to interpret it.

Remember, this man has been in prison with Joseph for some time, and Joseph reveals to him that **his dream is good news**: In three days, he will find his way out of his cell and back into the king's good graces.

Now, I want you to put yourself in **Joseph's shoes for a moment**. You just interpreted this dream, and you know that this man is days away from standing within earshot of the most powerful man in Egypt.

This isn't a coincidence ... **God's timing is perfect** ... so if you were Joseph ... what would you do? (ASK FOR A FAVOR) That's exactly what Joseph does ... take a look.

Slide9_Genesis 40:14-15

But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

Joseph says, "Don't forget about me! I shouldn't be here ... this isn't where I belong. I was brought here against my will. I was falsely accused. I don't deserve this ... so when you stand next to the king ... remember me. Don't leave me here. I'm tired of waiting for things to change.

We know what it's like to feel what Joseph feels in this moment. **God, please fix this ... NOW!**

After interpreting the dream of the cupbearer ... the baker says, "**Do my dream next.**" He's heard the good news that his coworker has received, and he wants to hear what good things he can expect ... so he shares his dream with Joseph.

Slide10_Genesis 40:16-17

When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. ¹⁷In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

Okay ... that's a weird dream. It's the kind of dream you might imagine you had after you ate some **bad mushrooms** the night before. But this dream also carries a meaning, which Joseph reluctantly shares.

Slide11_Genesis 40_18-19

"This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days. ¹⁹Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale your body on a pole. And the birds will eat away your flesh."

Yikes ... not the news the baker was expecting ... the text doesn't indicate anything about how the baker responded to hearing this news. But **if he was anything like us**, he would have likely said something like, "What do you know anyways." And ignored Joseph's interpretation.

This part of Joseph's story is an interesting one for sure ... we see this divine appointment play out as these individuals are brought into the same space as Joseph ... the boy of promise ... the man who has prophetic dreams, and who God has given the ability to interpret dreams - **This part of Joseph's story is all about timing.** And trusting God's timing.

In Ecclesiastes chapter 3, Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, had this to say about God's timing.

Slide12_Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens ... God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

The belief that Solomon held was the same that Joseph experienced, that God's timing is always perfect ... but like Solomon says ... **no one can fathom** what God is doing. Maybe a better way of saying it, and holding onto this truth is that ...

Slide13_BIG IDEA

**GOD'S TIMING IS ALWAYS PERFECT,
EVEN WHEN IT DOESN'T MATCH OURS.**

What Joseph saw and experienced was God's divine intervention. No one could argue that these two men were **like pieces on a chessboard** and had moved into the perfect position.

Joseph saw it so clearly that he began to connect the dots ... he told the cupbearer,... **REMEMBER ME** – when you are with the king. Joseph, at this point, had waited years for God to deliver him ... and I imagine as he interpreted these dreams, he believed the years of waiting were almost over.

Genesis 40 records for us what happened next to these two men ...

Slide14_Genesis 40:20

Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials:

Slide15_Genesis 40:21-23

²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand— ²² but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.

²³ The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

God's timing is perfect ... even when it doesn't match ours.

In this part of Joseph's story, he thought he saw a way out of the pit ... He thought he found his ticket out of prison ... He said to the cupbearer, REMEMBER ME ... but at the end of chapter 40, we are told ... that the cupbearer forgot him.

Joseph was still waiting. In fact ... the very next words of chapter 41, which we will get to next week, are ... **"when two full years had passed"**. What we will discover next week is that God's plan to move Joseph out of the pit of prison had already begun ... but it was going to take two more years of waiting for it to pan out.

Joseph may have thought at the moment that his ability to interpret these dreams **didn't move the needle** of getting him out of his situation ...

But little did he know that it was **in the waiting** ... that God used his faithfulness to plant the seeds and build the foundation of his eventual liberation.

What Joseph did in the waiting ... was **mission-critical** to finding his way out of the pit, and it mattered because God's timing is perfect, even when it doesn't match ours. What you do ... while you wait for God's timing ... can make all the difference in the world.

YOU. (Application)

Maybe you've never been **so bold or brash** to pray for **God to get off his butt** and help you ... but it's my guess that you've probably had your fair share of waiting for your world to change.

With the time we have left this morning, I want to look back at how Joseph handled himself while he waited for God's timing ... because I believe it can give us some great application to make sure that while we wait for God's timing ... **we wait in the right ways.**

The first spot I want to go back to is found in verse 6. This moment in the story happens the morning after the cupbearer and the baker have their dreams.

Slide16_Genesis 40:6-7

When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected.⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?"

Now, I don't know about you ... but when I'm in a pit, when I've been treated unfairly, when I'm getting the wrong end of the stick ... do you want to know what I **spend most of my time thinking about and talking about** ... ME.

Maybe you're better than me, but when I've been screwed over, and things keep going the wrong way, my focus, my emotions, and my mouth are all pointing in one direction ... I'm focused on me and the injustices I feel I have suffered.

But is that what Joseph does here? NO! Where is his focus? His focus isn't completely on his bad set of circumstances or his situation ...

We know later that he hasn't forgotten about it or given up on getting out of it ... but what we find here in verses 6-7 is that **Joseph is focused on others** ...

So if you feel like you are in a pit, and that your circumstances need to change, and you are waiting on God to do something about it ... the first thing I would encourage you to do while you wait is to **LOOK AROUND**.

Slide17_APP1

1. WHILE YOU WAIT, LOOK AROUND YOU

If God's timing is always perfect ... then you CAN'T speed it up by complaining about it, crying about it, or crock-potting on it. So, instead of focusing on the problems you're facing and the frustration that you're feeling ... begin to **look for others around you who may be in need**.

Joseph was aware of those around him, that they were troubled, and he cared enough to genuinely ask. **He was willing to put the needs of others before his own**. And this is a vital Kingdom principle. It's at the heartbeat of what it means to follow Jesus.

We could spend another hour looking at verses that back up this point of view, but let me just very quickly give you three to remind you of how important it is to look around you for the needs of others, while you wait on God's timing.

Slide18_Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Slide19_Hebrews 13:16

Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Slide20_Galatians 6:2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ

Putting others first, living sacrificially, and carrying each other's burdens is the way that we fulfill the law of Christ ... it's the way that we build His Kingdom instead of our own.

So while you wait in the pit or in prison, look around you and see who you may be able to love, serve, and encourage ... because **that's what Jesus would do**. (PAUSE) The second thing I noticed Joseph do while he waits is found in verse 8.

Slide21_Genesis 40:8 NLT

And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean." "Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

I love the way the NLT translates this because it highlights **that Joseph recognizes that he has the ability or a gift to interpret dreams** ... but that gift is not of his own making or expertise ... it is something that came from God. And what Joseph does after he looks around and sees the need is he **looks within himself** to see what he might have to help meet the need.

Slide22_App2

2. WHILE YOU WAIT, LOOK WITHIN YOU

The scriptures are pretty clear ... God has given you gifts. You may not be able to interpret dreams like Joseph, but there are unique things about you and gifts you have that are divinely given by God. You may not always see it or believe it ... but God's word says this is true.

The Apostle Peter encouraged Christians to use their gifts in a specific way and for a specific purpose. He writes: **Slide23_1 Peter 4:10-11**

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

While he waited, Joseph took the time to look within himself and consider what gifts, talents, and resources God had blessed him with. Then he used them to help others so that God would get the credit and glory. While you wait ... you can do the same, see the needs of those around you and then look to see how God has blessed you to be a blessing.

The last thing I noticed about Joseph comes from the statement he makes to the cupbearer in verses 14-15. He says:

Slide24_Genesis 40:14-15

⁴But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

What I notice about Joseph is that while he waited for God to remedy his situation... **he waited expectantly**. He didn't resign himself to his difficult situation, and he didn't come to terms with his imprisonment. No, Joseph believed that God's timing was perfect and that God would deliver him from the pit and from prison... **it was only a matter of time**, so he waited with expectation.

So while you wait, I want to encourage you to ...

Slide25_you3

3. WHILE YOU WAIT LOOK BEYOND YOU

God's timing is perfect ... even when it doesn't match your timetable. In order to live as Kingdom workers in God's world, we can't allow the pits and the prisons distract us from this truth.

So while we wait, we have to look beyond ourselves ... we have to look for what God is doing with **eager expectation**. Trusting and knowing that God's timing is perfect and that at any moment, he could be bringing divine appointments our way to help us find our way out of whatever pit we find ourselves in.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul reminds the Christians that **their citizenship is in the Kingdom of God**, and we eagerly await our Savior... the one who has the power to bring everything under his control and transform any and every situation.

So while you wait, look beyond yourself ... and to the One who has the power and authority to use your circumstance and situation for His glory, in His due time.

WE (Inspiration)

SERIES SLIDE

Whatever you are waiting for ... I hope that Joseph's story will stand as an encouragement to you. Next week we will look at chapter 41 and discover just how God used the events we looked at today, to lay the **groundwork** for Joseph's **liberation** ... and so much more ...

Joseph may not have known it at the time ... but **his faithfulness while he waited led to his deliverance**. It may have taken two more years to see it pay off, but his ability to look around, to look within, and to look beyond himself was the key to not **losing himself in the pit**.

If Joseph's story isn't enough, I can not emphasize enough from my own personal experience, how perfect God's timing has been. God knows what He's doing; He just wants you to trust Him.

So, while you wait ... I want to encourage you ... that there is still work to be done. Galatians 6:9 says this:

Slide26_Galatians 6:9

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up

I want to share this verse with you as an encouragement and a reminder. For some of you ... **you need to read this verse every day**. Because the reality is ... while we wait for God's perfect timing, and we wait to get out of the pit, or while we wait for the darkness to dissipate ... **it's easy to become weary**.

But trust in this promise ... that we should never become weary in doing good, because at the proper time ... **in the fullness of time** ... in God's perfect timing ... we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Think of it this way ... while you wait ... you are planting seeds that you will harvest some day ...

So keep loving and serving people, keep using your gifts to build God's kingdom ...and keep looking for God to move in powerful ways ...

Keep planting seeds while you wait ... and eagerly expect for that perfect day ... when the harvest will be ready.

(AMEN)