

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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IN LEADERSHIP AT LAST

Genesis 41:37-57

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There are three points to this sermon:

- Joseph was given a new position.
- Joseph was given a new name.
- Joseph was given a new purpose.

In our series on the life of Joseph, we've covered:

- Some of his family lineage.
- The sins that passed from one generation to the next, such as deception, jealousy, and extreme favoritism.
- We know that Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery.
- We saw how Joseph went to Egypt and was a trusted servant of Potiphar.
- Then we saw how Joseph avoided temptation and was thrown into jail.
- In jail, he met a baker and a cupbearer and interpreted their dreams.
- The baker was put to death by the king, but the cupbearer was let out of jail.
- Joseph hoped the cupbearer would remember him and help him get out of jail but he did not, at least not immediately, but he remembered Joseph when Pharaoh was troubled by a dream and his magicians could not interpret it.

Last week, we read how Joseph was brought out of prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. After God, through Joseph, gave Pharaoh the interpretation, Joseph went on to tell Pharaoh what he should do to prepare for the upcoming years of drought. Pharaoh was more than a little impressed as we will see from today's reading.

**JOSEPH WAS GIVEN A NEW POSITION**

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 41:37-44

*The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. <sup>38</sup> So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?” <sup>39</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. <sup>40</sup> You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.” <sup>41</sup> So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” <sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. <sup>43</sup> He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. <sup>44</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.”*

**EXPLANATION:** The Egyptians were very religious people. By some estimates, they worshipped as many as 1,500 false gods and goddesses. While there is no indication that Pharaoh worshipped the one true God, he could not help but notice Joseph’s wisdom. Joseph, of course, credited that wisdom to God. So, who was Pharaoh to argue? Pharaoh was glad to have someone in his court who had access to and the blessing of a deity. Therefore, he quickly promoted Joseph from the prison to the palace. Obviously, the people of this time did not have picture identification. Joseph was not given a badge to wear or a pin number for special access. Instead, Pharaoh gave Joseph his very own signet ring. This ring was the way in which Pharaoh identified himself, and it would have even been pressed into wax and used as his signature seal on official documents. When Pharaoh gave Joseph his ring, he was demonstrating publicly their association. Joseph was not the king of Egypt, but he moved with the blessing and authority of the king.

This is quite incredible when you think of it. What leader would take a person in jail and elevate him to the second highest position in the land? But that’s what Pharaoh did. Consider this: Pharaoh must have been a smart man. He must have realized the risk of putting a foreigner, and a person who was in jail for a crime, in charge of everything.

This is where we see God at work. Many Pharaohs later, God would work through another Pharaoh to accomplish his will. You know the story, it's about Moses and the Hebrew people.

**ILLUSTRATION:** An ambassador is a person who has been chosen to represent the leader of a country in an official capacity in a foreign country. Ambassadors have several duties including the protection and promotion of national interests. American ambassadors speak on behalf of the President of the United States. They organize visits, welcome visitors, support resolutions, and have the ability to take any issues directly to Washington. In addition, an ambassador helps protect the rights of United States citizens who are living in or visiting foreign countries. Perhaps most importantly, ambassadors seek to ingratiate the United States to the people and government of the area where they serve.

**APPLICATION:** In the same way that an American ambassador serves the president, Joseph served Pharaoh. Joseph was given a new position as Pharaoh's personal ambassador to the people. When we become Christians, we too are given new positions in Christ. Essentially, we are ambassadors—representatives—of Christ on earth. Just like a US ambassador is backed by the power of the United States presidency, Joseph was backed by the authority of Pharaoh. In the same way, we as Christians have been given the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. The Apostle Paul says in II Corinthians 5:20 *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.*

Joseph was not only freed from prison. He was promoted to a position of wealth, privilege, and power. He no longer lived like a prisoner. He lived like a king. The Bible tells us that Christ died so that we no longer have to be slaves to sin and death. But do we live as free men and women, or do we act as if we are still in bondage to sin?

- Joseph was given a new position.

## **JOSEPH WAS GIVEN A NEW NAME**

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 41:46-26

*Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout*

*Egypt. <sup>47</sup> During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. <sup>48</sup> Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. <sup>49</sup> Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure. <sup>50</sup> Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by A-sen-ath daughter of Pot-i-pha, priest of On. <sup>51</sup> Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, “It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.” <sup>52</sup> The second son he named Ephraim and said, “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”*

**EXPLANATION:** With Joseph’s new position, he also was given a new name. Zeph-e-nath-pa-neah probably meant “God speaks and lives,” but it may also have meant “God speaks, and he lives” an indication that because God had spoken through Joseph, Joseph’s life had been preserved. (Remember Pharaoh’s baker. His encounter with Pharaoh resulted in his execution. The same would likely have been true for Joseph had he not given a correct interpretation of the dreams.)

Joseph was also given a wife, the daughter of the Priest of On. On was a city also known as Helio-polis, “The City of the Sun.” It was the center of worship for the sun god Ra. So Joseph’s wife, like all Egyptians, would have been raised in idolatry. In fact, the name A-sen-ath likely means “belonging to Neith,” Neith being a female warrior goddess or huntress.

By renaming Joseph, Pharaoh was presenting him as a new and different man. He wanted to hide or disassociate him from his previous background as a Hebrew slave. He wanted the Egyptians to see Joseph not as a lowly shepherd but as a powerful associate to the king. He was given an Egyptian name and married into an influential Egyptian family.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Issur Danielovitch was born in upstate New York, the son of poor and illiterate Russian immigrants. He later changed his name and was known to most Americans as the actor Kirk Douglas. Margaret Mary Emily Anne Hyra thought her name was quite a mouthful. She took her grandmother’s surname and became known as Meg Ryan.

**APPLICATION:** The names we carry are associated with our identities. Like Pharaoh, many people think that changing a name will help them to become or appear to become different in some way. While Joseph’s new position, new name, and new wife may have helped him to appear more familiar to and be more accepted by the Egyptians, it did not change who he was. You would think that a man caught up in such a mythological and ungodly culture would be taken in by it.

I’ve mentioned to you several times how we respond to culture:

- We withdraw from it, or
- we are enthralled by it, or
- we engage it. – That’s what Joseph did.

We see evidence of that fact as he acknowledged the one true God’s work in his life when he named each of his two sons.

When we place our faith in Christ, God gives us a new identity, and we take on a new name—Christian. Christian means “little Christs.” The name was first given to believers in Antioch and was likely used then as a derogatory statement. However, today we bear that title proudly. Being a Christian is supposed to symbolize our new life and identity in Christ. By being called a Christian, we are saying that we think and act like Christ. History did not remember Zephenath-paneah; history remembered Joseph, the son of Jacob, a servant of the Lord. And Joseph did not forget his identity. What about you? Does your name match your identity?

- Joseph was given a new position.
- Joseph was given a new name.

## **JOSEPH WAS GIVEN A NEW PURPOSE**

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 41:53-57

*The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, <sup>54</sup> and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. <sup>55</sup> When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.” <sup>56</sup> When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the*

*Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. <sup>57</sup> And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.*

**EXPLANATION:** Pharaoh also gave Joseph a new purpose. Joseph's purpose was not to serve himself. He was not given that gold ring and all that power just so he could sunbathe beside the Nile. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge so that he could serve the Egyptian kingdom and therefore bring glory to him. Joseph's particular job was to make sure that when those years of drought came, Pharaoh and his people did not starve to death.

**ILLUSTRATION:** The night before the crucifixion of Jesus, he gathered with his disciples to celebrate the Passover meal. It was customary in that time for a servant to wash the feet of dinner guests. They did not sit at a modern table with their feet nicely tucked away beneath them. They lounged around a low table, propped on pillows. In fact, there was a good chance that their feet would be dangerously close to someone else's face. As nasty as our feet are after a day of sweating inside a pair of loafers or tennis shoes, their feet would have been much nastier. Their sandals did little to cover them from the sand and sewage-covered streets they traversed. But on that night, before his last meal with his closest friends, Jesus did an amazing and unexpected thing. He tucked a towel around his waist, grabbed a bowl of water, and washed his disciples' feet. Then he told them, and us, that we should do as he did.

**APPLICATION:** Like Joseph, when we become Christians, we are given a new purpose, actually two primary purposes, in life. Jesus summed them up in Matthew 22:37-39: "*Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*"

God has bestowed Christians with a new position, a new name, and -- with the power, privilege, and promises that accompany being a child of God -- a new purpose to glorify Him and serve one another. Just like Joseph's efforts brought about good for his king, for others, and for himself, so too will our lives do the same if we allow God to work in and through us.

- Joseph was given a new position.
- Joseph was given a new name.

- Joseph was given a new purpose.

**INVITATION:** God blessed Joseph through Pharaoh. Pharaoh may have tried to change Joseph, but Joseph never changed. He was always a servant of the Lord, working to glorify the God he served. If you call yourself a Christian, I want you to take a look at who you say you are. Are you fulfilling the purpose God has given you? If not, maybe you need to come forward today and repent and ask God to help you use your position of responsibility wisely, to glorify him and help serve others. If you have never given your heart to the Lord, then you have not yet received this new identity. You do not know what it means to be called a Christian. Come to the altar and let me tell you more about it. Let me tell you about the God of Joseph and what He wants to do for you.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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