

*Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Look, I have appointed you over the whole land of Egypt.”*

*<sup>42</sup> Pharaoh took his signet ring off of his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand. He dressed Joseph in robes made from the best linen and put a gold chain around his neck. <sup>43</sup> He had him ride in the second best chariot that he had. Men went ahead of him crying out, “Kneel down!”<sup>[a]</sup> Pharaoh appointed him over the whole land of Egypt. <sup>44</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but in the whole land of Egypt no one will lift up his hand or his foot without your permission.” <sup>45</sup> Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath Paneah, and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as a wife. Joseph went out and began to rule over the land of Egypt.*

*<sup>46</sup> Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and traveled throughout the whole land of Egypt. <sup>47</sup> During the seven years of abundance the earth produced plentiful harvests. <sup>48</sup> He collected all the food during the seven good years in the land of Egypt, and he stored up the food in the cities. In every city he stored the food from the fields that were around the city. <sup>49</sup> Joseph stored up a huge amount of grain, like the sand of the sea. Finally he stopped keeping track, because it was too much to measure. (Genesis 41:41-49 EHV)*

### **Trust God’s Plan to Provide**

God will provide. You’ve probably reminded yourself or heard someone say that a time or two. Especially when the cupboards are bare and the fridge isn’t very full, when the expenses doesn’t match what you are bringing in, when the ground is dry and things aren’t looking the best, when the numbers for people and students aren’t where we would like them to be, when sickness leaves us with more questions than answers, we try to remind ourselves, “God will provide.” It’s a profound promise. It’s true. Always is. But, believable? Reason latches onto the physical facts we can see and touch. It sees the dollars and cents. It considers the present situation and wonders: maybe this one time it’s going to be different. You know the promise but when we can’t see how it’s going to work we can find ourselves feeling: isn’t it possible that this time things are going to change? Is it still God’s plan to provide?

When we meet Joseph in Genesis 41, we see a guy who I’m sure often wondered about God’s plan to provide. It’s been thirteen years since Joseph was the apple in his daddy’s eye and the favorite of the brothers. It had to have felt like a distant memory. Thirteen years since he was home. Saw his dad’s face. Felt that special loving touch that only comes from a parent. Almost half of his life has gone since he heard his brothers’ plans to murder him only to be saved by another brother suggesting, “Let’s sell him into slavery.” Thirteen year as a slave in Egypt with the last few sitting in prison. How many times did he remind himself, “God will provide,” as he watched his plans and expectations for life go up in smoke?

This isn't: "Look at how bad Joseph had it. Now buck up and get over yourself." No, your situation probably does not match his. But, you've been there before coaching and assuring yourself, "God will provide." And it's so very difficult when my plans and your expectations do not seem line up with God's plans and expectations for us. It's hard to trust when it doesn't seem God is giving us the opportunities we think we need to be successful in life. It's hard to trust when those opportunities we once had are taken away. It's a short trip down jealousy lane when we see others treated better and seem to have more available to them. Is God really providing for me? Why can't he provide *this* way in my relationships, for my bank accounts, for my life?

Like us, Joseph knew God's promise to provide. But what exactly? A way out? A way home? Freedom? What? For a while he was a slave in Potiphar's house. He was the man in charge of the house. Everything prospers under him. He has complete trust of his master. It's a pretty good gig. While not exactly ideal; he is still a slave. But God has provided! But then a lying wife lands Joseph in prison for a crime he did not commit. God will provide? How? In what way? What is God's plan? As Joseph sits in prison the warden recognizes, "Here's a guy I can trust," and puts Joseph in charge of those in the jail. Again not ideal by any means; he's still a prisoner. But God provided. While in prison Joseph interprets the dreams of the cup-bearer and baker of Pharaoh. "Remember me," Joseph says, "when you get out of prison. Tell Pharaoh about me so I too can be free." But the cupbearer restored to his position, out of prison, in favor with Pharaoh does not remember. Again, not ideal with having to wait longer in prison. But God did provide Joseph with a way out.

How easy it would have been for Joseph to question God's promise. Think of how difficult it is for you when God provides but they aren't the opportunities you were looking for. It's not necessarily because we don't think it's enough. We know God blesses and provides. But it just isn't what we expect. It's not what we want.

As you get older and your health is going quickly while you are moving more slowly. You were ready to go home to be with Jesus when your spouse passed away, before the last health issues came up. God has provided you with a blessing of years! But, you maybe prefer something else and begin to resent those years.

It might be the blessing of children. Children need extra love, attention, and dependence on you. Here's an opportunity God provides! But it might not be what you want right now. So in comes the frustration and impatience.

It might be with your work and the responsibilities God provides you with. But they aren't the responsibilities you want. It's so much extra work!

It could be an opportunity God provides for sharing his love and his promises with others. But it's not at the time you would like and you are kind of busy.

It could be a group of people or a place who are there to support and love you. But it's not the place or way you want it.

Watch a picky eater go through their food. They check over everything, pull the meal apart, separate it out, and can't get over the "bad" stuff that was in their meal. That can be us as we look at the blessings God gives. We can dissect them so much, trying to find the possible, what we think, is bad that we neglect to see the blessings God provides. No wonder we are quick to complain when our attention is focused on the struggles and problems. It shouldn't be a surprise that we get easily frustrated and impatient when our minds are too busy complaining about not having what we want. Instead of approaching God with thankful, praising hearts we come with ungratefulness and whining. Instead of trusting him above all things, we mock his gifts as if he messed up by providing us with these opportunities and blessings because it's not what we want. Why? Because we do not trust his promise and plan to provide. Like a child whose parents take away toy because they do not say please or thank-you, for this thankless not-trusting heart, God should take it all away. He should remove his blessings and love. Lord have mercy on me, a sinner.

And it's in mercy, not treating us as our sins deserve, that God treats us. We like to think we know so much. But we often know and can see so little of God's plan. Who could have guessed this was God's plan for Joseph? No one. One of the most powerful men in the known world hears about a random Hebrew slave in prison who can interpret dreams and actually listens to him. And not only does Pharaoh listen, he follows Joseph's plans. This is absurd. But here is God's divine hand at work in time and space providing according to his plan. So Joseph, a foreign nobody, is put in charge of all of Egypt. Pharaoh gives Joseph his signet ring, a fine robe, and gold necklace so that people would see: here's the guy in charge. To solidify his position in society Pharaoh also gives him a wife. And then, in case there was any questions, he put Joseph in his second best chariot with people going ahead of him telling the crowds: Kneel! Make Way! God provides.

But why in this way? There was a great famine coming to this land. And through Joseph God would not only provide food for Egypt but also the surrounding areas! This includes Joseph's own family who would come down to Egypt to buy food. But this isn't just a neat rags-to-riches story about a guy who helps out his family. Through Joseph, God provides and protects the family through him the Savior would come. Through Joseph, God protects the line of Israel and his promise to save.

And that's God's ultimate plan: to save. Despite our thanklessness, taking-for-granted attitudes, and lack of trust, God treats us with mercy. In Joseph we can see a picture of Jesus; Jesus who leaves his homeland with his heavenly Father to live as lower than a slave here on this earth. Here Jesus has compassion on the people. Even at times when he needs rest and time for himself, he puts the people first because he cares for them. Jesus

too would be betrayed by someone like a brother to him. He goes to a cross for crimes that he did not commit. He would die for sins that were not his own. For my thankless, doubting, mocking heart Jesus gives up his life so that God does not treat you as your sins deserve but, in mercy, God forgives you.

All the while Jesus trusts his Father's plan to provide. Even when the Father abandons him on the cross. Even when the work of your saving from sin is finished and he gives up his spirit, Jesus trusts his Father's plan. He puts his soul into his Father's hands trusting that in three days his Father would again provide. And on Easter morning the Father does and raises Jesus from the prison of the grave. He gives him the name above every name that every knee should bow in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.

And now, that same Jesus provides for you. Jesus sets you free from the chains of the devil and slavery to sin. He doesn't give you a signet ring on your finger. He gives you the Keys of heaven. When someone has sinned or done something wrong you can say more than "It's okay" or "It happens." You have the authority to say, "Your sins are forgiven." And it's as if Jesus himself is standing there and speaking those words. Jesus dresses you in his own fine robe, not of linen, but at your baptism he wraps you in his own cloak of perfection so that when God sees you he sees someone who is right with God and without sin. He feeds your starving soul by giving you the food of his body and blood in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Instead of a gold necklace around your neck, Jesus has won you the crown of eternal life. He has made you his own bride, washed in the water and the Word, and presents you before God as holy and blameless, proud to call you his own. Through Jesus God provides you a place with him and eternal life.

Since the end is guaranteed be assured that God will continue to provide for us until then. He opens his hand and satisfies the desires of every living thing. And because you are his child bearing his name, the Father takes a special interest in you. You can rest secure in your Father's hands knowing your life doesn't have to be swallowed up with worry whether or not you will have enough. God will provide. And because he is our changeless God, you can be sure that promise won't change either. We can't always see the plan or will know how it will all work. But we do have a Savior who promises to work all for your good. And because we have a good and merciful Father in heaven, he will. Instead of focusing on the bad or what the world might say is a downfall, look at the opportunities God provides for you to live his plan to the glory of his name and putting your neighbor before yourself. Trust in God's plan is to provide. Amen.