

- Pastor Mark: Well, howdy. Pastor Mark Driscoll here. I am really excited to bring you a 10-part sermon series on the life of Joseph, titled Trusting God in Troubled Times. This is a crazy, hillbilly, redneck saga with a lot of baby-mama drama, starting in Genesis 37. So if you've got a dysfunctional family, you ain't seen nothing yet, and God shows up and is good to everyone, which gives hope to us all.
- Speaker 2: It all started when Joseph ... it was his birthday, and his brother ... his dad wanted to give him a nice coat for his birthday.
- Speaker 3: They were so jealous, they threw him in a pit and sold him off to slavery. Pharaoh had a dream and decided that he wanted Joseph to interpret his dream, and he was put in a high position inside of the Egyptian empire.
- Speaker 2: Joseph was in charge of all the food during the famine, and when later, his brothers came to get food, they all figured out that Joseph was their long-lost brother, and they all had food together.
- Pastor Mark: All righty. If you've got a Bible, go to Genesis, Chapter 41. We're looking at the life testimony of Joseph. And if you're new, here's his story. He had a very complicated family structure: 13 kids, four different women, one husband, all under the same roof. I know it's not going to shock you, they had a little conflict and drama. Some of the other brothers got jealous of him because he was dad's favorite, and dad was playing favorites. So when they were all the way from home, at the age of 17, his brothers did the unthinkable, and they sold him into slavery and told his dad that he was dead. The story continues, then, that he is shackled in iron shackles around the neck and his feet, the Bible says, and he is taken ... think of this ... as a 17-year-old kid from a rural area to a big city, from the Promised Land to the Egyptian Empire, from a place where they speak Hebrew to a place where they speak Egyptian, from a place where they worship the God that his fathers worship to a place that they've never heard and know nothing of that God.
- Pastor Mark: All of a sudden, Joseph finds his life completely upside-down at the age of 17. He is a slave. He is continually pursued by a very dangerous woman, who happens to be the wife of his employer. He resists all of her temptation, and rather than being rewarded, he is then instead thrown into prison, falsely convicted as a rapist. He spends the 20s in prison, the best years of his life. He interprets someone's dream and asks them to help him. They completely forget and neglect him. Joseph's life is absolutely, in every single way, emotionally, physically, spiritually, mentally, relationally devastated. Here's what he doesn't do: he doesn't rebel, he doesn't get bitter, he doesn't seek vengeance, he doesn't blame God, he doesn't walk away from God, he doesn't stop doing a good job on the job.
- Pastor Mark: And here's what he didn't have: he didn't have the full Bible. And this was a long time ago. There was a lot of things that God hadn't written down yet. He didn't have the full Bible. He didn't have the presence of his parents to help him navigate these life decisions. He also didn't have a church to go to, and there was no indication that there were any other believers orbiting around his life.

Here he is, all by himself. How do you go through that kind of adversity with this kind of character? That's the question that many of you have been asking, and it really is about the person and the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. So today, we're going to look at the life of Joseph, and we're going to look at five signs of the Spirit.

Pastor Mark: Genesis 41:38, when Pharaoh looks at him ... and Pharaoh is the most significant, popular, powerful, preeminent man on the earth ... when he looks at Joseph, here's the key, he said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" How in the world did Joseph do it? By the power of the Holy Spirit. He was filled by the third member of the Trinity, by God, the Holy Spirit. He knew what to do because God would tell him. He would know where to go because God would show him. He had an intimate, surrendered relationship with God, and as a result, God helped him navigate all of the complexities of his life.

Pastor Mark: This should serve as an encouragement for you and for me and for us. We have far more resources than he does. We have each other, we have the full word of God, we've seen Jesus come, live, die, rise, we know far more of the story of God than he did, yet we have to the same person, the same presence, the same power of the Spirit of God that Joseph did. And we read this in Genesis 39, as well. Four times, it tells us that he lived in God's presence, that he and God had this relationship where he was surrendered, yielded to, submitted to trusting God. Even though life didn't go the way that he would have wanted, he followed the way that God had for him. So we're going to look at what it means to live a Spirit-filled life.

Pastor Mark: Number one, the first sign of a Spirit-filled life is good stewardship at work and at home. Genesis 41, Verses 41 through 57. And because we're in a narrative, it's a lot of text, so I'm going to read a lot of Bible, okay? It's going to sound like I'm auctioning off Genesis. I've got to read fast because there's just a lot to cover, okay? And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Previously, he'd been a slave who was in prison. He interprets the Pharaoh's dream that there's going to be seven years of fat, seven years of lean, so they need to prepare themselves for the coming famine. So all of a sudden, he gets a promotion from being a slave to basically being the vice president of Egypt, from a prison cell where he has been for over a decade, to all of a sudden living at the palace.

Pastor Mark: Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand. You know what that is? That is the corporate Amex platinum card in Egypt. If you have the signet ring, it's ... if you have this ring, here's how you walk around. You walk around like this. You make sure everybody sees it. What that means is every potential thing you want to buy, boom, that's your signature. Anything you want to own, land, you want to get yourself a new home, you want to take care of your family, it's Pharaoh's unlimited bank account. The Egyptian Empire ruled for 1,300 years, more than the Roman and Greek Empires combined. This is the richest man on earth, and you're the number two, and you have an unlimited

account, and you don't need to get approval. How many of you, this would be amazing if your boss just gave you a card, and there was no purchasing department, and you didn't have to turn in your receipts? Oh, that's amazing. He doesn't have to turn in his receipts. He gets to do whatever he wants and spend all of Pharaoh's loot. This is a good day for a guy who previously was in jail.

Pastor Mark:

And clothed him in garments of fine linen. So when Joseph changes clothes, he changes roles. He had the coat of many colors. His dad put it on him, his brothers took it off him. Then Potiphar's wife comes along and literally takes his coat off him, and he runs for his life. Here, he gets dressed appropriately as an Egyptian leader. And put a gold chain around his neck. So now he's officially entering Egyptian hiphop status. He's got the platinum Amex, he's going to get a gold grill, he's going to put rims on his chariot, he's going to have 18-inch subs in the back, he's going to be playing Ridin' Dirty. It's just ... this is all a big transition for him, okay? This is where he's at. Just reading ... that's what it says in Hebrew. Put a gold chain around his neck, he's going to come out with his own line of shoes. He's going to have some, I don't know, Joseph Yeezys. I don't know what he's going to do, but it's going to be a big deal.

Pastor Mark:

So Verse 43, made him ride in the second chariot. You notice how Pharaoh does it? Pharaoh says, "Okay, here's how we're going to roll when a parade comes. I get the big chariot, you get the little chariot. Just remember, I'm still the boss. You're my wingman. That's how this is going to work out." And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Can you imagine this? You're riding through the Egyptian Empire, and as you come through, everybody takes a knee. I know this is controversial, and I'm not referring to that. This is just what they did in that day to honor the leader because, in the Egyptian Empire, it's kind of like North Korea today. It was like a cultic, demonic, military, familial dictatorship where one family ruled the whole country with an iron fist, and religion and state were not separated, and the religious leaders were worshiped as gods. So when Pharaoh comes through, they literally think he's a god, so they honor him as a god.

Pastor Mark:

And now Joseph is like, I don't know, the number-two god, so they honor him like a god, as well. How many of you, at this point, your pride would go up? You'd be a little arrogant. You're like, "Yeah, finally the rest of you recognize who I truly am. Thank you. Congratulations on your tremendous insight. You're right, I am kind of like a god. You're welcome." He's going to have to maintain humility. Sometimes the hardest thing is to be godly when you're successful, okay? Sometimes it's easy to be godly when you're humble. You're like, "I lost, we failed, and I'm humble." Well, you should be. You lost, and you failed. But when you're succeeding, when you're promoted, when you're getting accolades, sometimes that's also a test in part of your testimony.

Pastor Mark:

Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all of the land of Egypt." That's a big deal. And what Joseph's position here is one of stewardship. So what Pharaoh is saying is, "I still retain ownership. Egypt is mine, all the wealth is mine, all the land is mine." So what Pharaoh is designating is this is his ownership, and he's telling

Joseph, "Your role is stewardship. You take what is mine, and you manage it. You oversee it," okay? Some of you, you are bankers, you do life insurance, you run investment portfolios, you manage 501(k)s or 403(b)s or whatever the case may be. You're the one who manages someone else's wealth. You're an asset manager. And what you can't do is whatever you want to do with someone else's resources, because that would be stealing.

Pastor Mark: And in a certain way, this is how all believers are supposed to think. The reason that Joseph is strategically prepared for this role is because he thinks biblically, and biblically, we believe that ultimately it's God who owns everything. God made the planet, God made us, God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. God also says in the Bible that all the silver and gold is His. What God is saying is ownership, He owns it all. Stewardship, we're managers of God's resources. We're managers. And there's a big difference between ownership and stewardship. Joseph understands this because he thinks in a way that is according to the Bible. So as God's people, we're to say, "Okay, Lord, it's Your money. What do You want me to do with it? Who do You want me to help? Where do You want me to give? What do You want me to spend? Am I being a good manager of Your resources?"

Pastor Mark: That's why 25% of the Lord Jesus' Parables are about finances and wealth, and it's this issue of ownership versus stewardship. We're supposed to have this mentality that all we have is God's, and we're the ones who are managing it. Joseph has this kind of relationship with the Pharaoh, but Joseph ultimately knows that, even as he's managing the Pharaoh's resources, the true owner is God. So when you go to work, you work for your company, you're managing the assets and resources of your business or your boss's business, you need to understand that, ultimately, God is the owner of everything. And we want to be good stewards, and we want to be faithful servants of the resources that ultimately belong to God.

Pastor Mark: Pharaoh then called Joseph's name. He's going to get a name change, Zaphenath-paneah. I don't know if I'm saying that right. Let me just say this. If you ever get a chance to read the Bible publicly, and you find yourself in the Old Testament, read confident and fast. No one will second-guess, because none of us knows how to say these names. We're just going to call him JZ. Joseph Zaphenath, that's JZ, right? There it is. So we're just going to call him JZ. And he gave him in marriage to Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. So now he gets a wife, but it's a prearranged marriage, and he is marrying a woman who doesn't share his same religion. And the way that marriage would often work in that day, you would marry people together to combine empires and nations or religions. That's how the Egyptian Empire expanded itself. Well, he doesn't get to pick his wife, but he's going to love and serve his wife, and he's going to seek to influence his wife toward worshiping his God.

Pastor Mark: So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt, and Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through the land of Egypt. During the seven plentiful years, the earth produced abundantly. It was a run. Real estate's up, everybody's making money. It's a great time, but the famine is coming. And he

gathered up all the food of those seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt, and he put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it, and Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured. There was such a harvest for seven years that they stopped counting. Can you imagine if you reached that point? You'd be like, "How much money you got?" Like, "I don't know. My accountant stopped counting. It got to be so much. What a burden to count that much. We just sort of quit counting. I have a shed in the back. It's full of hundred-dollar bills. I don't know. The bank is full. I don't even know where to put all this money. I used to invest it, but actually, I've invested in everything. I have nothing left to invest in." That's God's provision and abundant blessing. This is a foreshadowing of God's eternal kingdom, where he provides generously and abundantly for all.

Pastor Mark:

Couple things I want to hit here. Ministry, he's working upstream. Most of us, most of you, your ministry is in the marketplace. He's at work, on the job. That's where his witness is. His work is his worship, his work is his witness. That's you, too. And he gets upstream. Culture is made upstream but flows downstream. So if you can run a company, if you can be a professor, if you can get to the point of being a judge, if you can get to the point of running for political office ... and exactly that's what's happening here, he holds a political office ... you are finding yourself, as a believer, in a strategic position to affect cultural change downstream. That's what Joseph is doing. That's why God's people should hope for opportunities to get into higher levels of leadership, not to benefit themselves, but to affect good change out of love and service to God and others.

Pastor Mark:

Number two, in addition to his ministry, he has his identity. When they change his name, they're trying to change his identity. They're saying, "You're Egyptian now." And Joseph does not define himself by what they say, but by what God says. Okay, you and I need to do the same. People may say things about you. Your family may give you a negative pejorative name. Somebody may lie about you or falsely accuse you of something or even just seek to hold you back and put you down. It doesn't matter what they say. It matters what He says. They can call you whatever they want to call you, but you don't accept, acknowledge, or receive what is said regarding who you are, apart from what God says. And that's going to be the key to Joseph. The Egyptians will see him as an Egyptian, but he still sees himself as a missionary there to love and serve the Egyptians on behalf of God. His identity is shaped through his relationship with God, not his relationship with Pharaoh.

Pastor Mark:

And the third thing we see is his family. He is going to be a man who wins at work, and he wins at home. He does an exceedingly good job at work. He does exactly what God tells him to do, store it during the seven years of plenty in preparation for the seven years of lean, but he also wins at home. You're going to see that he has children, he's a loving, devoted, present father, and we get every indication that he is faithful to his wife through the duration of his life. His brothers, not so much. His dad, not at all. This is a problem in his family line, but he is a guy who wins at home and is faithful to his wife and raises his kids and wins at work. And that's the big idea here. One sign of the Spirit is good

stewardship at home and at work. Some of us win at work, and we lose at home. The marriage or the kids are neglected. Or we win at home, the relationships are very tight, but we don't generate enough revenue to take care of our family, or our job suffers because we are not devoted and present. Joseph finds a way, through the leading of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, to win at work and win at home.

Pastor Mark:

Now, it tells us his age in Verse 46. Joseph was 30 years of age when he entered the service of Pharaoh. Now, he was 17 when he was sold into slavery. It's 13 years. He's missed his late teen years and all of his 20s. Just think about that. What were you doing, if you're over 20, during your 20s? If you're in your 20s, what are you doing? What if you were suffering away from home, no accountability, sexually tempted? Would you rebel against God? He doesn't. He doesn't make an excuse of a life stage. Instead, he just continues to be obedient and live in relationship with God. But it's been 13 years. How many of you have been waiting a long time to get out of the position that you're in? He waited for 13 years to get out of his position as a slave. He waited numerous years to get out of his position of prison. He's got a God-given patience.

Pastor Mark:

The story continues. Before the year of the famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. He gets two boys. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of his firstborn son Manasseh, where he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." The name of the second, he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." He gives his boys Hebrew names. What he's saying is, "Boys, we worship our God. We don't worship their god. We're going to worship the God of my dad, not your mom's dad." He makes a clear delineation and break.

Pastor Mark:

And this is true for all parents, but let me just speak specifically to the fathers, since it is a father who is present here. You need to be the family leader in your home. You need to set the spiritual temperature. You need to decide what God is going to be worshiped. You need to decide what church is going to be attended. You need to decide what your family will look like. And Joseph is married to a woman who is the daughter of the great pagan high priest. What he doesn't say is, "I'll convert to your religion." What he doesn't say is, "We'll give our children both of the religions." What he says is, "I worship my God. My kids are going to be named in honor to my God. As for me and my house," to quote another part of the Bible, "we will serve the Lord." He makes that determination.

Pastor Mark:

And he calls his sons "forgetful" and "fruitful." First time I read that, I thought, I feel bad for that first kid. The second one, I feel a little better for. But "forgetful" and "fruitful," what he's saying is, "Son, you're such a blessing that I've forgotten all the pain of my past." That's a real honor. You children need to know that you are a blessing. My children need to know that they are my blessing. The Bible says that children are a blessing from the Lord. And he looks at his son, and he says, "You know what? I'm so blessed today, with this life that God has given me, the opportunity that God has provided me, that I have forgotten the pain of my

past." What that means is, when he wakes up in the morning, he's not looking back with regret. He's looking forward with hope. And so he calls his second son "fruitful," which means he's really excited and hopeful for the future. What he's saying is, "God has preserved, protected, provided for me. He's got good things for me in the future."

Pastor Mark: For all of us, we need to have this sort of mentality. Holy Spirit, help us to forget the pain of our past, and help us to have hope for a fruitful future. And he names his sons that, and it's his way of reminding himself. How often do you say the name of your child? All the time, right? It's a constant reminder. We worship the God of the Bible, he allows us to forget the pain of our past and have hope for our future. And every time he says the name of his sons, that's what he's reminding himself and them. He's speaking a covenant blessing over his family.

Pastor Mark: The seven years of plenty that occurred in Egypt then came to an end, Verse 53, and the seven years of famine began to come. As Joseph had said, there was famine in all of the lands, but in the land of Egypt, there was bread. They were provided for. This is the Joseph principle: when things are good, don't spend it all. Save some for later. When the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph." This man is powerful. "What he says to you, do." He is now the second most powerful man alive on the earth. So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened up all the storehouses, sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the earth came to Joseph to buy grain because the famine was so severe.

Pastor Mark: Isn't it great that God can work through even corrupt governments, unhealthy governments, dysfunctional governments? It gives us hope, amen? I don't know about you, I'm not really enjoying the news, and I need a little bit of hope. And here, what we see is that God sends one of his servants, and that man is a blessing. When God's people go to work or into governance, our hope, our prayer, our goal should be that the presence of God comes with us and that we are a blessing. And let me say, you being here today, you're a blessing. Thank you for coming. God's people are a blessing, and the presence of God's people is a blessing.

Pastor Mark: And what I love about this, as well, here's Joseph running Costco. That's what he's doing. They've got pallets stacked up. He's in charge of the Costco, the only Costco still open on the earth, and he's really doing well. His margins are really good. But what I see here is God is saying, "Trouble is coming. Prepare yourself." And you need to know that God still does this. God tells us that even if our life is going okay, when we die, we will stand before him and give an account. But the famine that they have is not just a physical famine, it's also a spiritual famine. Not only do they not have bread, they don't know the Lord Jesus, who is the bread of life. So God is forewarning them that trouble is coming. If you're here today, and you're not a Christian, let me just tell you that, at the end of this life, you're going to Heaven or Hell. If you don't know the Lord Jesus, it'll be an eternal spiritual famine. So God wants you to prepare yourself for that day, and so he warns you in advance that you need Jesus just as they needed Joseph, and

that just as Joseph saved them from death, so Jesus will save you from death. That's the big story of the whole Bible.

Pastor Mark:

Spirit sign number two, he is relationally wise. Genesis 42:1 through 17. At this point, he is now 37 years of age. He was 17 when he was taken as a slave. We just learned that, at the beginning of the famine, he was 30. We're now into the famine ... or I should rather say the seven years of plenty, and then we're at the beginning of the famine, so at this point, he's 37 years of age. At this point, he doesn't know if his dad is alive or dead. He hasn't seen his family in 20 years. He has no idea what's going on back home. His whole life has changed. He's now spent the majority of his life in Egypt. He's wearing Egyptian clothes, he's an Egyptian political leader, he's mastered and perfected speaking the Egyptian language. There's not really anybody to speak Hebrew with, so he would have known that, but it got rusty. He is bilingual. That's where we find him.

Pastor Mark:

When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, Chapter 42 ... this is his dad, back home, all right? They're starving to death, and his dad hears a report, over in the nation of Egypt, they've got a Costco open. We could go there and fill up our cart and feed the family. There was grain for sale in Egypt, and he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" This is kind of funny, right? All the guys are like, "Yeah, we're sure hungry." There's 12 grown men, plus their dad, 13 guys, and they're all like, "Somebody should do something." And dad's like, "Get up and go." Some people don't get motivated until there's significant pain, and pain motivates them for change. These are not really aggressive, entrepreneurial, sharp-thinking ... I'm glad none of these guys is running Egypt, right? They would not have had a plan. But he's kind of jabbing at his boys, "Behold, I've heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down to buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." People are starving to death. That's how bad it is. That's how our people got to America. We were starving to death in Ireland. I think it was my great-great-grandmother either starved to death or died of typhoid, so that's how we ended up in America. That's how bad it was at that time.

Pastor Mark:

So 10 of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt, but Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him. The sons came to Israel to vie among others who came, for the family was great in the land. His dad's still playing favorites. The whole problem was he had four women, one he really loved, he had 13 kids, one that he loved from that woman, now he's got another kid from that woman, and he's still playing favorites. And he says, "Okay, boys. You all go to Egypt. I've already lost one son. I'm keeping Benjamin." And what he's saying is, "If I lose you guys, well, stuff happens. But Joseph's really important to me."

Pastor Mark:

All right, if you're a kid, you're pretty bummed if your dad plays these favorites, right? You're like, "Dad, how come I don't get buckled up?" "Eh, you don't matter." "Really? I've got to ride in the bed of the truck?" "Yeah, we've got so-and-so up here. We've got Johnny up here with the airbag. If something happens, we'd hate to see him get hurt." "Dad, we're in the back of the truck. How come we don't get an air ..." Well, you're not dad's favorite, amen? He's

still playing favorites, and so there's still problems with their pops. And the problem here is they've got multiple kids with multiple women, but dad is playing favorites. The closest cultural equivalent in our day would be a blended family. Blended families can be beautiful, but not if the parents play favorites. You've got to love all the kids the same. You've got to have a heart and affection for all of the kids, and this dad simply doesn't.

Pastor Mark:

Now, Joseph was governor over the land. He's in a governance slot. He was the one who sold all of the people the land. And Joseph's brothers came, and they bowed down before him, with their faces to the ground. You remember his dream at the beginning of his life, if you were here for that sermon? He got a dream, and he told his brothers, "I had this crazy dream. You guys were all down on your knees and bowing down to me. Isn't that a funny dream?" And they were like, "No, that's not funny at all. We hate that, and we hate you, and we hate Dad, and we hate that crazy coat, so we're going to sell you into slavery." All of a sudden, here's Joseph at work. He doesn't know that his brothers are coming, he doesn't know what God is doing, he doesn't know that the father has been sending, and all of a sudden, they show up, and his dream comes true. How many years later? 20 years. Sometimes you've got to wait a while for the promises of God. Here's what you need to know about God: he's usually late and always on time. That's how God works. He's usually late and right on time. Okay?

Pastor Mark:

So they bow down, and Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. This is the plot twist. Joseph doesn't look the same, right? It's been 20 years, from 17 to 37. People change, right? Some of you don't weigh the same. Just saying. It happens, right? He may have lost some hair. Now he looks like an Egyptian, he speaks Egyptian, he's wearing Egyptian clothes. And they're not expecting to see their brother. And Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed of them, and he said to them, "You are spies." He's going to test them. This is relationally wise. He's not sure if their hearts have changed, so before he reveals himself, he's going to test them. "You are spies. You've come to see the nakedness of the land." They came down from the north. Historically, Egypt was most vulnerable from the north. That was the border they had the most difficult time protecting.

Pastor Mark:

They said to him, "No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food. We're all sons of one man." You notice they didn't say "one woman." They couldn't say that. And I love this: they say, "We are honest men." Not really. You guys have been lying to your dad for 20 years. This isn't going to hold up in court. "Your servants have never been spies." He said to them, "No, it is the nakedness of the land that you've come to see." And they said, "We, your servants, are 12 brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. Behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more. We have two other brothers. One is gone or dead, and the other one's back home with Dad because Dad favors him." They're divulging a lot of information, right? Did they have to? People with a guilty conscience, just leave an awkward silence, and they just sort of put it out there. Joseph doesn't have a guilty conscience, so he's quiet. They've got a guilty conscience, so they're just going to put it all out there.

- Pastor Mark: Then Joseph said to them, "It is as I have said, you are spies. But this, by this you shall be tested, by the life of Pharaoh." That's their way of saying "I swear to God." So if you went into court, they'd say, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you Pharaoh?" "I do." Pharaoh was a god, and if you swore by the name of Pharaoh, that was considered, in Egypt, the highest authority. So he's playing the Egyptian role. He's not disclosing his true identity just yet. "You shall not go from this place until your youngest brother comes here." Uh-oh. "Go get your brother." Now, this is his biological brother. I don't think he even knew that he had a biological brother. "While you remain confined, that your words may be tested whether as truth, or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." And he put them all together in custody for three days. He throws them in jail for three days. How many of you would love to do that to your siblings? You're like, "Just three days. It's just an extended ... it's a holiday weekend. Just a couple of days, just eat gruel and be terrified. That'd be fine." All right, he throws them in jail for three days to test them.
- Pastor Mark: So here's the deal with Joseph: God has a destiny appointed for him, already told him that he was going to rule and reign. He's now entered into his destiny. He's the second most powerful man on the earth, he's overseeing this relief effort, he is managing the assets of Pharaoh, and he needs to know whether or not his brothers have changed. There are three kinds of people: there's wise, foolish, and evil. His brothers have been evil. Joseph here is not going to act foolishly and say, "Oh, I missed you. What's going ..." He's going to act wisely. When you're dealing with people that are potentially evil, you need to be wise. You cannot be foolish. So he is relationally wise, and he is testing them. He's wanting to see, have you changed? Because if he just embraces them and then reunites with them, and they're part of Pharaoh's household, and they've got all this power and money, and they're very evil men who continue to do harm, as they did when he was young, this could undo God's destiny for him.
- Pastor Mark: Here's what I'm telling you: God's destiny takes precedence over your family. Some of you, you don't walk with God, because your family gets upset. I know people that stopped going to church because their family got upset. It's like, no, no, no, that is God's destiny for you. You need to walk with God faithfully. And it's not that you don't love your family, but they are not your first priority. That's where Jesus says, "Unless you're willing to walk away from mother and father, you cannot be my disciples." He's not talking about dishonoring, disrespecting, or disregarding your family, but what he's saying is relationship with God has to be first priority. And if family is going to absolutely negate relationship with God and the destiny that God has for you, then they need to make an adjustment to His will. You don't need to make an adjustment to their will. So Joseph here is being very relationally wise.
- Pastor Mark: Spirit sign number three, he's emotionally healthy. How would you respond to this? You don't know if your dad's dead or alive, you don't know what's going on with your family, you haven't seen them in 20 years, you've already forgiven them from the heart, and you've moved on. And you think, well, that season of life is over. I'm in Egypt, I'm not in the Promised Land. This is who I am, what I'm

doing. I'm married, I've got kids. And all of a sudden, the family shows up, and the past enters the present. On the third day, Chapter 42, Verse 18, Joseph said to them, "Do this, and you will live, for I fear God." Proverbs says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. You're stupid until you honor and recognize God. Until we start with God first, and a reverence and a respect for God, we're very stupid. He says, "I fear God." What he's saying is, "I want to do whatever pleases Him. I live for an audience of one. I'm trying to do what's right in the sight of God. If you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain confined while you are in custody, and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your household." It's a test, "And bring your youngest brother to me." That's his biological brother.

Pastor Mark:

He said, "Okay, you guys all go home, and I'm going to leave one brother." You know why? He was the brother who got left, and he's wondering, have you changed? Because if you all leave and don't come back for your brother, you've not changed. You're doing the same thing to him that you've done to me. He is testing their character. Here's what I want you to know: forgiveness is free, trust is earned. Forgiveness is free, trust is earned. He has already forgiven them. Otherwise, he would be seeking vengeance on them. But they need to earn his trust. Some of you, you don't understand the difference between forgiveness and trust, so you forgive them, let them back in your life, but they haven't changed, and they do great damage. Forgiveness is free, trust is earned. He's already forgiven them freely. Now they're going to need to earn his trust. And it determines by how they treat the brother that they leave behind. See, he was the brother that they left behind and they never come back for, so he's going to keep one brother, and if they leave, he's going to see if they come back for that brother. If so, it indicates that they've changed and they're now trustworthy.

Pastor Mark:

Now they have a conversation. Then they said to one another, "In truth, we are guilty concerning our brother." They're talking about Joseph. Now, you're going to read this in just a moment. They're speaking Hebrew. He's only been speaking Egyptian. They don't know that he can understand them. So the brothers are like, "Man, this is like what we did to Joseph when we were evil to our brothers and we sinned and did wrong to him. It's happening again. Let's not make the same mistake. Let's not do the same evil thing that we did to Joseph." Are they changed? Yeah. Sometimes it takes 20 years, but let God work on your family. Right? If you want to hear "I'm sorry," you may need to wait 20 years. But God's working on everybody in this story. "And that we saw the distress of his soul, he begged us, and we did not listen. We were cruel and mean and evil to Joseph, our brother. This is why this distress has come upon us. Reap, sow. God's getting us back. What we did was wrong, boys, and now God's getting us back." They have this sort of karmic view of God. They don't have a gracious view of God.

Pastor Mark:

And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen." Reuben was the guy who slept with his dad's girlfriend, so he's not ... when he is pulling out the "we're not being very moral" card, it's official, okay? I'll just say it that way. It's official, right? "So now here comes a reckoning for his blood." They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them. And then he turned away from them,

and he what? He wept. He's emotionally healthy. He's emotionally healthy. He's already forgiven them. He's worked through the pain of his past. That has opened up the opportunity for reconciliation in the present. He's emotionally healthy. That is a tremendously healthy sign when you realize my dad's alive, I've got a little brother, biological, same mom and dad, my brothers, who betrayed and tried to destroy me, God's been working on their hearts, they really regret what they did to me, they've been haunted by it every day since, my family's in need, and God has put me in a position to love and to serve and to be gracious. And as a result of him weeping, that shows that he's emotionally healthy. He has empathy, he has compassion, he has the heart of God.

Pastor Mark: Joseph is able to be two things: tough and tender. When he needs to be tough, he's tough. In part of it here, he's being tough. He's testing them, he's throwing them in jail. You've got to be tough to do that. But he's also very tender. Most men struggle, because most men are one or the other. Most men are always tough, or they're always tender. You've got to know when to be tough and when to be tender. Here, Joseph has this perfect, Holy-Spirit-led blend of toughness and tenderness. He's tough with them because he wants to see if he can trust them, but his heart is very tender toward them. The Lord Jesus also is tough and tender, and he comes, and he also weeps.

Pastor Mark: One of the ways that we become emotionally healthy is by dealing with things as they happen, not letting them stack up. Joseph here immediately deals with this overwhelming experience. He pulls himself aside, and he weeps. He's going to pray, he's going to talk to the Lord, he's going to emotionally process so that he can heal up and move forward. Some of you, there are painful things in your past, particularly in regards to your family, that you've not really processed, you've not brought into the presence of God, you've not wept over, you've not forgiven, and as a result, you're emotionally unhealthy. And by being in the presence of God, by shedding your tears, by forgiving those who do evil, by overcoming the pain of your past, God will emotionally heal you up so that you can have a joyful future. Okay? And that's what God has done here, with Joseph, and we see it in his response.

Pastor Mark: Spirit sign number four, he's financially generous. Chapter 42, Verse 23, and he returned to them and spoke to them, and he took Simeon from them, bound him before their eyes. Can you imagine that? Here's Simeon is now taken into custody. Uh-oh. Joseph is powerful. These men are powerless. There is nothing they can do. If he wasn't emotionally healthy, if he hadn't already forgiven them, he would seek vengeance on all of them. "Oh, you know what you did to me? I'm going to do it to you. I spent 13 years suffering. I went to prison. You're going to see what that's like. I'll stick you guys in my cell." No. This is just a test. But ultimately, he hopes to bless, do good, and restore relationship.

Pastor Mark: Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to replace every man's money in his sack, and give them provisions for the journey. This was done for them. They pay him for the food, he puts the food in their sacks. He also returns and refunds all of their money. That's generosity. It's not generous unless you're giving something that the person is not owed. And he knows, with the amount

of food that he is giving them, how long is the famine going to last? Seven years. They don't know that. He knows that food ain't going to last seven years, so they'll be back, because God has given him insight into the future. Then they loaded their donkeys and their grain, and they departed.

Pastor Mark: As one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money in the mouth of the sack. He said to his brothers, "Uh-oh. My money has been put back here in the mouth of my sack," and then their hearts fell, and they're like, "Oh, they're going to think we ripped them off." If you're guilty, and you've not apologized or repented of something in your past, you will even see God's blessing as a cursing. You're going to think that everything is out to get you. You almost become paranoid. "My money has been put back here in the sack," and as their hearts failed them, they turned, trembling, to one another, "What is this that God has done?"

Pastor Mark: When they came to Jacob, their father, in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, "The man, the lord of the land, spoke roughly to us. He was very angry with us. He had a very stern tone, Dad." They have to go home and explain to dad, "Okay, the good news is we got grain. The bad news is they're going to think we stole all the money. And the other bad news is you'll notice we're down one brother. I know you see a pattern here, Dad. We go away, we come back, we're like, 'We missed one.' But we said to him we are honest men. We have never been spies. We are 12 brothers, sons of our father, one is no more, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. The lord of the land said to us, 'By this, I shall know that you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain for the famine for your household, and go your way. Bring your youngest brother to me, then I shall know that you are not spies but honest men.'" They're revisiting the whole story, "And I will deliver your brother to you, and you shall trade in the land."

Pastor Mark: As they emptied their sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. How many of you would love it, you go to Costco, you come home, you've got all your stuff and all your money? How many of you'd go right back to Costco? You're like, "I'm going to do this a lot." That's what's happening. And when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid. And Jacob, their dad, said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children. Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and now you want Benjamin. All this has come against me." Dad still sees himself as a victim. Doesn't see that he played any part in this. That sometimes happens, right, in family drama? The whole family melts down, and somebody's just like, "I can't believe that you treat me this way." "Well, actually, you participated, Dad. You played favorites, and so you were ungodly, Dad. We were ungodly. We were all ungodly, but Dad, you're not just the victim," right? "You're not the Jesus of this story, Dad. You're not the one who did nothing wrong."

Pastor Mark: So anytime there's conflict, anytime there's pain, humility requires that we ask, okay, how did I participate? And there's varying degrees. Maybe it's 99% them and 1% you, but this man here doesn't seem to even own his percentage. He's looking at his boys, "What have you done to me?" And they're like, "Well, Dad,

the reason that sometimes we have division is we go out, and you keep the brother that you like the best, and you play favorites." So their response was ungodly, but the way he architected the family system was very unhelpful and unwise.

Pastor Mark: The story continues, Verse 37. Then Reuben said to his father ... if you have a dumb family member, it's biblical, okay? Here's an example, "I've got an idea: kill my two sons!" Oh, that's a great idea. So let's just run the numbers here. Our dad is really devastated because he lost sons. You know what? If we kill some grandsons, that'll fix it. How many of you come from a stupid family? All right, we can all raise our hand. Stupid family's biblical. They have a stupid family. This is a stupid idea. I read all the commenters like, "Well, maybe." I'm thinking this is just stupid, okay? If my dad ... and I love my dad ... if my dad gets bummed, and I come to him and I say, "Dad, I'll kill the grandsons. How's that?" I'll just tell you right now, it doesn't fix whatever pain he's feeling. Amen? All right, we'll just continue.

Pastor Mark: Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons." Don't you love it, too, when a guy is not willing to suffer, but is willing to put his family in harm's way? This is like there's a bullet coming, he's like, "Hey, son, stand right here." What a great dad. It's so stupid. "Kill my two sons if I do ..." You know what, though? I'll say this, too. And this is all just a free-flowing riff, and I get paid by the minute, so I'm not done. But what I'm telling you is this: families look stupid when it's their family. When it's our family, we're just used to the dysfunction. Amen? So if their family came to your house for Thanksgiving, they'd be like, "This is the stupidest family I've ever seen." We always see foolishness in somebody else's family a little clearer than our own, because they're probably thinking, "Well, Reuben, he's a little impetuous. He sleeps with Dad's girlfriends and says crazy stuff. We expect that out of Reuben. He's that one, right? He's the one who didn't wear a helmet as a kid, and he just ... he does stuff." Okay, I'll just continue.

Pastor Mark: Anyway, Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left." "Uh, Dad, there's a lot of us. There's others." What a messed-up family, right? What a messed-up family. This reminds me of a family. This is sad. I'll change the mood, make you sad. Okay. It was Christmastime. I know a family had six kids, dad came down and gave one kid a present to open. That's what dad's doing here. He's still not learned his lesson. He's like, "I lost the two sons." They're like, "You have more." "Yeah, but you guys, what a disappointment." But he said, "My son ..." Let me say this, too: this whole family is so jacked up, right?

Pastor Mark: It goes all the way back to Adam, who watches Satan have a conversation with his wife. Then you've got Noah, who passes out, drunk and naked in his tent as a hillbilly in a KOA campground, doing stuff he shouldn't be doing. Then you move forward to Abraham, who has kids with a couple of women, and the story continues. And some people will be like, "And this is God's chosen people." That's because God is hilarious. That's because God has a sense of humor. And the big idea is God didn't pick them because this is the dream team. This is the

nightmare team, amen? Right? But what the good news is, is God can work even through totally messed-up families. And He does. Amen? He works through a totally messed-up family. That's what He does. And that's God's grace, and that's God's hope for all of us, including our own messed-up families.

Pastor Mark: Where was I? Okay, Verse 38. But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow. I can't handle any more grief." Now, what we see here, though, is Joseph is financially generous. He gives them food and all their money back. He's generous. He is a man who gives. And this is going to be important. My last point is that if you can give, you can forgive. If you can give, you can forgive. He's a man who understands giving and forgiving from the heart. So the last point, the Spirit sign number five, giving and forgiving from the heart. Genesis 43. We're going to cover a whole chapter. Here we go.

Pastor Mark: Now, the famine was severe in the land. When they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go again and buy us a little food." They didn't know it was going to last seven years. Joseph did, so Joseph gave them what they asked for, but he knew they would have to come back. But Judah ... this is the older brother, and over in Genesis 38, he sexually sins. He's not a great guy, but he's changed. Sometimes when you're dealing with family members, some of you have felt the pain of this, family members will freeze you in a moment in time and not let you mature. All they do is they see you where you were, not where you are. Sometimes we can move forward, and it's our family that seeks to drag us backward.

Pastor Mark: It would be easy to look at Judah and say, oh, gosh, here's his story. He betrayed his brother, he sexually sinned in Chapter 38. He's just a bad guy. But he changes because God changes people. Some of them start changing fairly quickly, like Joseph. Others take time, like Judah. I believe the reason that Joseph matured more quickly is he had more adversity. I wish you could get character by going on to Amazon and getting overnight shipping, but usually, character doesn't come that way. It only gets delivered in the package of adversity. Joseph matures quickly because he's had more adversity, but God also works on and in Judah, and you're going to see Judah respond a little bit differently here.

Pastor Mark: And Judah said to him, Verse 3, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face again unless your brother is with you.' If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy food, but if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'" And Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?" Dad's saying, "Why didn't you boys lie? If you would have just lied and not told him about the other brother, we wouldn't have gotten into this. Hey, boys, didn't I teach you to lie?" "Yeah, Dad. Joseph's a lie. We're really good at lying. You don't even know all the lies we're telling."

- Pastor Mark: Don't teach your kids to lie. Teach them to tell the truth, even when it costs them. The dad is upset because the boys are not good at lying, and he doesn't know that they're really good at lying. They went to Joseph's funeral and all cried, and they knew that Joseph was alive. They've been carrying a lie for 20 years, and a lie is not the answer. A lie is always the problem. And what happens when you start lying, you tell a lie, and then you've got to tell another lie, and then you've got to add another lie, and eventually, it all collapses, and the truth will set you free. And they're about ready to discover the truth. Dad's alive, Joseph's alive. God has been working on everybody. The boys have had a heart change. The truth is going to set them all free.
- Pastor Mark: They replied, Verse 7, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves ..." they're defending themselves ... "and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' What we told him in answer to these questions, could we in any way know that he would say, 'Bring down your brother?'" They're like, "We didn't know how this was going to play out." We're all smart in hindsight, amen? And Judah said to Israel, his dad, "Send the boy with me. I will go arise, that he may live and not die, both you and the little ones. I will be a pledge for his safety. From my hand, you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. If we had not delayed, we would have now returned twice." He said, "Let's stop arguing about this. Let's just go do what we need to do. And Dad, here's the deal. I will take responsibility as the oldest son for the wellbeing of the brothers, and if something goes wrong, I will take responsibility."
- Pastor Mark: This is one of the first times we've seen any of these guys take any responsibility. This is a masterclass in blame-shifting family. "It's your fault, it's your fault, it's his fault, it's their fault. It's not my fault." Judah says, "I will step up and take responsibility." You see a heart change in him in Genesis. I think it's 49:10. It says that the scepter will not depart from Judah. He becomes the one through whom the Lord Jesus Christ comes. The whole point of this crazy family is to get Jesus on the earth to forgive sin and to fix problems and to save families. So Judah here steps up, and God's been working on him.
- Pastor Mark: Then their father, Israel, said to them, "If it must be so, then do this. Take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, carry a present down to the man," right? Show up with a lot of gifts and say, "Whoops, we accidentally took all your money." A little balm, a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio, nuts, almonds. "Take double the money with you. Let's show him that this really was an accident. We don't know what happened. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight. Take also your brother and arise and go to the man. May God Almighty ..." Oh, now he's going to pray. It's about time, amen? We've been waiting a while. Dad's like, "Let me pray about this." That's a great idea, Dad. "May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send you back with your other brother and Benjamin. As for me, I'm bereaved of my children. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved." He says, "You know what? I'll just leave this in God's hands. We're going to stop trying to be in control. We're just going to trust God to do what's right and see what

happens." Ultimately, this is all we can ever do. And it's better to start there. He gets there through pain.

Pastor Mark:

So the men took his present, they doubled the money with them and Benjamin, they arose, went down to Egypt, stood before Joseph. Here's the big scene. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them ... there's his little brother of the same mother ... he said to the steward of the house, "Bring in the men into the house, slaughter an animal." See, if he was vengeful, he would slaughter the brothers, amen? Like, "We're going to have a feast, and you're not going to eat it." "And make ready for the men to dine with me at noon." He is going to invite them to his house, to eat at his table, to have a meal with him. This is a picture of the kingdom of God. We are all like the brothers. Jesus is like Joseph. Heaven is a banquet that Jesus throws, and we sit at his table, and none of us deserve to be there. But he's good, amen?

Pastor Mark:

And the men were afraid because they're brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money which was replaced in our sacks for the first time that we were brought in so he may assault us, and fall upon us, and seize our servants, and even take our donkeys! And we really like our donkeys!" They're very frustrated. They're very scared. They don't understand grace, they don't understand love, they don't understand mercy, they don't understand forgiveness. So when they receive it, they're like, "This is a trick! He's going to take our donkey." So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house, spoke with him at the door of the house, and said, "Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food, and when we came to this lodging place, we opened our sacks, and there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack. Our money is full weight, so we have brought it again with us. We've brought our money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks." Are they trying to do what's right? Yeah. Is this new for them? Yeah. Yeah. They're like, "We're trying to do what's right. We'll see how that works." They're trying to do what's right. Are they being honest? They're being honest.

Pastor Mark:

Joseph, he understands forgiving and giving. Those are two different kinds of currencies. He's already been forgiving. Otherwise, he wouldn't treat them this way. And he's been giving. He was generous toward them, financially. There is financial currency, there is relational currency. Someone who has the Spirit in them, they give financial currency, they understand giving, and they understand relational currency, they're forgiving. This is why we had our staff life group this week, and I told the guys, I said ... and gals ... I would never allow one of my daughters to marry a man who wasn't generous, because if he doesn't understand giving, he won't understand forgiving. If you're a giver, you can be a forgiver. Joseph is both. He's a giver and a forgiver. That's because the Spirit of God is in him, and that's what God's like.

Pastor Mark:

He replied, "Peace to you. Do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father ..." He's dressed up like an Egyptian, and now he's going to say, "You know what? This is about your God. Every time something good happens and somebody shows up and says, 'Joseph, thank you,' he says, 'No, no, no. God did this. I'm just the steward. He's the owner. I'm just dispersing the resources that he has

entrusted to my care.' You and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon to them. And when the men were brought into Joseph's house, they were given water, they had washed their feet, and he had given their donkeys fodder. "Oh, look, he likes our donkeys, too." And they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there. When Joseph came home, they brought him into the house to present what they had with them, and bowed down to the ground. They're honoring him. They're finally learning some humility. Well, that's important in our culture of dishonor, disrespect. We don't get honor and respect at all, to actually get honor and respect.

Pastor Mark:

And he inquired about their welfare and said, "Oh, you know what? He's got empathy and compassion." What Joseph doesn't say is, "You know what it's like to be separated for 20 years and not know if your dad's dead or alive? You know what it's like to figure out how to speak Egyptian? Do you know what it's like in an Egyptian jail cell?" He doesn't do that. Here's what he asks, "How are you doing?" That means that he's already taken all of his burdens to God, and he's not carrying them, so he doesn't need to dump them on his brothers. You dump your burdens on the Lord, you can go to other people, and you can invite them to dump their burdens on you, because your truck bed's empty, not full. You're not carrying all the hurt of your past. He inquired about their welfare.

Pastor Mark:

"Is your father well?" They don't know this is their brother. Here's what he's asking, "Dad loved me. I miss my dad. 20s, 30s, married, kids, career, my dad wasn't there. How's dad? The old man you spoke of, is he still alive?" He doesn't know if his dad's alive. They said, "Your servant, our father, is well. He is still alive." They bowed their heads, and they prostrated themselves, and he lifted up his eyes. He saw his brother, Benjamin [inaudible 00:59:06] his mother's son. He said, "Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son." Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. He's emotionally healthy. He's going to process this in the presence of God. Some of you guys don't cry. You're not tougher than Joseph, and you're not tougher than Jesus.

Pastor Mark:

"God be gracious to you, my son." Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, sought a place to weep. He entered his chamber and wept there. Then he washed his face and came out. Controlling himself, he said, "Serve the food." They served him by himself and them by themselves, because Egyptians who ate with Hebrews, that was forbidden. What they thought was, the Hebrews, those were not people that eat with Egyptians. The Egyptians were the preferred class. This is almost like a Hindu caste system. Hebrews over there, Egyptians over there. Here's Joseph, honoring the culture but also testing the brothers. For that was an abomination to the Egyptians. They sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in amazement.

Pastor Mark:

This is funny. They're like ... because what happens, portions were taken from them to Joseph's table, but Benjamin, his biological brother, portion was five times. And they drank and made merry with him. Can you see this? Joseph's like,

"Okay, everybody sit here." And then they're serving, "Okay, steak for you, steak for you, steak for you, steak for you, five steaks for you." "What? What? Okay." Glass of wine, glass of wine, glass of wine, glass of wine, five glasses of wine. What? Piece of chocolate cake, piece of chocolate cake, piece of chocolate cake, hold chocolate cake. Benjamin's [inaudible 01:00:58] "I don't know, it's good being at the end here, in Egypt. I like being at the end." This is what he is saying. He's saying, "I'm going to be generous to all my brothers, and this is my little brother that I should have been present for all those years, to protect and provide, and I couldn't be there for him, but I'm going to make it up to him by being really generous to my little brother." Joseph is a godly man of tremendous character.

Pastor Mark:

At this moment, Joseph in Egypt is viewed as a god. Potiphar, who threw him in prison, now works for Joseph. Potiphar's wife, who falsely convicted him of rape, he now does her husband's performance review. The governmental leaders or the leader that he interpreted the dream for, who forgot him, now reports to Joseph. Left him in prison for two years. Joseph's brothers, who wrecked 20 years of his life and separated him from his father, they're bowing down to him. They are not citizens. They have no legal rights. He is a god. He can do anything to all of these people that he wants to do. And what does he do? He forgives them, he loves them, he blesses them, he serves them, he is kind to them, he builds a relationship with them because Joseph is a little picture of the big story of the Bible that's all about Jesus. And Jesus treats us the way Joseph treats his brothers.

Pastor Mark:

How in the world can he respond like that? It's supernatural, not natural. It's from the Holy Spirit at work in him, causing him to reflect the character of God. The same Spirit that is in every Christian is in Joseph and provides the same opportunity. So what we're going to do now, we're going to eat and drink like they did. That is foreshadowing and practice for the kingdom of God, when we all sit down with Jesus. And we're going to sing, and we're going to celebrate, and we're going to worship. And as I was praying for you, I believe this is the word that God gave for me. God wants you to be in his presence right now. Not check your phone, not get distracted. God doesn't want you to worry about what is next. He wants you to be present in this moment. He wants you to invite the Spirit of God to dwell in you so that you can be emotionally healed, that you can forgive people that maybe you've carried a grudge or a burden or a hurt against, that you could process emotionally some of your family and past. And then, like Joseph, you could unburden yourself.

Pastor Mark:

Joseph is not the burdened man in the story. The people who are burdened are his brothers. Joseph is very unburdened. Number one, he is unburdened to try and control his life. Was this the script that Joseph wrote for his life? Not at all. But it was God's destiny. By unburdening yourself of trying to be in control of your life, you're able to be healed up, filled with the Holy Spirit, and just follow God's script for your life and the destiny that he has for you. The first burden I want off of you, I want the burden of control off of you. And just surrender yourself to God, and follow his will for your life. Number two, Joseph was unburdened, in a healthy way, for his family. He didn't spend 20 years bitter,

jaded, vengeful, angry. He forgave. He even named his sons "forgetful" and "fruitful," "I've forgotten my past, and I'm working on my future." Paul says it this way in Philippians, "Forgetting what lies behind, we press forward to the upward call of God in our life." Paul is saying the same thing that Joseph was experiencing. I turn my back on the past, I turn my face toward the Lord. Forgetting what lies behind, I press forward to whatever destiny God has for me.

Pastor Mark:

I want the burden of control off of you. I want the burden of your family off of you. I want you to be healed up. I want you to enjoy God's presence. I want the Holy Spirit to be with us now. Holy Spirit, we invite You to be present with us as You were present with Joseph. As You healed him, heal these dear people of their hurts. As You gave him the power to forgive people, give them the power to forgive. God, as You gave him the ability to not be bound by his family, but to pursue his destiny, I pray that same grace upon these dear people whom You love and I love. And Lord God, thank You for the people of God. Thank You for Your presence, God. We take this moment to eat and to drink and to remember the brothers feasting together, and we remember the kingdom of God, where we all sit at Jesus' table. And we'll sit there with Judah, we'll sit there with Simeon, we'll sit there as well with Joseph. We'll sit there with those brothers and realize that we're all there by grace, we're all there by the presence and the power and the person of the Holy Spirit to celebrate Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen. I'm going to ask you to stand. We're going to take Communion, and we're going to celebrate in God's presence.