

**Trusted: Lessons from the Life of Joseph**  
*Week 2: "Trusted with a Household"*

Well, here we are at the 10<sup>th</sup> usage of the word "account" in our study of the book of beginnings – Genesis. The other accounts gave us the stories of people like Adam, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, men in whom God found great faith, many of whom are mentioned again in Hebrews 11. In this book we have seen how God uses people and things in spite of their incredible dysfunction, and how God sovereignly rules over the affairs of men to accomplish his redemptive purposes.

But the "account" we have lifted out of Genesis in order to take a closer look is the drama of Joseph, whose story unfolds in Genesis 37-50.

When we last left Joseph, he was closing out his second dream, doing what he did best in his long and decorate tunic – telling his father the truth about the things going on in his life and in the life of his brothers. After all, that's what he did as the "heir to the chair" – he was a reporter.

**TRANSITION:** In fact, look at this with me in Genesis 37.

Genesis 37:12-14 – Here we see **Joseph the reporter in the land of Canaan**. And yes, a willingness to be truthful was essential.

Whether it was concerning his dreams, the sheep, or his brothers, Joseph was bound to the truth. It almost proved fatal for him, but it was the truth he told nonetheless.

**TRANSITION:** But take a trip with me now, would you? While holding a finger there in Genesis 37, look at Genesis 39.

In Genesis 39:1-6, we see **Joseph the manager in Egypt**. Look at this text with me.

[READ TEXT]

Do you see the progression and expansion that has taken place in Joseph's life? From checking on shepherds at home to running the estate of a man in a foreign country. Sure, he was a purchased slave, but a high-ranking one! He had proven himself, and so much so that Potiphar never thought twice about the leaving his house under the full control of Joseph (at times he no doubt should have!)

Notice the actual phrases in our text:

- 39:1 – "*Ishmaelites had taken him there*" – he was aslave for a traveling band of Midianites.
- 39:1 – "*Potiphar bought him*" – he was a slave for an Egyptian man, Potiphar.

- 39:4 – “*became his attendant*” – Because of God’s obvious presence in his life, Joseph was promoted to a position closer to Potiphar.
- 39:5 – “*put him in charge of his household*” – Again, Joseph’s success from God was the reason Potiphar gave him authority over the entire estate.
- 39:6 – “*Joseph in charge*” – Here is the role he played while at Potiphar’s place, probably for 10-11 years – as the man in charge!

To give you a better idea of what Joseph actually did as manager of Potiphar’s estate, I summed up some of the words from the passage in this way.

- He was responsible to manage the property.
- He was responsible to oversee the people.
- He was responsible to supervise the operations (livestock, fields, etc).

Martin Luther, in the book Luther’s Works, writes, “*Joseph was not only good and chaste, and not only diligently poured out prayers to God for his master ... but he was also a most vigilant overseer and manager of the domestic tasks.*” (Volume 7, pg. 64)

And as he did his job in this most excellent way, the Bible says that “the Lord was with him” (39:2 & 3), “the Lord gave him success” (39:3), “the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph” (39:5), and that “the blessing of the Lord was on everything.” (39:5) WOW! Now that’s the kind of employee to have, eh?

And that’s not a bad place to end up after a foiled murder attempt and an ensuing kidnapping, is it? Truly, Joseph was in a better place.

**TRANSITION:** But how? How did Joseph go from reporter to manager? What did it take to make this occupational jump?

In a word, **endurance**!

You see, I believe Joseph displayed a willingness to be tested in these early stages of his life. And just as truth was essential to his role as a reporter, and thus enabled him to be trusted, so testings and trials were the essential element in his journey towards more trust as a manager. Whether it was holding firm in the pit while his brothers ate a meal or waiting for Potiphar to finish his meal, endurance characterized Joseph in his rise from slave to supervisor.

In fact, I want you to take note of the trials and tests mentioned in chapter 37, for they really outline his journey and show what it took to become even more trusted.

- 37:23 – “*stripped him of his robe and threw him into the cistern*” [explain the pit]

- 37:28 – “his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for 20 shekels” [explain the betrayal]
- 37:36 – “the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt” [explain the slavery]

And all the while, Joseph was probably thinking, “I’m really missing out on things at home!” Really? Genesis 38 (38:1 – “At that time Judah...”) is a striking interlude that shows the terrible end of enticement, while Genesis 37 and 39 show the providential result of endurance. Truth is, he wasn’t missing out on anything. Dysfunction, debauchery and deceit were rampant back in Canaan. But in Egypt, amidst the pagan environment, Joseph was faithful and favored. It’s a poignant contrast between God’s man Joseph and man’s man Judah. Sure, Joseph probably thought he was being tested and tried in a way that was negative, but it was probably God’s method of preservation!

And don’t forget about the trials and tests he endured at Potiphar’s house. Remember, he was a slave! Things such as learning a new language, adjusting to a new culture, meeting new people, acquiring new skills, and dealing with loneliness and betrayal, all while being watched to see if he would “mess up” were probably some of the very things he was going through. It isn’t easy adapting to a new environment and acclimating to a new culture. Yet, it appears Joseph embraced his new challenge and saw these tests as opportunities, not obstacles.

I like how James Montgomery Boice says it in his book Genesis when he writes, “I can imagine that in the beginning he was at quite a disadvantage. He did not know the language of Egypt. He did not know the ways of the Egyptians. Much of the Egyptian’s commerce, art, industry and medicine would have been completely new to him. What did he do? While some slaves would have played dumb, reasoning that if they gave the appearance of not understanding or knowing how to do something, they would not be required to do it. But this could not be the way Joseph reacted. Instead of holding back, playing dumb, and doing as little as he could, Joseph plunged ahead to learn the language, master the trades, and acquire management skills. It must have taken long hours and genuine interest, but Joseph kept at it. Joseph could not have been a clock-watcher. If he were living in our time, we would have found him working extra hours and taking courses at night in order to expand his capacities.” (pages 910-911, Genesis)

This all happened when he was still a young man of 17 or 18, and they were no doubt difficult tests. But Joseph viewed what others would call stumbling blocks as stepping stones, and God honored him in that by trusting him with increased responsibility.

**TRANSITION:** I learn something about trust from Joseph’s experience as an estate manager, as well as from his journey from slave to supervisor.

**POINT:** And I’d like you to say this with me, okay? “**TRUST IS EARNED AS TRIALS ARE ENDURED!**”

Make no mistake, church: *I become trusted as I endure testing!* And until I am willing to endure trials, it is highly doubtful God will trust me with more responsibility. *Godly endurance is a prerequisite to greater entrustments.*

I say “godly endurance” because that is exactly how you get through the trials – because of the Lord’s presence! It is not that you “white knuckle” it physically or “grin and bear it” humanly. Endurance is a spiritual trait *first* that comes from an inner confidence in God’s presence no matter where we are or what is going on around us. Remember all the times in Genesis 37 that we have the words, “the Lord was with Joseph”? That’s the key – the Lord is with us! That’s exactly the promise he gave us in Matthew 28 – “I will be with you till the end of the age.” We, like Joseph, can find the endurance we need for the many trials we face by first standing on this promise: God is with me, and he will “never leave me or forsake me” (Hebrews 13:5)

**SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATION:** Interestingly, Joseph is an Old Testament picture of a New Testament passage: James 1:2-4. Turn over there for a moment, would you? I’d like to show you the Genesis principle illustrated by the writer James.

Yes, James lays out the equation of Joseph’s success: TRUTH (“know”) + TESTS (testing of your faith”) = PATIENCE (“perseverance” or literally, “to remain under”), and this leads to MATURITY (“perfect, lacking nothing”). That’s exactly what Joseph did, and this is exactly what we must do! And if you don’t respond like that to trials, he tells us in verse 7 that you won’t “receive anything from the Lord.” There it is – godly endurance leads to greater entrustments.

In fact, watch the screen here for a moment. This is what God wants to do in your life!

[show slide animation]  
TRUTH + TESTING = TRUST

This takes time, and often we don’t like that aspect. But if we endure our tests while standing on the truth of God, it will increase the trust he places in us. That’s what it takes – letting God take what seems like stumbling blocks and turning them into stepping stones.

**HUMOROUS ILLUSTRATION:** As I was thinking about endurance this week, I came across this story of an Iowa farmer’s donkey which fell down into a well. Did you hear about this? You won’t believe it! The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn’t worth the effort or expense to retrieve the donkey. So he invited all his neighbors to come over and help him bury the animal – alive! They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly, making awful noises and sounds. Then, to everyone’s amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer’s neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he

would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!

Okay, that didn't really happen here in Iowa (as if you needed me to tell you that). But a little humor can often prove an important point: *it pays to hang in there!* Let's face it – Life is going to shovel dirt on us, isn't it? We're going to feel like Joseph more than we want to admit – forsaken, betrayed, lonely, and distant. But if we remain faithful and endure, God has a sovereign way of turning the very thing we once thought was going to be our grave into a platform for grace! But we have to be willing to remain under and endure, just like Joseph.

**TRANSITION:** Seriously, as I think about endurance, my mind is drawn to the recent tragedies we have been brought face to face with, such as...

**APPLICATION:**

- The martyrs in Turkey [read letter and article]
- The murders at Virginia Tech.
- And even closer to home – the passing of little Sarah Wing last December.

These are all things we don't understand and can't quite explain, and the tendency is to quit. Go back. Lie down and die. But when we do that, we discount what God might do in the future based on his timetable and according to his plan. What could God do if we trust him and endure? It is in the character and actions of God to turn ashes to beauty, mourning to dancing, sorrow to joy. So we endure the rain to see the sun! Endure the trials, my friend, so that he will entrust you with a greater role in his historic plan to bring glory to his name from every created thing! May we, like Joseph, learn to endure so that we can be entrusted. In fact, would you say this one key action point with me? **"I must learn to endure if I'm going to be entrusted!"**

**TRANSITION:** While you ponder that simple action point, I'm going to ask the ushers to hand you something – a **seed!**

**CLOSING:** Here's what I want you to do – press it between your thumb and index finger. What does it want to do? Just what you want to do when you get squeezed – **squirt out!**

But here's a better idea – stay put and endure! Stop running from them, escaping and hiding. Just stay put and endure. For trials are God's greatest tools for character development. And if you'll endure, he'll entrust you with more of what he has in store for you.

While you're holding that seed, read aloud with me some verses that talk about endurance, and let's close this morning with a unified commitment to "remaining under" the pressure so that God will produce in us the maturity needed to be trusted with more from him. For just as Joseph's journey of increased trust – from a reporter to a manger – was actually a passageway

of pressuring tests, so ours may be as well. Truly, trust over the household is earned as trials in the field are endured.

**Hebrews 12:1-3 (everyone)**

*Let us run with endurance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

**Psalms 30:11-12 (ladies)**

*You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever.*

**Job 23:10 (men)**

*But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.*

**James 5:7-8, 11 (everyone)**

*Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

**Romans 15:4-5 (everyone)**

*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus.*

Stand with me, church, and let's pray. [Response time/invitation]