



Strong Finish: *Too Soon to Quit* by Warren W. Wiersbe

Chapter 3 (pages 45 - 62) "Joseph, the Dreamer"

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I. Borrow a Dream?

A. The word "dream" has several meanings.

1. A dream might be a series of mental images we "see" when we're asleep.
2. A dream might be a strange experience we have while we're awake.
3. Sometimes we equate dreaming with considering possibilities and making plans.
4. If a dream is wedded to prayer and a God-given vision, it could result in God's blessing; but if not, it might turn into a nightmare.

II. Dreams and the Word of God

A. Dreams played an important role in many key events in Scripture, particularly in the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Daniel.

B. The Bible warns us not to accept our every dream as a personal message from the Lord.

1. Jer. 23: 16-40 makes it clear that false prophets depend on dreams.
2. God's people today have the Word of God as their lamp, and they can trust the Holy Spirit to teach them and guide them.

C. Joseph didn't own a Bible, so God spoke to him in two dreams and revealed what he was planning to do (Gen. 37: 5-20).

1. His brothers sneered at them and hated their younger brother.
2. Because he believed God's promise, he began to "reign in life" and deal successfully with the difficult challenges that came his way (Rom. 5: 17).

3. Joseph “reigned in life” long before he put on Pharaoh’s signet ring and reigned in Egypt, and this is what made him the person that he was.

4. If we “reign in life” by faith as he did, we can see our God-given dreams come true.

D. We live in a world which prefers to ignore God’s truth and trust in lies and illusions.

1. When we pause to consider that, we can move on to learn how Joseph turned challenges into victories and went on to rescue the Hebrew nation from destruction.

III. Reality versus Illusion

A. The late Daniel J. Boorstin wrote, “A dream is a vision or an aspiration to which we compare reality”.

1. An illusion, on the other hand, is an image we have mistaken for reality”.

B. Joseph, the warden of the prison and the Pharaoh are the only persons in the Joseph story who knew the difference between illusion and reality and acted accordingly.

C. When Joseph told Pharaoh the truth about the future famine in Egypt, Pharaoh believed him and put Joseph in charge of feeding his people.

D. Satan is an illusionist and finds it easy to deceive people. It’s easier for them to be fooled than to take the time to think.

1. “You will not certainly die” coupled with “you will be like God” (Gen. 3: 4-5) was an offer Eve couldn’t resist.

2. Knowing and using the Word of God, Jesus saw through the devil’s cheap counterfeits. He knew they were illusions, substitutes for the promises He had already received from His Father; so He successfully resisted the enemy (Matt. 4: 1-11).

E. The first challenge Joseph had to face was family conflict.

1. Unfortunately, Jacob helped to create some of Joseph’s problems because he favored the firstborn son of his beloved Rachel, the son of his old age.

2. Little did they realize that the fulfillment of their brother’s dreams would mean deliverance for their family and the entire Jewish nation.

3. Before we pass judgment on the sons of Jacob, we need to examine ourselves, our families and our churches to see what the “love quotient” really is. “Let love be without hypocrisy”,

wrote Paul. “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom. 12: 9-10, NKJV).

IV. Reigning through Serving

A. One of the basic principles of “reigning in life” is learning to obey and serve faithfully, no matter who is in charge.

1. Joseph had exchanged his beautiful coat for a servant’s cloak, but Joseph’s heart had not changed.

2. Above all else he wanted to please the Lord, and the Lord not only blessed Joseph so that he was promoted, but He made Joseph a blessing to the entire household (Gen. 12: 1-3)

3. As often happens in times of great blessing, the Enemy came and presented Joseph with his second challenge: a repeated temptation to impurity from Potiphar’s deceitful and lustful wife (Gen. 39: 1-19)

4. Joseph refused to sin against God, his master and himself (I Cor. 6: 18) and fled from the house, leaving his cloak behind (II Tim. 2: 22).

5. When her plan failed, the woman’s passion turned to hatred, and she sought revenge. She lied to her husband about Joseph’s conduct, and Potiphar exercised his authority and put innocent Joseph into prison.

B. God knows what He is doing, even though we don’t always understand his ways (Isa. 55: 8-9).

1. In prison, Joseph was about to face another challenge, and his victory would lead him to freedom and a throne.

V. Learning Patience in Prison

A. The Lord put Joseph into prison to prepare the way for Jacob’s family to move to Egypt and become a great nation (Psalm 105: 17).

1. Joseph’s imprisonment would help keep the Hebrew nation alive so the Savior could be born into the world.

2. Eventually the warden turned the management of the prisoners over to him. Once again, by his willingness to be a servant, Joseph became a ruler.

3. To reign in life has little to do with the circumstances around us and everything to do with the faith and submission within us and our willingness to serve others for God’s glory.

B. Pharaoh was offended by something his baker and cupbearer had done, and he sent both of them to prison, not realizing he was obeying the Lord's command.

1. One night He gave both of the men dreams so disturbing that the experience robbed them of their peace.

2. Joseph quickly noticed that the two men were sad, and he asked what was wrong.

3. He gave God the glory and told them what was about to happen: the chief cupbearer would be released within three days, but the baker would be executed. That's exactly what happened.

4. He asked the cupbearer to intercede with Pharaoh on his behalf. "The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him". (Gen. 40:23)

5. Two years later the Lord would jog the cupbearer's memory, and he would tell Pharaoh about Joseph's skill at interpreting dreams.

VI. The Seduction of Success

A. Joseph is now about to enter eighty years of comfort and success (Gen. 50: 22), a challenge more difficult than any he had faced so far.

1. When life is comfortable, we tend to take His blessings for granted and start drifting. Success can be very seductive.

2. Pharaoh asked him to interpret his dreams. "I cannot do it", said Joseph, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires". (Gen. 41: 16)

3. Joseph was seventeen years old when his troubles started (Gen. 37: 22), and he was now 30 years old (41: 46) and second ruler in the land. But those thirteen years had not been wasted, for God had used them to build Himself a man, a leader who would honor Him and do His will.

4. As Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's two dreams, he must have recalled the two dreams God had given him thirteen years earlier, and surely he was humbled and grateful to the Lord.

5. When we walk with God, success humbles us, and we seek to use it to help others.

B. Joseph was also given a wife who bore him two sons, and he gave them Hebrew names: Manasseh ("forgetting") and Ephraim ("twice fruitful")

1. Joseph knew that God would work everything out, because his dreams had told him so.

VII. Bringing His Brothers to Repentance

A. Perhaps the hardest challenge Joseph faced was dealing with his brothers.

1. In dealing with his brothers, Joseph may have hurt them, but he never harmed them.
2. If the men did not confess, judge their sins and forsake them, they could have no successful future.
3. They didn't realize that the harshness of the "Egyptian official" was actually an evidence of their brother's deep love for all of them. On at least three occasions, Joseph wept (32: 24; 43:30; 45: 14-15), including when the men (speaking in Hebrew) confessed how badly they had treated Joseph.
4. Genesis 45 describes a family reconciliation unparalleled in Scripture. Joseph's explanation gave glory to the Lord, and his tears and kind words assured his brothers of his love.
5. When Jacob saw the carts and the gifts brought home, and when he heard the words of Joseph, he became a new man.
6. The brothers were unable to accept Joseph's words of assurance and feared that Joseph would punish them after their father was dead (Gen. 50: 15-21).
7. Often we impute to others what we would have done ourselves. Joseph assured them that all that had happened was a part of God's plan to save the family and the future nation. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good", Joseph told them – a beautiful Old Testament version of Rom. 8:28.

VIII. Learn from the Past, Learn from the Pain

A. Joseph made it clear to his brothers that Egypt was not their permanent home.

1. He made them promise to take his body with them when they left Egypt because he wanted to be buried in the Promised Land (Gen. 50: 22-26).
2. The family's promise to Joseph was passed from generation to generation, and Moses saw to it that Joseph's coffin went with them at the Exodus (Exod. 13: 19).
3. After the conquest of the land, Joshua put the coffin in the family tomb, where Joseph had buried his father (Josh. 24: 32; Acts 7: 16; Heb. 11: 22).

B. We fix our eyes of faith on an empty cross and an empty tomb, not an ancient coffin; and our "Joseph" is alive today and interceding for us in Heaven.

1. In Scripture there is no one more like Christ, in person and experience, than Joseph. Each of them was the well beloved son of his father. Each testified against their brothers' sins and were hated by men. Each of them revealed the exalted positions they would hold in the future and were hated even more. Both of them were plotted against by their brothers. Both were sold for

multiple pieces of silver. Both were tempted but did not yield. Both were accused wrongfully. Both took Gentile brides to share their glory after being exalted. Both were acknowledged to be the savior and ruler of their people. Both wept at the conditions of their times. Both gave all honor to to their respective kings and delivered all things to their kings' hands.

2. In chapter two of his book entitled *Up From Slaves*, Booker T. Washington writes these words of wisdom: "I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed."

3. Joseph was an overcomer. He faced each challenge and kept moving on. His dreams also kept him going when his world seemed to be falling apart.

4. Heaven-sent dreams lead to success; the world's illusions lead to failure.