



Week of
prayer

FOR YOUTH MINISTRIES

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Joseph the Dreamer	3
Joseph and His Family, Part 1	13
Joseph and His Family, Part 2	25
Joseph and Integrity	31
Joseph and Temptation.....	41
Joseph and Difficulty.....	51
God, Why	63

INTRODUCTION

Youth Week of Prayer is something that I have had the privilege of being involved with all my life, including as part of my pastoral ministry. It has been a wonderful experience that I cherish. I am excited that the ministry of Week of Prayers continues today.

The North American Division Youth Ministries Department is providing the sermons for March 19 - 25, 2023's Week of Prayer. Our theme is the life of Joseph from the book of Genesis.

The sermon series is set up so that each youth department/youth director of the local church can access the sermons and share them with the young people who sign up to preach each night of the week.

I am excited that this year the Week of Prayer will be hosted by local churches March 19 - 25, 2023. If you are unable to host the services during that time, please choose a time with the support of your pastor that is most convenient for your local church.

Pastor Vandeon D. Griffin

Associate Youth Director

North American Division

JOSEPH THE DREAMER

Genesis 37:5-11

Every single child of God should be carrying some kind of dream from God.

INTRODUCTION

Momentum is something honestly we all desire to have. Oxford Dictionary defines momentum as the ability to keep increasing or developing; a force that is gained by movement. Nothing is worse in life than having that feeling of sitting still while everyone else around you seems to be moving. It then becomes frustrating when it seems as if the sum total of our lives have come to a stand still and we are not increasing or developing. What a sad existence! Through this series, I want to take you on a journey of someone in Scripture whose life definitely had momentum. And let me begin by saying that momentum does mean that every single day of your life you are improving or developing necessarily. There will be some difficult days and sleepless nights at times, but momentum suggests that though you experience days of difficulty you are steadily increasing and gaining movement. How many of you would like momentum in your lives? Nothing is worse than staying in the same place for a prolonged period of time—especially if you are destined to move forward.

On Valentine's Day in 2007 a JetBlue Flight was preparing to leave the cold climate surrounding JFK airport. The weather was forecasting a winter ice storm coming that would soon change to rain, but the conditions never cleared as expected. The tower had communicated to the pilots to proceed to the runway hoping that when the weather cleared, they could give planes permission to take off. One particular flight, Flight 351 was reported as staying on the runway for a prolonged period of time. Passengers inside wanted the plane

to simply turn around and head back to the terminal, however the tower wanted them to stay in place where they were in case weather conditions improved. They stay stuck on the runway for hours. The snacks began to run out, the power on the plane was going in and out, unreliable television on the screens, and an overfilled sewage system. And because of this prolonged time, kids began running around, flight attendants were running out of ideas as to what to do, and it was an all around difficult and frustrating situation. And because they didn't go back to the terminal and since they did not take off the plane just sat on the runway. It was a crisis situation! The plane had no momentum! And since the plane did not turn around to go back to the terminal, and because the plan was not given clearance to take off, it just sat on the runway...for over 10 hours!!!! And eventually, since there was no movement, the heat from the inside of the plane and the cold of the outside caused a tragic situation...the plane eventually froze.

Whenever you lose the ability to keep increasing or developing; whenever there is a lack of movement, you will eventually freeze and be unable gain momentum.

BODY

Joseph was special from conception! He was the answer to the prayers of his barren mother, Rachel. Rachel was unable to conceive and became upset and angry because everyone around her was having children except for her. Genesis 30:1 tells us "...when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. Her happiness was connected to having children, and because she was not able to have a child, she did not think much of herself. And at the time of our text, people believed that having children was a sign of God's favor. If you had children then you were favored and blessed by God; and if you could not conceive children then God had rejected you. In Jewish culture you were even more blessed when

you delivered a male-child because of the prophetic potential for carrying the seed that would crush the head of the serpent the devil. Some scholars even suggest that if women could not have children, they would prostitute themselves in an effort to become pregnant. Because having children was a sign of God's favor and being barren was a sign of God's rejection.

But I thank God for the fact that God's favor is not contingent on what I have but the favor of God is His grace toward us. And I'm so glad that God's grace upon my life does not depend on what I have or what I own, but God's grace is based upon His unmerited love for me. Now the reason why that should have put a huge smile on your face is because there are many of us who don't have much, but our gratitude and gratefulness is not based on what we have but it's based upon the grace of God toward us. And I know this may not connect with everyone but there are a few of us who don't live in a big house, or drive a car sitting on 20s. There are a few of us who don't have a famous family name, get straight A's, the best designer clothes or a pair of Jordan 1s, we don't have what the world would suggest is great—but that's not kingdom greatness and that's not how we get favor from God because his grace towards me is not based on the stuff I have or what I have done but it's based on the great God of heaven's unfailing love for me!

When the first thought of you entered into the mind of God it must have caused God to smile when considering what He had in His mind concerning what He was placing inside of you and caused God excitement when thinking about how people would be blessed as a result of what you would contribute and add to the earth. You are individually so special to God and so uniquely designed by the hand of God that He made sure that when He created you, no one else ever created would look exactly like you or had the same DNA as you or carried the same personality as you or mirrored the usual and rare gift as you! And what God was attempting to do is not just make you different, but God's intimate love for you was seen in His creativity of making you.

And to help you understand this further, there are three things that will help explain this even more. The first is the fact that **YOU ARE FULLY KNOWN BY GOD**. God knows everything about you. He knows when you are imitating someone else and when you are living your God-given design for your life. He knows every single detail of your life—the good, the bad and the ugly. And I know that you sit here today looking good, and that's because God is a good God, but because God fully knows you, He knows that some have come this weekend to gratify your ego of finding out how others are doing so that you can psychologically satisfy the need of requesting how other people are doing to judge where you are in life juxtaposed to other people. God knows all about you. He knows that you are struggling to realize the purpose for which you were created, and that you enjoy being satisfied with who and what everyone else wants you to be.

Here is the second thing that I know for a fact and that is that **YOU ARE FULLY LOVED BY GOD**. Now I know that what I just said didn't mean much to many of you. I know what I just said was not anything deep or transformative. When the scripture lesson was read, you noticed that nobody shouted or got excited. But when I consider the fact that God fully loves me I have to pause when realizing that God knew everything about me and knew that I would mess up at times and not follow His will. And he knew that I would often do this and not do that. You would think that after God saw my life's future and saw how much I would mess up and defat the creation of His image, you would think that God would stop the process of creating me so that He could keep what He wanted to happen in tact and to ensure the posterity of the kingdom. But God loves me so much that when He saw how much I would mess up, and fall down, and deny His name, and turn my back on Him, and disrespect Him, and misrepresent Him, and act a fool, and keep asking forgiveness for the same thing and—you would think that God would decide to stop the creative process and create someone else who was more cooperative and more agreeable with God's plans for their life. And yet God fully loves me even though He knew everything about me!

I don't know why He loves me. Sometimes I sit on the edge of my bed while tears fill my eyes and ask God-God why do you love me? After all that I am, and all that I'm not...why do you love me? Surely you could have made someone else who could carry out your plans better! Surely you could have created someone else who would have done it right and not let you down. Surely you could have found someone who was better at it, but every time I ask God that I am reminded of this third thing that I know and that is: YOUR BIRTH WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT. What I'm saying here is that you are supposed to be here. It was God's will to get you onto planet earth. You being here was supposed to happen. Make no mistake about it, if you have been graced to arrive on this thing called planet earth it means that somewhere in the mind of God, you were included in God's plans for what He wanted to accomplish in the kingdom. God wanted you to execute something with a unique flavor that only you could do. And that's why you have to be careful how you treat people because you don't want to terminate or mess with what was purposed by God to happen!

And even though his birth seemingly happened after a long-awaited time from his mother's perspective, Joseph's birth was not an accident and was a thought in the mind of God surely long before anyone on earth had any concept of who you were. That means that everyone is special from conception, considering what it took for us to get here. Your reason for being existed long before your actual birth or even conception took place. Its almost as if God said: "I have to get this person here on planet earth, because if I don't then this world will forever miss out on something special!" Scripture teaches us that before the foundations of the world came into being God had thoughts towards who you were.

When you were younger, you had dreams, aspirations, and plans for your life. You would dream about where you would live and you began to map out your life and career and how you envisioned your life being. Some of you may have dreamed about your wedding day, who you would marry, and what life would be like when you moved out of your parent's house. The truth is however, oftentimes at the

time when we begin making plans we aren't strongly connected to God, we didn't really know the Lord when we laid out our plans. So much so that even though the plans may have been good plans, they weren't Godly plans. They were creative plans but they weren't very spiritual plans. But when you come in contact with the Lord, you somewhat feel conflicted with trying to fit what God desires for you to do in life with what you feel that you want to do. And you can become increasingly frustrated because when realizing that God is insurmountably smarter than you and what you are normally accustomed to planning in your life has very little to do with God and more to do with making yourself look good. How do you gain Godly momentum in life when God's plans take a back seat to the thoughts and plans you have for your life? You are too special to God to have His thoughts concerning you to be subjugated to the plans that you have come up with.

And that's one of the reasons why social media has become such a huge part in the lives of people in today's culture. Everyone wants greatness, but they feel as if that greatness is achieved through more followers, abundant likes, or more feedback concerning picture or word posts. But people love social media and reality television because we don't like dealing with the reality in our own lives, because if we can drown our minds in someone else's dysfunction than we can anesthetize our mind into believing that even though we aren't walking in God's plan for our lives we will compare and contrast ourselves with other people's lives. Because when you are walking in your God-ordained purpose and you know what God and who God has created you to be you are not left with much time to scroll and troll—watching how someone else's life is unfolding because walking in purpose takes up enough time of its own. But when you don't understand the power of why you were created and what God has designed for you to walk in, you can often become jealous of somebody else based on what you see.

So you have to make the decision and determination that this is the last moment that you are going to simply exist, but you are going to live out the amazing and wonderful call and plan that God has on

your life. Because if in fact God created you with purpose and planned your existence, don't grieve the heart of God with the heart of heart by wasting away God's creativity. And it is an insult to the intelligence of God not to become what God created you to be! In fact, allow that to be your primary goal this year—to discover WHY God created you. Why did God take the time to ensure that you arrived on planet earth? What was it that moved the heart of God? Why was God so intent on placing something special inside of you?

The Bible says that when Joseph was 17 years old, in the prime of his teenage years, that God dropped something in his life that would forever change and challenge the course of His life. Scripture says that Joseph has a dream that he and his brothers were in the fields binding stalks of grain, and when they are finished binding the stalks of grain—Joseph's stalk rises up while his brother's stalks gather around his and bow down to his. I want to suggest that not only do all of us have a Godly purpose for our lives, but God will give you dreams about that purpose. God plans your existence and then when you are born, God will give you thoughts and dreams about your purpose to create in you an appetite for how God wants to eventually use you.

After Joseph receives this dream from God, he tells his brothers who start hating Joseph even more because of his dream. They already disliked him because they felt as if their father was showing Joseph favoritism, but now that Joseph is explaining to them a dream that pictured them in some subservient role to their younger brother was almost unbearable. The truth is however, Joseph did not make up this dream. This wasn't something that he created and then shared what originated in his mind. The dream Joseph was given was sent to him by God and when people don't have any dreams its easy for them to become bitter and hateful at others for carrying dreams. Its possible that the other brothers were given dreams as well, but because they were too interested in other people, places, or things they didn't allow their dreams to manifest. Because every single child of God should be carrying some kind of dream. Every person who has God-given purpose should be carrying in their mind the dreams from God that He planned for their life before the foundations of the world.

My question for you today is: What are you dreaming about? What has your attention? What do you find yourself thinking most about? And while you are dreaming and thinking, please be certain that it's actually God who is giving you the dream. Make sure that when you sense something that it is actually God who is communicating it to you. May I also suggest that even though God shares His plans to you about your life, it doesn't mean that you can share those dreams and plans with everyone. Everyone can't handle what God is sharing with you and if they don't have an equal to or greater than dream, some people will always be jealous of what God has given you.

Joseph is given another dream. The sun, moon, and 11 stars all bow down to him. When God first communicates His purpose and plans to you about your life, please understand that you are rarely ever in a position where it looks like everything that God shows you will happen. In fact, when God initially shows you His plan for your life you are in a less than favorable position for that dream to become a reality. What do you do when God shows you things that most people around you don't agree with—including your family? What do you do when people start treating you differently and don't like you because of what God has shown you. You're saying to yourself: "I didn't ask for these dreams, I was doing fine living life as I knew it." And dreams always come with responsibility and many of you are nervous because you have messed up so many times before and terrified about some of the things that God has revealed to you and are scared that you may squander what God has shown you.

CLOSING

Some of us are even so scared that even when good things happen to us we will fight yourself out of a blessing and talk yourself out of good seasons, and feel unworthy to receive any good thing from God because of fear! And that's why it's fear that will push some of us from God out of the worry of what God will reveal to us—but perfect love casts out ALL fear!!!

And this is the best time and best season of your life to begin to ask God about His plans for your life as well as asking Him what changes need to be made in order to walk in purpose. Joseph was so excited about what God showed him that he couldn't help but share it with everyone he came in contact with. I wonder what God has up His sleeve for your life? I wonder what thoughts and plans God has for your life? Trust me, it's something big...and it has MOMENTUM!!!

My prayer for you is that you recognize how special you are to God!

JOSEPH AND HIS FAMILY, PART 1

Genesis 37:1-4

Interestingly enough, of all the things that can often prohibit our momentum most is our family.

INTRODUCTION

I am convinced that people who have been in bondage often become the cruelest masters themselves; because since they had no strength and no power during their time of captivity to get out of bondage—once they finally are able to get out from under difficulty, they love to prove that their life is no longer dysfunctional and believe their strength is now seen in how well they have mastered the art of dominance and cruelty.

It is a melancholy truth that people who have been deeply hurt in vital areas of their life will often seek to exert their dominance and control in the life of another person because it's in the abuse of another person that they somehow feel and believe that they have put the past behind them and are no longer affected by the stains and scars of pain. That's why Doctor McMillan says it best that relationships are much like medicine—that they should be used as directed and kept out of the reach of children. Because the critical question that one must ask themselves when in relationships with other people is: where did they come from? Now this question is not one of location but of situation. In other words, what was the situation that the person was birthed out of and what was the situation that the person came up in. Because oftentimes the

situation of one's past becomes the introduction for another person's future! We will plan and map out life with another person and not consider what past they are bringing into our future.

It is a critical question one must ask themselves because poor relationships don't have their genesis at the dysfunction within the relationship but they have their beginning within an individual. They don't have their beginning with the couple but with a person. Because who you are as a person will determine what you want from a person. Because many times we will get frustrated and annoyed at the behavior of the other person in the relationship not understanding that the ambiguity about who you are as a person will oftentimes push you to accept anything from anybody.

The problem with most relationships is that most relationships are built on the premise of love based on what you can do for me and how well you make me feel about myself. Most relationships are based on how well you perform for me on a regular basis. It is rare when you are able to find the purity in relationships that are based on agape and unconditional love. But what a blessing it is when you find someone who will love you with no strings attached, who will love you with all your flaws and failures, who will love you with your mess, who will love you back into loving yourself and life again. It's a blessing when you have people in your life who will love you in spite of the mistakes and won't guilt you into performance when you mess up again.

Bad relationships often suggest that there is one person who isn't whole in life and doesn't have it all together while at the same time the other person is a complete person and functions well. But bad relationships are bad because they involve two human beings. This thing called relationships is one that needs clarity and focus because relationships, regardless of what level they're on, involve stress and dis ease. There is work involved to have relationships function well. Any parents who have school-aged children understand the headaches of homework and the stress of school and the enigma of attitudes; and the plight of puberty and the dilemma of dirty clothes

that aren't yours but you still wash, and the strife with social media, and the battles with their behavior...relationships on any level cause stress and strain.

And I'm not sure who is currently dating but dating today is not what it was years ago. Because in today's dating world the expectations have become much more blurred and what you believe to be heading into matrimony is actually just passing the time just because someone is a serial dater and doesn't want to be by themselves. And while I'm here let me pause by saying that if you're not ready for commitment and fidelity and if all you want is someone to lay next to and a partner for Netflix and chill; if all you want is to feel wonderful then keep your hands to yourself because anyone who has been in a relationship before knows that relationships can carry a heavy weight because it is the singular relationship that God ordained before sin and yet we must still navigate the details of the relationship after sin. There were no mothers, fathers, sisters or brothers—no church members or grandmothers that God placed in the Garden of Eden—and yet God ordained man and woman to be in covenant relationship before sin ever came into the world and yet sin did not stop this covenant relationship that God designed. We must now forge and press through the details of a relationship that involves two sin-filled people who are striving to become something beautiful together...relationships on any level, cause much stress and strain.

And while we are there who can quickly forget the relationships that we have with church members. What an interesting place to form relationships, because the implications of those relationships suggest that because we met at a sacred place and space then that relationship will never feel the stress and strain that most relationships experience. We think that because the nature of our relationship began at church then it means that I will never experience you talking about me, or thinking ill of me, or looking down on me because of my past. And we live in these unrealistic places and spaces in our minds and exalt the humanity of people into the belief that because the relationship is with a member of the household of faith then you believe that the relationship with experience no

stress and no strain...but if I can be honest, some of the most difficult conversations, and many of the most broken experiences that we have had to navigate happened because of relationships with people in church!

I want to, however, focus on the dynamic of relationships that may cause us the most dis ease and the most strain, and that is our family relationships.

BODY

Remember now, I told you that everyone who has ever been born was born with purpose. The issue is that even though we are born with purpose, there are factors for all of us that prohibit or push us further into our purpose. For every child of God we were born with and created with purpose, and even though we were born with purpose there are circumstances surrounding our lives that will make you believe that because of the incubator you were born in that you don't have any purpose. Oftentimes these factors are fueled from circumstances beyond our control, and the frustrating and difficult reality is in understanding that regardless of these factors, God still expects for us to fulfill our purpose in spite of factors that push us away from purpose.

Look at Joseph's birth and the circumstances surrounding his birth. His mother Rachel is barren and can't have a child. She no doubt believes that she will never have the precious and powerful experience of carrying a baby and becoming a mother. She longs for the opportunity to have a child herself and for whatever reason she is unable to conceive. At the time of our text women who could not conceive were frequently teased and ridiculed because of the seeming reality that God had rejected them. However, through a touch from God, Rachel conceives—becomes pregnant, and gives birth to a baby boy named Joseph. He is born to place on the earth what God has thought about for him before the foundations of the world.

Our being and our existence is first in the mind of God. In fact, scripture teaches that there has never been a time when God has existed that you have not existed in His mind. He has always thought about you. You have always been on His mind. And make no mistake about it—you are more important than the purpose for which you were created. Who you are is more important to God than what you do, and because you are so important to God he chooses you to house purpose. Purpose isn't simply placed on the earth like the sun, moon, and stars—it must be placed in a person. You are in the mind of God and because of who you are and what He has created you to be, He places purpose inside of you so that your life will reflect the great God of heaven. There is a bona fide and real reason as to why you are on planet earth. God wanted you here on purpose not on accident, so that your life will reflect the life of the Divine.

However just like purpose is not just placed here on the earth without it being housed in a person; a person isn't just placed here on planet earth without them being housed in a family. You are a thought in the mind of the Almighty God, and then God places purpose inside of you, and then in order for you to get here on earth, God places you in a specific family line to come through. Like Joseph, God plans your birth and strategically places you in a particular family. God always chooses a particular family that will bring about your birth in order for the purpose to come alive. And you cannot fully begin to unpack and understand your purpose without looking at your family, because family can often be the biggest fast forward, pause, or sadly—the delete button that is often played in the purposed plan for our lives.

Let's look at Joseph's family. His mom doesn't think she will get pregnant, so when Joseph is born, she spoils him because she thought she would never have him. She feels the need to spoil him because she felt she could never have any children. Or maybe she felt as though she was late to the party and had him at a later age than everyone else her age was having children. And because Rachel is the wife that Jacob really wanted anyway, Jacob, Joseph's father, makes him a cat that he has never made for any of his other children. And though God plans for our existence and purpose, our arrivals on earth,

through our families aren't always thought of with the same attention and detail. But the interesting thing about this is the fact that you can pick your spouse however you have no choice or say so as to your birth family or family of origin.

And if you are like me you would have loved to have a conversation with God concerning who your parents were, who your siblings would be, who else would be a part of your blood family. However, there are no conversations with God while you are in the womb concerning the family God places you in! None! By the time you come out of the womb, you learn and discover what family you have been placed in. Which is also the same for your purpose. There are two things that you don't have conversations with God about: your family and your purpose. When you are born you discover both of them, and God does it strategically. And some of you are wondering today: If there is such a huge, wonderful and amazing call from God on my life then how come it seems as if I was placed in a family that did not give me the best head start towards accomplishing this purpose? But being frustrated and mad at God for your entire life does not change the genealogical make up of your family or the purpose for which God created you.

Let's look at the family that God placed Joseph in. Joseph is the son of the biblical patriarch Jacob. And you remember who Jacob is don't you? Jacob is the one who stole the birthright blessing from his brother Esau. He's also the one who is favored over his brother by his mother, Rebekah. Jacob and his twin brother Esau went through years of fighting and tension because of the stolen birthright. Jacob's family of origin has relationship dynamics that you would put in a reality television show. They could star in the Real Housewives of Israel. Jacob unfortunately creates an atmosphere in his house similar to the dysfunctional one that he grew up in. Jacob's mother Rebekah shows him favoritism, while Jacob's dad Isaac how's favoritism to the twin— Esau. The generational cycle of favoritism is just one of the dynamics that runs deep in the fabric of this family. And what is so interesting about this is how the names in this family (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), are the names that are used and called upon give credit to the

might and power of God. These are the names that referenced when referring to people who have experienced power in their relationship with God. Abraham was full of faith, Isaac was full with years of life, and Jacob spent an entire night wrestling with God! These are powerful men of God and YET these are also the same people who have deep seated generational cycles, and spirits of favoritism, and anger, and betrayal, and lying, and bitterness. Because no matter how spiritual you are, you still have to deal with the family that you are birthed into and the generational cycles that exist in your family. What generational cycles have existed in your family?

Let's look at a few possible generational cycles that exist. Ask yourself if you can identify with any of these family types.

1. Controlling Families.

These are homes where the parents always made the decisions for you. Even when you got to a more mature age, they still made almost every decision for you. Insomuch that they didn't even allow for you to make mistakes. They always picked out your clothes, dressed you, and did household chores that you could have actually or even needed to do. As these individuals grow older they often dodge responsibility because they have grown accustomed to always having everything done for them. As they become adults, because they were never given responsibility, they don't want any responsibility or accountability. They can often be viewed as spoiled brats who feels as if the world owes them something. They would rather accept a job where there isn't much responsibility than to move forward with what God has for their life. My recommendation for those who have grown up in this type of family is to take control of your life. At some point you have to discover what God has called you to be and you must find out who you really are in the Lord. You should also be cautious in getting into relationships with people to replace what you wish you had.

2. Fear-Based Families.

These are people who grew up in an environment where things happened that caused them to be fearful. Whether it was the neighborhood they lived in or what they saw in their home of origin—what they saw caused them some level of fear and it pushed them to be scared in life. These individuals generally have no motivation because they are afraid to try anything in fear that what they try might end up in failure. They are afraid to make decisions because they are scared that it could be the wrong decision, so they always play it safe because they are fearful of the possibilities of disappointment. For those who grew up in this type of family my suggestion is for you to break away from people who enjoy staying where they are in life—even if the place of comfort is dysfunction. Begin taking steps towards God's best for your life and start trying new things in God.

3. Insecure Families

These are often people who grew up in homes where divorce or separation took place. These are people who also grew up in homes where money was scarce or tight and the security of finances was always called into question. Because of this, out of personal anger, parents sometimes would tell the children how bad things are and the status of the family situation as a way to cast blame on something else. So they would communicate how bad things are and how much they don't have in their home. In response to this, children would often learn how to worry, and worry about not having enough. Sometimes these individuals become extremely motivated to never go back to the same place of their home of origin. However, when they become adults they are also constantly trying to gain security. The moment when things begin to not move according to the plan they had in their minds, they have a difficult time because they mentally and emotionally travel back to that place and time in life when they lived without and what they wish they had. So, at times, when they get money, they will waste their money on what they

wish they had until they go broke trying to buy their happiness in life. These people sometimes have a tough time trusting God and they will get angry at God when things happen that cause frustration and pain because their rationale is: "I've already spent enough time having difficult moments in life, so why are you putting me through more..." To keep your Godly momentum, please understand that you don't have to be the victim or be bound to the decisions that someone else made for their lives. Being a "repeat offender" is not automatically laid on you. You can also build your self-esteem through positive relationships with people who can be completely honest with you.

4. Abusive Families

Whether it was physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, the message to abused individuals is that they have no value. The message communicated through abuse is that the only thing you are good for is to be used for someone else's personal preference that comes out in physical release, an emotional deposit, or sexual gratification. These individuals sadly often turn to addictions (alcohol or drug abuse, gambling, etc.) because since they were abused, they are taught to continue to abuse themselves and not treat themselves with care. They sadly turn to substance abuse to cope with or suppress their feelings. They are often broke because all of their money is spent in addiction. They have a very difficult time believing that they have purpose or can amount to anything of importance. They will often rebel against social norms and have a tough time believing that they can amount to anything important. They can't save money because it's always spent on self-abuse. I wonder how much money they could save if the money that they spend on alcohol, drugs, or in gambling? To keep pushing however in God's momentum for your life don't ever forget that God thought you were worth it! In fact, God thought you were to die for!! His thoughts and plans for you are amazing. Just because someone did you harm (as in Joseph's story, which we will see later) doesn't mean that your life is over. Do what you need to do to face what needs to be fixed and take your time to heal!

5. Wealthy Families

We would all love to be wealthy! Rich! Who wouldn't? Who wouldn't love to have money and have more of it? I know I surely would. There are some people who, when they're born they are born into money. As soon as they open their eyes and experience their first day of life they have immediately walked into wealth. They didn't do anything for it and they didn't have to work for their wealth. Because of who their parents are they were born into a family line of wealth. What a beautiful experience actually! These individuals never have to worry about not having enough, in fact the only thing they really know is abundance. But sadly, for many, because they didn't work for wealth they often can feel entitled in life. They also begin believing that their money can get them or get them out of anything in life. And because money has power, they see themselves as so powerful that it trumps anything negative thing in life that they do. But momentum would suggest that individuals from this family should find a productive cause to get behind and actually put some blood, sweat, and tears into worthy cause. Don't run from responsibility!

6. Performance-Based Families

These are people who grew up in homes where they were only loved if they did their job or task well. People who grew up in this environment are always trying to gain their parent's and other people's approval because if they aren't performing well then no one loves them. These are people who perceive that their value is based on how well they perform or they believe that their self-worth is connected to how good they perform in life. These people get so down on themselves because the money when they feel they have messed up they have a difficult time trying to get back on track. But my recommendation is for you to understand that people will always place expectations on your life. And people will do this oftentimes because they are so unsatisfied with their own lives that they love for you to perform or do what they never accomplished. But when you

set goals, you never have to be a captive to someone's expectations ever again. You are only in competition with yourself. Stop trying to be perfect, because no one is.

CLOSING

Regardless of what the context of your family is, and regardless of the family line you were born in—God has a purpose and plan for each and every one of you. You are not a mistake or an afterthought, but you were purposed in the mind of God to be amazingly great!

My prayer for you today is that you will realize that there is a great Godly plan for your life and don't let anyone distract or disrupt the plans of God for your life.

JOSEPH AND HIS FAMILY, PART 2

Genesis 37:12-35

Following the momentum of God in your life will often lead you in uncomfortable places.

INTRODUCTION

I want to repeat again that momentum is the ability to keep increasing or developing but if you're like me, you can oftentimes feel like you are simply spinning your wheels in life. Sometimes you feel that despite how life is going; regardless of good you are excelling in school; even though you have a lot of friends; even though it seems like you are heading in the right direction you have concluded that your life doesn't have much momentum. Yet there are countless of others who feel that there is absolutely no way that God's plan could include me being in a place that is uncomfortable or a place of uncertainty. Surely the plan of a loving and all-wise God would not include frustration and failure; hurt and pain. There are many of us who feel, sense, and believe that because God loves us then surely His plan for our lives could not include our parents divorcing; a serious health challenge; there's just no way, we would refuse to believe, that God's plan could consist of crying all night; losing friends and forsaken by family; there's no way that God would do me like this! This can't be happening to me, I don't deserve this. How can I get in God's will and follow God's plan if everywhere around me there are seemingly negative things that show signs of pushing me out of his will and away from his plan? How in the world can I have momentum with things that seem to push be backwards and away from my destination?

I can remember one year when I was a student at Oakwood University traveling back to school after spring break. I must have been busy talking or got caught up listening to music but after driving for a significant amount of time I realized that I wasn't following the directions to my destination. This was before the days of Waze and Google Maps and based on the directions, I was supposed to take an exit about an hour ago. So, I quickly got off at the very next rest stop to look at a map to see where I was and saw that based on my directions I had been driving in the wrong direction for over an hour. Frantic and frustrated I looked for an attendant at the rest stop to ask where do I go from here; because oftentimes when you make a wrong turn and go out of the way you have to go back to the point where you took the wrong exit just so you can go back in the right direction.

When she asks me where I was headed and I told her my destination she began to smile and I couldn't understand why she was smiling so much. Didn't she understand that I would soon be two hours off course and where I needed to be would take a lot longer? Because based on the directions I had, I was driving the quickest and most direct route to my destination. But she looked up at me and smiled and said, sir you are fine! All you have to do is go west for a few miles and then go south. But ma'am you don't understand I am not going west, my ending destination is south. Why do I need to go west if I am supposed to be going south. She looked at me and said: based on where you are right now you don't need to go back an hour north to come back down south. You are right where you need to be to get to your destination; but listen to what I'm going to tell you so that you won't get lost again! In fact, she said, you are at the best place because the next rest stop would have caused you to miss the very exit you need. Just go west until you get to this particular exit and when you get to this exit that I'm showing you it will be the exit you need to get exactly where you need to go!

I wonder if I'm talking to someone today, who feels they have taken so many wrong exits, and so many wrong turns that you think God can't turn things around. I wonder if there is someone who is frustrated because they feel that they are so off course that God's

destination and God's plans have been messed up. Is there anyone I who because of some bad choices, and poor decisions you feel that God has left you and feel defeated and are wondering how long is it going to take to pull the pieces of your life back together again? Anyone who feels miserable wondering how God's plan is going to all come together? How are the plans God has for my life going to be realized when life seems so messed up?

BODY

We pick up the momentum of Joseph's story in a rather interesting time in his life. He is in a family surrounded by brothers, but there is no brotherly love. In fact, there is just jealousy and hate. This is the backdrop of where we find Joseph at the request of his father. While Joseph's brothers are out one day tending their father's flock, Joseph is asked by his father to go and check on his brothers. Go and do a wellness check on your brothers, see how they are doing and then come back and report to me how they are doing.

And as Joseph is seen coming from a distance by his brothers—they plot to kill him. While he is seen from a distance, his brothers plan to carry out the hate they've had for Joseph that has been in their minds for years. And like Cain over his brother Abel, Joseph's brothers have so much hate for him that they begin discussing how they are going to kill him. Can you imagine that? All Joseph is doing is following what he believes to be God's will for his life and yet, because his brothers can't discern what God is doing in his life, they seek to take his life. These are his brothers??? After Joseph receives the Lord's will for his life through a vision, the Lord's will is not received by people who are around him. They are his brothers but they seem like his enemies. They are his family but they appear as if they are foes. The Bible says that they hate him because of what God showed him. It's his brothers who sound like enemies to him because every now and then you will have people in your life who look like friends but sound like enemies. But Lord protect us from enemies who sound like friends!

And the Bible says that as they are talking with one another they say to each other: "Look, here comes this dreamer!" Sometimes our own family will stand in the way of our momentum. Sometimes it's not your enemies but because of the dynamics of our families it can cause hurt and pain so deep that you spend years swimming in deep water just trying to float and maintain because it was your family who caused so much pain. I can understand if my enemies did this, that's almost expected, but my momentum stop was my own family!!! They say look at this dreamer!

But then they say to each other, let's kill him and throw him in one of the pits and say that a wild beast devoured him. Don't ever forget, that people, even family members, love to kill your dreams. Because they haven't acknowledged the dreams that God has given to them, they seek to kill and destroy your dreams. That's why people hate you who don't even know you. They're trying to kill you! That's why there is so much police brutality—they're trying to kill you. That's why some people don't want to be your friend—they think that's going to kill you. That's why people speak so negatively against you—they're trying to kill you. And that's why the more nice you are to people, the more evil they respond, because they can't understand how with all the evil they are sending you way, how you are still able to smile. That's why when they see you coming you see them gathering in little groups to talk about you. Like the brothers of Joseph, people love to kill dreams. But in all honesty, it wasn't really about Joseph...and it's not you either...ITS the dream! You just happen to be the one who God chose to carry the dream. So they don't really hate you that much, but you are carrying so much purpose from God—you are carrying the dream. And if they can kill you then maybe they can kill the dream. If they take you out then maybe they can terminate the dream. Every time they look at you, your face is a fresh reminder of the dream! The dream reminds them of how boring, unfulfilling and unsatisfying their life is! You remind them of how much momentum is happening in your life!

But the brothers forgot one thing! The dream didn't come from Joseph, the dream came from God. And since God gave Joseph the

dream then God was not going to let Joseph die, until the dream was fulfilled. God won't let you die until you're given an opportunity at the dream!!! In fact, the only reason why you're still alive is because you're still sitting on the dream. If God gave you something, if God showed you something, if God revealed something about His plans for your life, then the power of God will continue to keep you to ensure that momentum still happens in your life. Because God's plan for your life isn't just for you but it will always bless someone else!

So because God wouldn't let them kill him the brothers say, let's throw him in a pit! All Joseph was doing was coming to check on his brothers. But the family that he came to check on throw him in a pit. They take off his multi-colored coat and throw him in a pit where, the Bible says, is an empty place and there is no water in there. He's in a pit—alone and without food or water and seemingly without any hope that something better will happen. It appears that Joseph's life story could actually end in a lonely pit, because there is no water down there with him. Some pits would have water, but isn't it interesting that the very pit that Joseph is placed in has no water down in it. How is Joseph going to survive down there? How will Joseph gain momentum down in a lonely pit. This was not part of the dream that God showed him. How is God's Plan going to come alive if it looks like I'm about to die? Joseph is this it? Now we can surely look back at this story and those who have read it before know that this is not the end of Joseph's life; however surely Joseph sat down in that empty pit not knowing what would happen in the next season of his life.

What is so interesting to me is what the brothers say of Joseph when they see him coming. They say, Look here comes this dreamer!

CLOSING

One day Joseph is told by his father to go and check on his brothers who are away tending sheep. Check and see how they are doing. But at this particular time Joseph did not know something about the will of God—and that is the fact that the will of God also

includes pits of hell. Because when God gives you and shows you the promises of his will he does not often if ever include the pits of hell in the picture he shows you. When he showed Joseph things bowing to him and his life rising above others, God did not also show him sitting in a well by himself, or in a dark and damp well where no water is there, and God's will sometimes will have you sit alone by yourself where the only person who can hear your tears and hear you complain is the Lord.

Everybody who lives in the will of God and who has tried to walk in the way of God is going to experience that moment in your life where because of what you know to be God's will you are frustrated because what you are experiencing does not feel like God's will. And what do you do when what you believe to be the will of God feels like a lonely pit and it pushes you to wonder: If God loves me and based on what God has shown me, why am I now sitting in a pit by myself instead of experiencing what God showed me? But what is more important than you experiencing what he showed you is God making sure that you can handle what you saw! Because when God shows you the promises of his will you don't immediately walk into them just because he showed it to you. What happens between receiving the promises of his will and you walking in those promises is preparation! And hear me when I say this: God's will includes preparation!!! Because it's a terrible thing when you are where you want to be but don't have the anointing and character of God to stay where you need to be. So God works on you so that when you get to the place of promise you are able to stay there without having to be denied access to it because you aren't ready for it!

JOSEPH AND INTEGRITY

Genesis 39:1-6a

Regardless of where you find yourself, God's presence will always give you momentum.

INTRODUCTION

I want to repeat again the definition that bears repeating. Momentum is honestly something we all desire to have. Oxford Dictionary defines momentum as the ability to keep increasing or developing; a force that is gained by movement.

If you have been privileged to be a part of this momentum series, then you should know by now that all of us go through moments when we pass through difficulties and pitstops when God promises us momentum. Because if we are going to survive this thing called life, and make it to God's forever kingdom, it is crucial we understand that every valley is not a sign of God's absence and every mountain top experience is not an indication of God's favor.

And what I want more than anything in the world is to be actively pursuing God's plan for my life. I want to keep spiritually increasing and developing. I can't speak for any of you today but I know for myself that I am tired of trying to make my plan—God's plan. But I know that I often do this as if I have an extremely better master plan for my life than what God desires for me. It's like what I can dream up is so much better than anything God can plan for me. I get frustrated with the failures of attempting to analyze, answer, and effectively carry out what I think is a great plan yet coming to the painful conclusion that my good plans pale in comparison to God's plans. God even tells us, "I know the plans that I have for you. Plans to prosper you, to not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." I

feel that my plans are great plans but I am left in awe when God says that, "Eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, and has not entered into the heart of man the things that I have for those who love me."

God what is your plan for my life? What should I be following so I can begin to align my life with your word? The Bible tells us that if we hunger and thirst after righteousness then we will be filled. That means that instead of talking up all of our time and energy that we use trying to figure out what's going on with everyone and everything else but God—take that focus and place it into seeking God, asking him what his plans are for our lives. What is better than being in the center of God's will? What could be more fulfilling than living out the dream of who you were created to be? Having momentum in God's plan and in his will for our lives is better than any amount of money—for what does it profit a man a man to gain the whole world and to lose his soul.

How can I know that where I am is where God wants for me to be? I need to know that where I am, whether it feels wonderful or seems terrible, I want to be exactly where God wants for me to be. And if you're like me you need for God to speak up and be crystal clear because you have missed his will so many times before in life and are prone to miss it again. I don't know about you but I don't have time to be wishing and wondering; life is too crucial for me to live on continuous "maybes" or "hopefullys." And just because you pray doesn't solely mean that you are always in God's will, because I have learned the hard way that you can be loving God still miss his will. Because sometimes foolishness can dress up in faith's clothes and what you think is God is really the devil. So your prayer should be, "Lord give me an ear so I can hear you, because the further I am from you the easier it is to miss you."

BODY

The momentum in Joseph's story ended last time we were together with Joseph being thrown in a pit simply because he shared

with his family what God shared with him. In other words, Joseph finds himself in a pit, because he talked too much. And sometimes, if you are not careful, the same word that God gave to bless you will be the same word that people use to kill you. Can't you just hear the brothers talking to each other while Joseph is down in the pit? While Joseph is down in the pit with no food, water, or companionship—can't you hear Joseph's brothers not only plotting to kill him but talking about his dream that will not come to pass? If we kill Joseph, then everything he said he saw will be a lie! If we kill Joseph, then there is no way that his dream will be realized. If we silence Joseph, then we are vindicated from seemingly having no momentum in our lives. Individuals who aren't experiencing the momentum of God in their lives will always talk like this.

I thought we were supposed to be bowing down to Joseph? I thought Joseph was supposed to be ruling over us and rising up above us? None of this will happen now, and we are going to make certain of it. Can't you see Joseph? In a place where he never imagined he would be...in a pit and seemingly about to die. Is there anyone who can relate to Joseph's story? Maybe some of you have heard people say, "If God was so good to you then why are you experiencing so much pain? If God loved you so much then why did he allow your loved one to die?" If there is such a powerful plan for your life then why does it look like your life has nothing going for it. And I want to encourage someone right now because when God gives you dreams and shows you His great plans for your life, you are rarely if ever in a position where it seems like the plans of God will actually happen.

You're in a place that you never thought you would be and for some reason why is it when we are at our worst that's when the worst people always seem to come around? You're already down in a pit and people will say things like, "You know if you didn't open your big mouth you would have avoided the pit." People will say things like "You should have never dated that person, now you have attached yourself to crazy! You sure know how to pick 'em, don't you?"

And because they could not kill Joseph, they sell him the Bible says for 20 shekels (about \$230) they sell Joseph to traders who take him to Egypt.

And these traders take Joseph all the way to Egypt, where he is sold as a slave into the service of Potiphar who is an Egyptian officer of the Pharaoh—King of Egypt. And even in Joseph's difficult time look what happens. The traders could have in fact sold Joseph anywhere along their journey. They could have dropped Joseph off at any stop and made money off of him at any place along their travels because the distance from where Joseph was to the destination of Egypt was about 240-280 miles. And the traders could have sold Joseph anywhere and to anyone during that long travel. But in God's plan Joseph was sold in exactly the right place!

But when life hits you hard and we like Joseph find ourselves in tough situations, its sometimes extremely hard for us to see God's plan at work? Just yesterday Joseph was going to look after his brothers who were tending sheep but today he's a slave. God, how are you going to bring this dream to pass? Is it even possible to continue to have momentum when it appears that all movement has stopped? Just yesterday Joseph had on a new coat but today he doesn't even have his own clothes—he's a slave. God how can this be part of your plan of momentum for my life? How am I going to get in the right school when I didn't do well on my SATs? How can this be part of your plan? How am I going to become a doctor when I don't even like science? This can't be how you planned it for me! My parents just got divorced and I feel stuck in the middle. But since I'm so out of order in my life does that mean that your will and plans for my life has been suspended?

One of the things that often confuses us in our quest to follow God's momentum and His plans for our life is God's Preferred Will and God's Permissive Will. God has a preference for your life. There are some definite things that God wants; God has a bias, a first choice, and primary selection for you. And God's preference is not always easy for us. The Bible says that Joseph was taken into slavery. He is

not there to give Bible studies or lead an evangelistic meeting. Joseph is not there to teach the Egyptians, not is Joseph there (at least from a human perspective) to teach them the ways of God but Joseph is in Egypt to be a slave. And if you're like me you look at bad situations and think to yourself what you could have done that matches the tough things that you are experiencing to help you somehow deal with your current condition in life. And I promise you that it's the devil's desire to make you believe that God's permissive will is His Preferred will. He wants to make you believe that just because it happened it is what God wanted to make you leave the love of God. And because you feel that God isn't with you that means that God has left you as soon as your situation started going bad.

Joseph has now at a young age been taken to Egypt to work for Potiphar. With a full range of emotions, one has to think what Joseph's disposition would be as a slave. How will Joseph behave while a slave...after all, he didn't do anything to get sold...except follow God's momentum for his life.

But the devil forgot one thing about Joseph. As soon as he was sold into slavery the Bible makes it abundantly clear in that the Lord was with Joseph. (YOU MISSED IT) Joseph is in slavery and yet God was with him. He's far from home and yet God was with him. His brothers threw him in a pit and were mean to him and yet God was with him. He doesn't know anybody in this new land of Egypt and yet God was with him. Wait a minute! Pause! The Bible says that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So if God was with Joseph yesterday, that means that means that He'll be with me today. (OKAY, YOU'RE STILL MISSING IT) You can't see how it's all part of God's plan but as long as God is with you then the plan will come to pass. Stop looking at where you are and what you don't have and remember the Person who is there with you! And that's what kept Joseph and that's what will give you encouragement, regardless of where you are in life—to know that the Lord is with you! That's the question you have to ask: Is God with me? What does it mean to have God WITH you? Let me suggest a few definitions of WITH.

- WITH means accompanied by another person (God accompanied Joseph)
- WITH means moving in the same direction as (God and Joseph moved in the same direction)
- WITH means possessing something as a feature or resembling (Joseph resembled God)
- WITH means employed by (Joseph received his daily orders from God first)
- WITH means affected by (Joseph was affected by God)
- WITH means indicating separation or removal from (Joseph was able to remove himself from whatever was not like God)

The main thing that God is will help you to understand through your journey in life is that God's presence is the best thing that could ever happen to you! And through God's plan, God will teach you some things with the comfort of His presence. Your so-called friends may be shady but he is a friend to the friendless. People may have left you and let you go but God will never leave you. Don't miss what God is trying to teach you and produce in you—God wants you to become a person who stops relying on people, places, and things and realize that His presence...is...ENOUGH!!! I know you are waiting on this huge dream to come to true and are trying to figure out if God gave you this dream then why does it seem like your life is lining up with the amazing dream you saw. Because it can at times seems like everything around you is going crazy, and can seem like your life is spinning out of control. But can I tell you that if your life is out of control then give God an opportunity to take control, and He will always do that by His presence.

Joseph is a slave but watch what God's momentum does in his life. He is a slave, but because presence of God is with Joseph, Joseph is given favor! God's presence brings favor over Joseph's life and the Bible says that he is placed in charge of everything that his

master owns. God's presence can bring you FAVOR. And whatever Joseph did, because the Lord was with him—He was successful! Stop looking at where you are and remember who is with you. And because God was with Joseph it gave him success even in a foreign land. The test of your character is, can you hold onto and display integrity when you are in a place that is not familiar. Are you a different person in familiar surroundings than in unfamiliar surroundings? Do you act churchy at church but worldly away from church? Do circumstances affect your character? We all know chameleon-like people. People who change who they are to fit where they are. But as a child of God you can't move based on what is around you, you have to move based on what is inside of you. P.T. Forsyth said: Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is around us. Joseph's integrity held strong even as a slave in the house of his Egyptian master.

Joseph continues in the momentum of God grows up and the Bible tells us that Joseph wasn't ugly—he was attractive. And he was so attractive that he wasn't just admired by women in his age group, but older women think he's fine too—particularly Potiphar's wife. To the extent that she is not discrete or secretive with her advances. She is very direct and says to Joseph, let's have sex together. But look at the response from someone who is with God. Joseph says, if I do this I'm gonna mess up the plan. For many of us, we are living-right now, in God's permissive will. Most of us say if God didn't want me to have it then he would not have allowed it to happen. If I'm not supposed to have it then why do I want it so bad? But God permits things in our lives for these four reasons:

1. To get us back on track
2. To help us realize that his presence is greater than what we desire
3. So when people look at all the mess that you are in and are still able to praise him, they want to know more about him
4. So that when he works it all out he gets all the glory

When God is with you, people begin to notice you as they did Joseph. And because of his integrity, Joseph gets promoted from a slave to that of a personal assistant. God takes Joseph from the lowest in the house and from people being over him, to him overseeing everything in his master's house. What an upgrade?!? To think that you would put a slave, someone you hold captive, in total responsibility of your house. Potiphar is a pagan and worships many gods, but he sees something different in Joseph that pushes him to take him from a slave to a personal assistant. And because God was with Joseph he is promoted and is able to keep his integrity.

CLOSING

Joseph gets in the pit because of his dream, and then gets thrown in prison because he doesn't want to keep following God's momentum. Don't miss this... even while Joseph is in prison the Bible says: And the Lord was with Joseph. But how is Joseph able to keep his mind on God's plan? I know he loves God and he was taught about God. But even people who serve God get annoyed with God.

The reason why Joseph was able to stick to God's plan was not only because God was with him but also because he knew who he was. He knew his purpose. And the sad reality today is that we think that who we are is based on what we have. But can I let you know that who you are has nothing to do with what you have, who you are is on the inside. (SOME OF YOU SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN EXCITED, BECAUSE SOME OF YOU DON'T HAVE TOO MUCH. YOU DON'T LIVE IN A FANCY HOUSE, DON'T HAVE ALL THE NAME BRAND CLOTHES OR SHOES...) But you know who you are! Am I the only one who is not a millionaire, I'm not baller, I don't drive a fancy car, I don't have what the world would signify and suggest greatness is....But I know who I am!!!

Because too many of us confuse having worth with having things that are worth a lot. You think that because you have a certain brand of something then that gives you your worth. So we spend our money

and resources going to places to get name brand things and walk around with someone else's creativity and yet we don't even know who we are. And it's a terrible thing when you can wear someone else's name but you are clueless of who you are. So you go broke trying to get someone else's identity because you don't know who you are.

But when you know how you are and when you live in God's plan you can wear Payless shoes like you got them from Lord and Taylor. When you know who you are you can wear Goodwill like they came from Nordstrom. And most of us are frustrated with where we are not because the place is difficult; but our current position is often frustrating because we can't be satisfied with where we are until we know who we have been created to be! When you know who you have been created to be it doesn't matter where you find yourself or where the circumstances of life might take you...as long as the dream is still inside of you then you know that there is purpose still in you!

My prayer for you, is that even in difficult spaces and places in life, you are able to keep your integrity and continue moving in God's momentum for your life!

JOSEPH AND TEMPTATION

Genesis 39:6b-20

Though the Momentum of God carries many highs it is also paved on the road of many temptations.

INTRODUCTION

Julian McCormick, an 18-year old freshman at Bowie State University let the campus on September 1st, 2007 at 12p on his way to the University of Maryland in College Park to pick up his girlfriend. But when Julian failed to meet us with her or return her calls she called his parents—who he would usually contact every day. When he was not located a call to the police was made and a missing persons report was filed. The local hospitals and the Maryland medical examiner's office began looking for Julian but unfortunately couldn't find him either. Police said that McCormick was last seen leaving Bowie State University in his blue-silver Honda Civic. His parents tried continuously calling his cell phone, which keep going straight to voicemail they also tracked his ATM card that had not been used.

Police began a thorough investigation the very next day and helicopter searches went out around the area backtracking where he was heading, but came back with nothing. Since no signs of foul play were evident—his search was categorized as a 'noncritical missing persons search'. Flyers were posted around Bowie State as well as Laurel High School where he just graduated from, requesting any knowledge of Julian's whereabouts.

For more than a week concerned parents and friends of Julian McCormick thought the worst as every day that passed prevented less hope of finding their beloved relative and friend. Yet just when

they were at their wits end, and feeling that all hope was lost, a woman who was driving down Powder Mill Road spotted a young man who was battered and bruised—but was alive!

While he was on his way to pick up his girlfriend, Julian lost control of his car and skidded off the road and his car was overturned into a creek at the bottom of a steep embankment. For over a week he was stuck in his overturned car lying in a creek that runs under Powder Mill Road. The thickly wooded site, not far from BWI Parkway (295) is not visible from the roadway. Crews searched the ground and divers checked bodies of water along the route but because his car was overturned in a very rural area with farms and fields no one could find him.

Julian told reporters that what kept him alive was the fight he had inside of himself to see his family and loved ones again. So even though he drifted in and out of consciousness he fought for life. He drank water by using his shoe to scoop up water from the creek; he ate by capturing fish that were swimming down the creek. And even though he was lost from the human eye for an entire week—he wasn't dead. He stopped waiting for someone to find him upside down in his Honda Civic. Injured and dehydrated he somehow managed to climb out of his car and up to the side of the road where Leigh-Ann Hess, who was driving down the road, spotted him.

He stayed alive because of the fight inside of him! No matter the cost and what the circumstances around him were; despite his injuries and seemingly no one trying to rescue him—he fought on because of the joy he would receive by seeing his loved ones again. And I wish that in the body of Christ we had more fighters. People who will not just lie down and accept defeat, but people—even when they are in the middle of a difficult situation, they are able to put their boxing gloves on, lace up their shoes, and prepare for a possible 10 round fight. Fighters, who, when they get knocked down they still get back up. Fighters, who, may have some blood under their eye and are tired of throwing punches but have something inside of them to keep their momentum!!!

BODY

We find now in Joseph's momentum that he is favored of God and his Godly favor has caught the eye of people, namely Potiphar. God's favor is on Joseph and the Bible says that he is put in charge of everything in his master's house. His master had no worry or need of anything because Joseph took care of it. It is not by accident but by design that scripture communicates that Joseph was handsome and good looking. Coupled with Joseph's talents and gifts—he was very attractive. The Hebrew text suggests that he was well-built and wonderful to look at in regard to his form and appearance. And after being a slave and experiencing promotion, Joseph is seen working inside of Potiphar's house. And after Joseph's work ethic is regularly noticed, his work ethic is not all that people take notice of. The Bible says that Potiphar's wife makes sexual advances towards Joseph. Notice what happens to Joseph and when it happens.

Joseph is having success in Egypt because of the favor of the Lord. Who would have thought this would have happened? After the experience of almost dying in a pit, and then being sold by traders to a foreign land...Joseph wasn't supposed to end up in this position, or was he? After Joseph gets elevated to his new position, it's at that point in time that his greatest temptation comes. Make no mistake about it, whenever God moves you into a new level based on His favor over your life, a temptation will come. Sometimes the temptation is slow and steady and other times it comes out of nowhere. I am not saying that it's a possibility, but I am assuring you that a temptation of some kind will come to your life when you are trying to move in the momentum of God. They come because the higher you go in God, the devil wants to bring you back down to his level. He doesn't want you to move forward, he doesn't want you to succeed, he doesn't want you to win. His desire is for you to be so out of sync with the favor of God that the momentum that was happening in your life all of a sudden stops.

Watch this. Potiphar's wife didn't just come for him once...she came for Joseph multiple times. He was being obedient to his work

duties and following God's plan and Potiphar's wife watched him and continued to make advances towards him. Here's a great question: What is your game plan when temptation comes to you? What is your escape route when your temptation comes? We know this temptation was great and significant because Joseph did not trust himself to continue working while Potiphar's wife was around. The Bible says that he ran away from her and left his garment in her hand. The text seems to suggest that she was extremely close to him. She may have even grabbed him. Maybe she leaned in for a kiss? Whatever the actions were, it was significant enough for Joseph to get out of harm's way. He did not trust himself in her company. His way of dealing with temptation was to literally run away from her. In today's culture many of us would laugh at Joseph for not accepting the advances of this older woman. Listen...she had to be attractive too for Joseph to feel the need to run away. Temptation is an interesting thing, it can even be scary at times. We all have been tempted before. And temptations also come in various shapes and forms. Joseph's temptation was sexual. Your temptation may be lying, cheating on a test, or scrolling IG or Snap longer than you probably need to. Joseph ran! He made his decision and knew that his response to temptation had to be quick and decisive.

We all have been tempted before, and the initial temptation with temptations is to flirt around with it. Most of us believe that we are strong enough to handle temptations. Most of us don't think that one more moment hanging around temptation will cause us a more difficulty than we realized. Eve thought she could hang around the tree, Saul thought he could disregard the voice of the Lord, Samson thought he could hang around multiple women, Judas thought he could hang around money...there are countless stories in the Bible of how individuals believed that they could hang around and flirt with temptation. And like you and I, they found out the hard way and realized that you can't hang around temptation but you have to flee temptation. The Bible says that we should resist the devil and he will flee from us. However most of us are more content to hang around him to see how much we can jump in before we jump out. What is

your game plan when your temptation comes? And temptation often doesn't just knock once but it comes regularly for us—like Potiphar's wife did with Joseph. Why does opportunity knock only once but temptation bangs down our door? And some would even admit that falling to temptation has overtaken you to the point where your momentum has changed.

Falling to temptation could pause or halt momentum.

Temptations doesn't just come in the form of sex and music. It can come in any form because the enemy has one objective...to get you to pause God's momentum in your life. Today's culture teaches us actually teaches us to embrace temptation. It teaches us to do whatever you have to do or need to do to make yourself feel good. Let's define temptation. Temptation is a desire to do something that is so strong it has the potential to take you off track. What do you find that is keeping you off track and holding you back from the destiny that God has designed for you? There are several kinds of temptation.

- Pride
- Materialism
- Anger
- Bitterness
- Lust
- Greed

Even Jesus was tempted. And some would suggest that every temptation that comes our way can be summarized in the three temptations of our Lord. From Matthew's gospel we see the three things the devil tempted Jesus with.

1. If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.
2. If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written that He will give His angels charge concerning you
3. All these kingdoms of the world and all their glory I will give you if You fall down and worship me

The devil came to Jesus, questioning His purpose and place in God. He was trying to cause our Lord to question His purpose being the Son of God. Because when you don't know who you already are, then you are willing to accept whoever someone tells you—you are. And the Lord's response to temptation was quoting Scripture. Similarly, Joseph responds to his temptation by speaking about his relationship to Potiphar and with God. "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. How then could I do with great evil, and sin against God? But how do you handle temptation? Do you run and escape or do you hang around it?"

Interstate 5 is of vital commercial importance, but detours and disruptions along its 1381-mile length from the Mexican border to Canada have become increasingly common. Many attribute the disruptions to steady traffic and steady deterioration of the roadways. This freeway carries approximately 225,000 vehicles a day and is common to truckers and cars alike that are trying to meet the demands of everyday travel. More and more big rigs flood the Southern California freeways, as the Los Angeles Long Beach ports have grown with expanding global trade to become the world's 5 largest port complex. It's estimated that about one-third of the port cargo is shipped by rail, but the remaining majority by truck, which clogs the freeways.

There is however a particular section of Interstate 5 that has presented problems for truck drivers. On the southbound side of this interstate located in Southern California, there sits a 'not so ordinary' tunnel. Big-rig drivers say that they dread this tunnel, some calling it the worst part of driving in the state. The traffic lanes curve left toward Los Angeles and then abruptly the drivers find themselves in the tunnel, blinded in the dark.

The truckers dread this tunnel. One driver said: "I've been driving for 23 years and I hold my breath every time I approach the tunnel."

Lois Ceja said: "You don't see what's ahead of you until you get in the tunnel. It's like you're going blind—the tunnel is so dark that you only have a second to react." This treacherous 550-foot-long tunnel near Santa Clarita mixes three problems that drivers dread most: darkness, blind spots and curves. The southbound I-5 tunnel can be treacherous in the rain and when it rains the water doesn't evaporate in the tunnel—it's like a lake of oil and water—making it extremely easy to slide on.

On the night of October 14, 2007, when the rain just began to fall in Southern California the worst happened. Trucks had entered this dreaded tunnel with sharp curves and darkness. If there is a problem in the front it's going to affect everyone afterwards. If there is a crash or someone stops, the next driver usually doesn't see it. Drivers entered this tunnel only to discover on entry that an accident had occurred causing a chain reaction crash of big trucks that soon burst into flames.

Robert Griffin, a 32-year old driver said: "I always have an escape route in mind, but tunnels are different and the worst because there's no place to go. There was nowhere for the fire to go, no air or rain that came inside either—just fire, oil and men stuck in their trucks, trapped in a tunnel with no way of escape. The fire burned throughout the night and into the next day but because there was no escape for those who were already inside the tunnel most of them died. The heat was so intense in the tunnel; firefighters said that they couldn't explore the tunnel beyond its opening.

And in many ways, this dark tunnel is similar with being trapped in by the weight on temptations; and it's not until you are in the middle of your fiery furnace of temptation that you see the devil for who he really is! And now most of us—even today remain stuck inside this dark tunnel of temptation not knowing when we are going to get out. But I thank God because His word says in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to us all. And God is faithful that he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it!"

But that's why 1 Peter 5:8 says: "Be alert and of sober mind, because your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." It's interesting that scripture compares the devil to that of a lion. Lion's most active time is during night hours until dawn; it's during that time when hunting most often takes place. But before they devour their prey, they stalk their prey! They watch for hours what they ultimately eat. The lion's eyesight is 5 times better than a human's eyesight and they can hear their prey more than a mile away. They stalk the prey and know all about him so that when the time comes to kill and eat they won't miss. The enemy knows more about you than you know about yourself! What do you do when temptation comes? There is no way I would stay around with a lion until he devours me!!!

CLOSING

What was it that kept Joseph? How was he able to maintain and stand in the face of temptation that was coming regular and strong? Joseph's response wasn't just NO, but he ran. Let me first suggest some principles from Gene Getz, who suggests few things about temptation.

- When we are the most successful, we are often the most vulnerable to sexual temptation
- To resist temptation, we must have firm moral and ethical convictions based on a biblical value system
- To resist temptation, we must avoid verbal and visual stimuli
- Resisting temptation may hurt people, but it never hurts God

We often fall to temptation because

- We are vulnerable
- There are no foreseeable consequences
- We have no accountability
- We like it
- It numbs our pain
- Out of fear

And because Joseph said NO, Potiphar's wife called in the men of the household and said to them, "See he has brought a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. And it came about when he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled, and went outside." And because of this Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined and he was there with them.

And what if I were to tell you that some of the worst times some of you have experienced in life were set up by the hand of God. Though difficult to understand and frustrating to push through, it is evident that God uses things we don't like before he gives us what we enjoy. God will sometimes use what we hate before he gives us what we love. And I have discovered in my own life that God will push us through seasons of difficulty because many of us aren't right now ready for God-sized blessings.

My prayer for you today is that you will be faithful to God's momentum regardless of the cost!

JOSEPH AND DIFFICULTY

Genesis 40-41

Your momentum is inextricably tied to the level of trust you have in God in difficult seasons.

INTRODUCTION

At arguably the most difficult times in our lives, we often find ourselves searching for justifiable meaning and understanding to help us cope with what we are going through. And if you're like me, you would admit that its terribly hard to give God an "in the midst" praise when life serves you an appetizer of stress, a main entree of trouble, a side dish of pain, a beverage filled with discouragement, and a dessert portion of depression. And oftentimes it's even more painful when like Job we have no clue as to why we are going through what we are going through, and the only explanation to some of why we are experiencing what we are going through is for the simple fact that our name came up in a conversation between God and the devil.

At the most difficult time in my life to date, it was extremely frustrating dealing with the demands and pressures from other people, coupled with my own thoughts, physical limitations, and psychological warfare. Because sometimes things get so confusing and disappointing that we end up spending the majority of time fighting with ourselves between giving up and holding on. In my moment of darkness, indescribable hurt, and bitter pain, a good friend of mine gave me a book to read entitled: *When God Breaks Your Heart (Choosing Hope in the Midst of Faith-Shattering Circumstances)*. In his book Ed Underwood, pastor of the historic Church of the Open Door, chronicles his experience as he dealt with the tremendous challenge of chronic leukemia. And even though he prayed for

and believed God for healing, days continued to slip by without improvement as his pain became extremely unbearable.

During his time of great suffering, Ed Underwood became broken by the seeming realization that the God who was able to do anything for anybody was doing nothing for him. As his condition worsened and the leukemia became more ferocious he questioned that if God loved him so much why was he experiencing so much prolonged pain! As he continued to pray his way through his pain, there was one thing became unmistakably clear and that was this: Even though Ed had to endure so much pain, there was equal to or above his level of pain, a serious calling on his life and regardless of doctor's diagnosis of his demise God had something special in mind when he created him. And through his past pain he realized in a more meaningful way the powerful purpose that God had for his life.

And that's what I want to press to your minds today, regardless of what any of you have been through, and regardless of how much pain you've faced in life, there is a plan of Godly purpose attached to your life and you can't die until you complete it! In spite of everything bad or negative that you have suffered through in your life, because of God's love for you there is over your life a purpose and a plan attached to your life and your hurt feelings, unforgiveness, or the fact that you feel you've been dealt certain cards in life can't be used as lifetime excuses as to why you can't or won't walk in your purpose and I'm here today on assignment to alert you to the fact that your success or failure in the next season of your life has everything to do with how connected you are to God and the maturity you have to stay in the will of God knowing that the will of God includes promises and problems in your life!

Each person here today then is either in one of two places. You are either totally unaware of what your purpose is. And you are here enjoying the worship and the music and fellowship, and can even sense and feel the presence of God but have no idea of what your Godly purpose is. Which means for you then, that as soon as church is over you need to begin an aggressive search and pointed journey

of discovery into finding out what, even with your setbacks in life, God was thinking about when he decided to create you. Why have I had seemingly so many troubles, or why does it appear as though I always have to fight, scratch, and work harder at everything than seemingly everybody else. How come I never knew my dad and why didn't my mother want me? Why is it that what comes so easy to some is a constant and severe struggle for me? Why has my life's journey been accompanied by sorrow and why has there been the consistency of people pushing me away from my Godly purpose? How come my reality has seemed like a lifetime of pain and a few moments of joy? After the benediction is over, to begin finding out what that purpose is.

You are either there or you know what your purpose is but you don't like what life feels like when you start walking in purpose. You don't like the things that you experience and the bitter moments you taste. You can't stand the way it feels because you think that your moments of trouble are signs that you aren't in purpose. You don't like the fact that some people have to leave and there are some people who must come. You can't stand the things it denies and the things it restricts. The fun you can no longer have and the lifestyle that you must take on. There is for every child of God-purpose attached to your life but when you start walking in it you don't like the possibility of some lonely nights or tears that will be shed. You don't like the pressure it brings and the determination it demands; the responsibility it requires and the opportunities it opens. The demons you have to fight and the prayers you have to pray. You don't like the boundaries you have to create and the walls you have to tear down! The people that will talk about you and the people come to help you out. The faith walks you have to go on and the fear that must be suppressed! You like the fact that there is purpose all over your life but you don't like what it means when difficulty is part of the place that you must rest in in order to fulfill your purpose.

BODY

We pick up the story now with Joseph who is in prison even though he has done nothing wrong. He was first a slave and now he is a prisoner. He's a prisoner on false charges of rape in the first degree. There are no witnesses. Just Joseph and Potiphar's wife...and the Lord. He's sitting in prison waiting for release because he is innocent. He's in prison for having integrity and for following the momentum of God. He's in prison because someone lied on him. What do you do or what would you do if you felt as if you are in God's Plan but God's Plan seems to be failing? What is your attitude when it seems you have done everything right but everything around you looks so wrong? What is your attitude when it seems like your character is being attacked? Some of us have a poor attitude when no one has attacked our character. Some of us have a bad attitude even when everything is going well. But now?? What is your attitude when difficulty is part of your journey?

Can I suggest though that what looks like God's failures are actually just pieces in the puzzle? Has anyone ever worked on a puzzle before? I'm not the best at putting puzzles together, in fact I'm not a huge fan of putting puzzles together—but they teach us so much about life. Before you start the puzzle, you take the final product (the top of the box) and place it on one side, while the many pieces of the puzzle are scattered beside the picture of the final product. Despite how great the final product looks you sit there and wonder how are you going to take all these individual pieces of the puzzle that you are initially unsure of their placement and take the pieces and put them all together to form this wonderful final product that you see in the picture. And if you are like me you get so frustrated with looking at the many pieces that you would rather give up on the process towards the final product than take time to work on what will become a masterpiece. People that work on puzzles regularly tell me that what eases the frustration is that they don't finish everything in one day but they work on the puzzle over a period of time, because if they try to finish the process all at the same time they will become so

irritated that they will stop working on the entire puzzle. So they work on it in stages. And there may be someone listening to me today who, like Joseph, has gone through many personal pitstops and unpopular prisons in life and your patience is getting weaker because like the puzzle, the pieces of your life don't seem to be coming together and you're wondering when the nightmare of this supposed and proposed plan of God will ever come together.

But there is another thing that I have learned about people who love to put puzzles together and that is, they tell me that if you are ever confused, stuck, or unsure of what piece to place next, just look at the box. In other words, the box contains the end result, it shows what the final product looks like when it all comes together. So regardless of if you find yourself in a pit or a prison, what keeps you in momentum and continues to cause you to keep moving and to keep pushing is the dream that you had.

So God works on me, and God allows certain experiences to come my way not to destroy me but to develop me! God works on me as he did when he first created man. He develops me and grows me, and matures me, and educates me, and causes me to become wiser so that when its time for the dream to come alive—I'm prepared to be used by God. So that when people see me now based on where they saw me back then and where I've been they can praise God not because where I am is so prosperous but you can shout and praise God for me because in spite of everything I've been through God's Plan is still moving forward.

In fact let me pause now and give you a chance to praise God because you have had certain experiences in your life that weren't always the best. And people wonder why you praise God so hard. But they don't know what your pitstop was like, they don't understand what your prison experience has been. And they look at you now all dress up with a smile on your face and don't even understand that there is a purpose in your praise. I'm not just shouting and lifting up my hands because that's what we do in church, there is a purpose to my praise. I'm thanking God that he didn't do with me like I'd do with

a jigsaw puzzle and give up on me and moments of frustration, but God saw the finished product, and I just want to thank God today that His Plan was better than my plan. And even though it didn't look good last year you can look back and say God thank you for your plan. And there's somebody sitting here right now and saying I don't know how God's Plan is gonna work, so if that's you; because you realize that God knows what he's doing then all you have to say to God is: God work out your plan! Work out my future, work out my parents, work out my school, work out my friend work out my mental health.....AND is there anybody here that knows that whatever you commit to God He is more than able to work it out for you!

Look at the parallels of Joseph while in Potiphar's house and Joseph while he is in prison.

- The Lord is with him
- He's found trustworthy
- He's put in charge of people
- He receives promotion
- He is successful

How can Joseph still have momentum even in prison? It's almost as if God is saying that circumstances can't be used as lifetime excuses for not moving forward. Not only that but it seems that throughout his time in Egypt, Joseph is creating a following. His IG followers have gone up exponentially since being in Egypt. Sure, he was an attractive person, but it seems that what is causing people's attraction to him and love for him is his character. Here's a good question for you: Why can't some people stand to be around you or why does it seem that you attract the same negative people? Often times we put the blame on others but why do you always attract the same kind and caliber of people to you? What is it about your character that pushes some people away from you or causes some people not to stand being in your presence? Joseph's character and personality was such that people fundamentally enjoyed being around him.

While Joseph is in prison, there are two people who are sent to prison that he is given charge over—the cupbearer and the baker. We aren't told of the specific nature of why they were sent to prison except for the fact that they offended their master, the king of Egypt. And yet even though Joseph is in prison for wrongful charges, he is promoted. The cupbearer and baker are released from prison and yet innocent Joseph remains in there because of what God is ultimately trying to do in his life. Joseph is in prison but the dream didn't show him the pit or a prison. The dream showed Joseph's family bowing down to him, the dream showed him being served and having wonderful things happen to him. But when Joseph first gets this dream, it's not in the next verse, chapter, or year when what Joseph sees in the dream comes true. What happens between what Joseph sees and the fulfillment of that dream are things that suggest the dream, the momentum of God will never happen. I don't see any evidence of the dream, how am I supposed to continue to believe God?

I promise you that in the middle of your difficulty, God is at work! And what God is mainly working on is your character, and this isn't always a fun process. The work needed on us takes time and usually doesn't feel good. But while God works on us, He promises the power of His presence to be with us! And there are a few things that help to improve our character.

- Difficult people
- Unfavorable situations
- Struggles with temptation
- Disappointments
- Time alone with God
- Understanding your purpose
- The power of God's presence alone

Joseph's mother has already died and his father is older now and could be dead himself. His brothers could have moved away as they got older and have families now of their own. How is God going to place Joseph in a position where the dream could come true? It also appears from the dream that because his family is bowing down to him that he is in some type of position that warrants honor and respect, and yet he is in prison, and even though he is placed in charge of all the other prisoners...he is still a prisoner himself. No matter how many privileges he receives, he receives them while he is in prison. God how is your plan going to work?

Let me suggest to somebody today that you stop worrying about how God is going to work out the dream. We place so much time and energy into wondering what God is doing that we forget that we are in God's Plan not our plan and while you are in God's Plan, he desires for you to understand three main things. Please don't miss these things because if you miss any one of them then you will continue to misunderstand what God is doing! The first thing God desperately needs you to understand is that His Plan includes pitstops. Moments that you didn't plan for and caught you off guard, but never caught God off guard. The second thing God needs for you to know is that His Plan includes temptations. Don't be annoyed when temptations scream at you and invade your life. They come to you as a child of God, but God always provides a way of escape. The last thing that God needs for you to understand is that His Presence will be enough for you. Along your journey there will be moments in your life when you will feel alone. But just because you feel alone doesn't mean you are alone.

Joseph finds himself in prison and while he is there, two of Pharaoh's servants, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, offend the king of Egypt and are sent to prison where Joseph is. While they are there they receive dreams that they can't seem to find the meaning to and Joseph comes to them as say why are you worried, don't interpretations of dreams belong to God? Joseph seeks God and gives the interpretations to the dreams that the cupbearer was going to be released in three days and assume his position but the baker would

be put to death. And when they are released the Bible tells us that it happened just the way that Joseph said it would.

Two years later, Joseph still finds himself in prison and Pharaoh has a dream one night but can't find the interpretation of his dream, and the chief cupbearer then remembers that while he was in prison Joseph was so close to God that God downloaded to his mind his very thoughts. Joseph is released from prison and tells the Pharaoh that it is God who gives interpretation of dreams. Now I'll be honest, I have an issue with this right here. Because Joseph gives the dream interpretation to the cupbearer, and Joseph gives the dream interpretation to the baker, and Joseph gives dream interpretation to the King of Egypt...and yet God never tells him the interpretation of His own dream?!?!

CLOSING

When Joseph is finally released from prison it comes at a critical and crucial time. The land is about to endure seven years of famine. And Joseph is promoted to be ruler in Egypt not because he was smart or because he is handsome. He is not promoted because he is able to interpret a dream—but he is promoted because it's part of God's will for his life. And everything that Joseph has been going through has been preparing him and pushing him to this moment. And there is one singular thing that is evident in the life of Joseph that the Bible keeps saying and that is: And the Lord was with Joseph. The interpretation is this—Joseph stayed in the will of God when the will of God didn't make sense. Joseph experiences momentum because God was with him!!!

His brothers, who think he is dead, come to Egypt because of the saving wisdom of Joseph. They are suffering and in lack in their homeland and in need of help during this difficult time. So they come to Joseph as the ruler in Egypt, and not recognizing him they bow down to him with their faces to the ground. It's interesting in chapter 43 how, when he saw his brothers they have to hurry

Joseph out of the room, and in verse 30 the Bible says that he wept! Now...I always thought that he singularly cared because of seeing his brothers. And while he cried because of that. I want to suggest to you that what made Joseph weep as well is the fact that when he saw his brothers bow to he remembered the promise that the Lord had shown him and his brothers bowing to him was God's way of telling him: You were never forgotten and NEVER out of my will!! Because God's will always includes the fulfillment of His promises! Momentum always has fulfillment!

Joseph says in 45:5- "Don't be upset with yourselves. You sold me here but God sent me here just to preserve your life...While your friends and their family is dying because of the famine; God sent me here to keep you alive. Therefore my brothers...It wasn't you who sent me here but God." In other words, you wasted your money selling me. Because God's Plan was to in some way get me here to save thousands of people. What you meant for bad, God used it to work out his glory. So that now the purpose of my life is to praise God for keeping me when it looked like I was about to die!

And that's my word for you today, don't wait until you see the dream fulfilled, praise God now because you know that since God is for you and you are in His plan, everything is going to work out for his glory. Because it's not your plan, it's God's plan and since it's God's Plan it's up to God how he is going to work everything out!

My prayer for you is to continue your momentum in God's plan even when you find yourself in difficult seasons of life. God's momentum will always be fulfilled!

GOD, WHY

Jeremiah 1:4-8

There is a sure and definite reason as to why everyone was created and it is our life's task to find out that 'why'?

INTRODUCTION

It is extremely evident to me after many conversations with many people through the years that most people live very uneventful and unfulfilled lives. Sure, they have jobs, make money, rear families, and can even speak to various accomplishments in their lives. However, when the sun goes down and their heads hit the pillow and they reminisce about the day's events and what is currently going on in their lives—the truth is that they are frustrated because they sense and feel that despite the children and the ring; the job and the career; the friends and the family despite all of that, something is still missing. And I want you to pay very close attention to what I am sharing today because what I am speaking to now is not necessarily people who are financially strapped, and educationally illiterate, or relationally taxed. I am not even referencing here people who don't know who God is or have not accepted Christ as their personal Savior. This is not a word for those navigating school or trying to date. And while all of those dynamics beg to be discussed—this is not my focus today.

I stand today troubled and challenged because of the millions of people in this world today and more specifically in the church, who excel in their places of business, are financially stable, and who even can say that they know the Lord—the world would look at them and call them successful and yet when heaven looks at them and they begin thinking and having conversations with God it is evident that

even though some people know what they want out of life, they don't know their why in life. And when heaven looks at them they wonder how come they are using so many of heavens resources to accomplish nothing.

The reason that I am so passionate about this and why this is so crucial and critical is because when you don't know and understand your why and for what purpose you were created it makes you question God's rationale and reasoning of not just why He created you but also why did He and has He allowed you to experience and be a direct recipient of what would appear to be cruel and even unnecessary. And I know that there are some like me who when I get to heaven am going to make my way straight to the throne of God to get some answers to some things that have been plaguing my heart and mind for years and I need to sit down and have a face to face conversation with God to find out straight from His mouth as to why everything that happened-happened; and have a conversation with the Father to hear from Him the meaning, reasoning and implications as to what prompted certain activities in my life and to hear God place everything in perspective for me.

And I'm not in heaven yet or in front of the face of God but I hear God saying at that time to some of us that the reason you went through some of what you went through and experienced some of the difficulties in life wasn't because I didn't love or care for you. It can't even be attributed to the fact that I needed for you to learn and understand some deep theological lesson. But some of what you went through was self-afflicted. You experienced unnecessary pain because you were not in purpose. You experienced unneeded difficulty because you spent so much time in life living and doing what I never created or intended for you to be so the pain you felt was really an announcement to you of your ignorance of and wasted time with spending so much time and expending so much energy not being what you were created to be. So because you were never activated and used as a proper tool in the hand of God it created a life of frustration that you often took out on other people. Because when you aren't happy with your own life then you often make certain

that other people aren't happy with theirs. And the mystery you are experiencing now is because you aren't being used properly as a tool in the hand of God.

I remember some years ago I bought my son a basketball hoop to play on and shoot around with outside. I bought it for his birthday and then put it together. When I opened the box, looked at the instructions, and saw the tools required for assembly I immediately realized that I didn't have the proper tools but because I didn't want to spend the money to buy the correct tools I used the tools that I already had at my house. And as I began to assemble I realized and recognized how difficult it was putting up the hoop. I realized how much energy I was expending to put it up. My father was visiting us while I was putting it together and suggested we could finish putting this hoop together rather quickly and probably could be finished by now if you had the right tools. You've been using what will eventually get it done and finish the job but you aren't using the tools that were made to assemble this hoop. When I finally broke down and bought the proper tools I realized the rapid efficiency to which I assembled the hoop. And through my sweat and pain I heard God speak to me in the spirit saying that there are too many people who were created to bless the world and to put up something that will help masses of people to show the power and might of what happens when they rest in the hand of the Almighty God—and for people to watch and see what happens when a person rests in the hands of God to be used for their true and intended purpose.

And yet instead of walking in and living in what they were created for they become settled in and complacent with living a life that they were never called to live. And will become content with being born, living, and then going to the grave having made no impact on the death and being okay with mediocre living and satisfied with an entire lifetime passing them by and making no difference or change in somebody's life. I mourn for people who are okay with being average. I mourn for people who are at ease with being average. I mourn for people who are okay with being regular, knowing that God never called you to live simply a regular life. And it is disrespectful to the

intelligence of God and impolite to the Spirit to never become what God created you to be. Jesus did not die on the cross so that you would be a mere reflector of other men's thought and never walk in the eternal greatness He destined for your life! And make no mistake about it, there is a call from the Lord over your life on everyone under the sound of my voice. And I am so excited to announce to you today the fact that because you are alive and can hear what I am saying right now God is giving you right now the great opportunity to shift and change your focus to making sure your life is in alignment to His plans for your life because when you become what you were created to be you will not only want for nothing but it will allow you for the first time in life to bless your attitude and release you into an attitude that is not based on any external circumstances but based on an inward reality that you are a child of the King and you were created with destiny and purpose!

There are five categories of people I have discovered exist:

1. People who have a short life but a BIG impact
2. People who have a long life with little to no impact. They live their whole lives never making a difference
3. People who are frustrated because they battle between their why and their want
4. People who are scared to fully live for God
5. People who are fully and without reservation walking in their purpose

I want to ask two thought provoking questions:

- Is where you are where God wants for you to be?
- What is preventing you from getting to where God wants you to be?

Richard Jacobs said: "Answering what your purpose is perhaps the most important question you could answer in this lifetime. By living

your purpose you can discover new levels of happiness, fulfillment and effectiveness.”

Jeremiah for me is key to helping many of us unlock some closed doors in our lives. Jeremiah is born in the suburbs of Jerusalem to a priestly family. And let me pause briefly to make mention of the fact that one of the keys to understanding your purpose is in realizing that your family’s expectations on you and God’s purpose for you are two totally different things and confusing the two will have your more confused!

When Jeremiah is conversation age he gets this word from God: “Before I formed you in your mother’s womb I knew you!” I don’t know how you feel about it but the Bible lets us know in no uncertain terms that before a pregnancy was realized, and before any ultrasound, and prior to the first beat of your heart was heard—before a first sighting of your frame, God had an intimate relationship with us. And to be honest I am not too sure how to explain this idea of how someone could actually have a relationship with someone else when at the time the relationship started one party in the relationship hasn’t even been born yet is an intriguing and interesting concept much less a seeming impossible one to be in relationship with someone who cannot communicate back would seem a bit uneventful and even boring and dull. I can’t really understand how God could know me—even with understanding the theology of God, how He could know me without having conversation with me.

But I can remember when my children were in the womb of their mother I started talking to them. I knew that at the current time that they would not and could not talk back to me. But in spite of their known non-response I would bend down and put my mouth on the belly of my wife and because we had picked out their names in advance I began talking to them with the current knowledge that I had about them. And even though they could not talk back to me I would have and she would have full-blown conversations with them so that when they came out of the womb they were already familiar with my voice.

God says however that even before you showed up in the womb I started talking to you! Before I could feel you kick I spoke words to you. Before your parents knew each other, I knew you! I had a cheat sheet into the discovery of who you were so much so that when everyone saw you on the first day of your life outside of the womb their faces were elated because of their first glance at you but for God it was a continuation of a previously established relationship! And what excites me is the fact that God knows who I am! He knew what and who He created! And watch this, the Bible is so clear on the fact that He knows me based on David's words that say that I am fearfully and wonderfully made and if I could count God's thoughts toward me that they would outnumber the sand of the sea. And what excites me about this is that God knows who I am which means that regardless of how confused I am with life and unsure about myself God knows me and God knows that whatever He creates He attaches purpose to.

Not only are you known by God but the Bible says that before Jeremiah was born there was purpose over his life before he started his first day of life. Before you came out of the womb, God consecrated you. Part of knowing your purpose is in understanding that God Himself consecrated you! To consecrate means to declare something sacred and devote it to a particular purpose. To consecrate means that something is so special that it deserves singular affection. To declare something as consecrated means that you have to set it aside because its different than everything else. (The sabbath, martial sex.) It's so special, it's so tight that God has to single it out because of its major importance. God basically says that I am setting you up for greatness. I have had a relationship with you for as long as I have existed and now that you have been released on the earth I want to see the person who I was having conversations and communication with. And what is so great about God is that God will plan your existence and plan your purpose but He will never leave you clueless as to what that purpose is. And if you don't know what your purpose is it is a sign that you haven't been talking to God enough. Because when Jeremiah begins having these conversations with God, God reveals to him in a very direct way and

says I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations. He gives Him His purpose for existence (STAY HERE).

Now just because you know your purpose, like Jeremiah does not mean that it is super easy to walk in. In fact, your purpose is often known and realized through pain. In fact, Jeremiah receives this word in the first chapter but the entire book is basically a list of things that happen in his life that make him question his purpose.

CLOSING

How do I begin to realize my purpose?

1. Don't fight God. Trust that God knows best
2. Become familiar with God's voice
3. Listen to His Spirit for His direction in your life
4. Don't settle for what you've always wanted but be open to what God desires
5. Be obedient to God's desires, realizing that God's purpose for your life will always lead to fulfillment and joy

