

Are you a world changer?

If you look through the pages of your Bible you will discover one world changer after another...

And, the remarkable thing is that they are all different, there is no formula.

There was Noah, of course, a light in a very dark world.

God used him to save the human race, to be a picture of the Lord's salvation.

There was Abraham who believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness...

and the promise of God leading to the Messiah began with him.

There would be Moses, son of a slave, prince in Egypt, 40 years in the wilderness... that's odd training.

God chose him to lead the people of God out of slavery.

There would be Joshua, a former slave who led Israel in battle and established a struggling nation.

There would be Ruth, a young widow from Moab. She would change the world by changing on person's life...

Naomi, in the depths of depression, became a woman whose life was filled with meaning and purpose.

There would be David, a shepherd turned outlaw... God made him a king.

It turns out that shepherding is good preparation for ruling as a king... who knew? God did.

There would be Elijah, a wandering man of the wilderness who spoke to kings. They hated him but he was the one who won.

There would be other prophets, all different... **Amos 7:14-15**

There would be Daniel, another slave, trained in the courts of Babylon...

He served God in the courts of at least 4 great Babylonian and Persian kings... the chief advisor to three of them.

There would be Nehemiah, a slave, a cupbearer to Persian kings...

odd preparation for one who would lead God's people back to Jerusalem and rebuild the city.

There would be John the Baptist, who lived his life in the wilderness, unmarried, barely clothed, different...

God used him to prepare the way for the Messiah by helping people to see and confess their sins.

There would be Peter, Andrew, James, and John... fishermen all... smelly menial small businessmen...

They became leaders and preachers and the world has never been the same... **Acts 4:13**

Those they impacted were like them... **Acts 17:6**

What is the common element with all these people?

It is not their background or their training or their upbringing or their money...

Daniel 11:32 "The people who know their God shall display strength and take action."

We see this with Joseph. What was his preparation for the courts of Pharaoh?

He was betrayed by his family.

He spent some 7 years as a slave, he was betrayed by his master's wife.

So, because his master believed her he spent another 7 years in prison... and was forgotten. But, not by God.

Joseph was learning that if you know God you find that He knows what He's doing.

And, God will use you to change the world... in small ways, in big ways, in ways that look small but turn out to be big.

Know God and change the world.

You remember how prison went for Joseph... good news/bad news

Good news: Joseph ended up managing the place because God was with him and the jailor learned to trust him.

Bad news: After making friends there, they forgot him. It had been two years.

But now, what God has been preparing Joseph for is about to be revealed.

Sometimes moments like this are almost predictable, you can see what God is doing... for years.

Other times they are a shock. You might seem to be going in another direction, preparing for something else...

And then something happens and everything is different. This is one of these times.

But once it happens, once you see what God has been doing, everything makes sense.

Pharaoh had had a dream. He knew it was important, but he didn't know what it meant.

Gen. 41:8 Pharaoh calls the smartest people he's got, the experts in dreams, the wisest men. They're all there.

They're stumped. This is what happens when people in the world try to figure out God and what He's doing.

I. The nations do not understand God.

vss. 14-24

The chief cupbearer remembered Joseph. God made him remember... and so Joseph is cleaned up and brought to Pharaoh.

There he stands, a prisoner for some 7 years, before that, a slave... standing in front of the most powerful man in the world.

Some say that Pharaoh is a god... Pharaoh says that!

There he stands, in clothes that are not his own, looking all scrawny and pale from the prison.

But, we shall see that he knows why he is there... and it makes all the difference.

God has placed him there for His purpose.

What is it? Joseph doesn't know yet, but he knows that God knows, and that is enough.

He knows this much. He is there to seek and honor his God... so he speaks... **Gen. 41:16**

This is gutsy, bold, audacious, stupid?

You can almost see the wise men, wise guys?, standing around cringing, "What did he say?"

"Pharaoh... he's a god!"

Joseph doesn't care, (lit.) "God will answer Pharaoh peacefully." = It's OK Pharaoh, God's not mad at you.

Incredibly, Pharaoh shows not a whiff of anger, there has been no impertinence.

He just wants to know what the dream means. God has done this to him with the dream, humbled him a little.

Pharaoh tells him the dream... seven good cows, seven bad cows... seven good ears of grain, seven bad ears of grain.
Notice how these dreams from God come in pairs in Joseph's life... two when he was 17, two in jail, two to Pharaoh.
Notice too, the unforgettable nature of these dreams... people know when God is telling them something.
We'll get back to that.

Then Pharaoh finishes up, "I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me."

Ex. 8:18-19 The magicians of Egypt try to deal with the wisdom and power of God through Moses.

Dan 2:10-11 The wise men of Babylon try to understand what God has told Nebuchadnezzar.

See, people who are not following God and filled with His Spirit cannot understand what God is saying.
They might think they can.

The world is full of ungodly people, some who think that they are godly... who think that god is speaking to them.

They might even find something in the Bible and point it out and say "See! This is what God is saying."

But, they're actually saying what they want to say.

They might say, "I have had a dream from God."

And maybe they did. But, in their ignorance they think they know what it means.

They might say, "God has told me..." They seem sure. It's hard to argue with such people. But, they are dangerous.

Historically, every religion (even Christianity) is full of such people.

They know what God says, there can be no discussion, no need for the body of Christ, no need to study the Word.

They know. God told them. Now they're telling you. Beware.

If they are not following God, obeying God, praying to God, seeking God, reflecting His character... don't listen to them.

No one can confidently understand God except those who know Him.

II. Those who know God will display understanding.

vss. 25-36

Before we are bowled over with admiration for Joseph, let us not forget where he tells us the wisdom comes from.

God gives him this understanding... and the understanding of the dream comes in two parts.

1. What the dream means... vss. 25-32

Seven years of plenty, seven years of famine.

Repeated = determined by God, God will bring it about... there is no stopping this.

You might imagine that David has seen this repetition at work before... in prison

And he expects the same of the dreams he had as a youth.

2. What to do about it... vss. 33-36

This understanding from God may have been some 14 years in the building as he went through all those trials with God.

Administrative understanding. He looks at the situation and sees what must be done. = wisdom

This sort of reasonable revelation often gets short shrift today...

people prefer a bolt from the blue rather than deep thought backed up by experience.

In 1 Cor. 12:28 "administrations" is listed as a gift of the Spirit.

III. This world needs people who are filled with the Spirit of God.

vss. 37-45

It is Pharaoh who recognizes this as Joseph is standing before him, the wise guys gathered all around.

vs. 38 You could imagine them all standing around, "Well, we do need someone like that. I'm kinda like that."

vs. 39 Whoa! "Pharaoh, how long have you known this guy?"

"No one as discerning and wise? What about us... we have degrees, training... this guy is a jailbird!"

vs. 40 OK, I'm not going to be the one to say it... but Pharaoh has flipped out." It's God's doing! God did this.

First, Pharaoh realized that he needed this guy, Joseph. Why? Vs. 38 tells us.

There is a "divine spirit" in Joseph... now Pharaoh probably doesn't even know what he is talking about.

But he knows it when he sees it... God is showing him.

The Spirit of God is in Joseph. He is the first spirit-filled believer in the Bible that we know of. It makes him different.

Wise, humble, resistant to sin, hard working, forward looking, always thinking about God.

Is the Spirit of God living in you? Do you know God through Jesus Christ?

Second, Pharaoh sees something else in Joseph... we see it in the name in vs. 45

"Zafenath-panea" = God speaks and lives, he lives, we live = God speaks to this guy.

Which is what happens to us every time we pick up the Word of God and, guided by the Spirit of God, we read it.

God speaks... life results. This is why it is called the Word of Life... Phil 2:16, 1 John 1:1 (Jesus)

There is a last lesson in this chapter... we will see it as we finish.

IV. God reigns over the earth, nations, and each of our lives.

vss. 46-57

Here Joseph is in Egypt, the land of immensely powerful God's... Ra (sun God), Horus (sky), Osiris (dead), Ptah (creator), Set (evil),

Isis (magic), even a god named Nut... and then there's Pharaoh.

And Joseph comes in and says "my God, the Hebrew God, actually runs the place." And guess what? He's absolutely right.

And, God causes a famine over not just Egypt, but over the whole known world! He runs things everywhere! **Daniel 2:20-23**

And, not only does God control weather, nations, and all the earth... He does things in my life for little 'ol me.

Look what He does for Joseph... God gives him two sons and Joseph names them according to what God has done for him.

"Manasseh" = forget (vs. 51) Some people never get past offenses. God has made him forget this one. Blessing.

"Ephraim" = fruitfulness" (vs. 52) God has given him a fruitful life... faithfulness, family, a future

God is in control of Joseph's life... even though there were times when it seemed like He'd forgotten.

And God is using Joseph to change the world... because he knows god and is filled by His Spirit.