

Sunday 6th July 2025 Genesis 41:41-57 Becoming an influencer

Genesis 41:41-57 Joseph in Charge of Egypt

⁴¹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

⁴⁴ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt." ⁴⁵ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷ During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. ⁴⁸ Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. ⁴⁹ Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰ Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On. ⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵² The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

⁵³ The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. ⁵⁵ When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."

⁵⁶ When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. ⁵⁷ And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

You might have seen this rather amusing photo of a collision that took place in Mamaroneck, New York in 2015...



'On the road to success there are no shortcuts.'

Don't you just love a bit of irony!

Well over this last term we've been looking at the story of Joseph, an Old Testament character who I'm sure would echo those sentiments. In the book of Genesis we've read how Joseph the Hebrew was stripped of his Father's gift of a 'technicolor dreamcoat' robe and sold into slavery by his brothers, then he was thrown into prison when he spurned the seductive advances of his Egyptian boss's wife, and languished forgotten there for several years. Then suddenly one day Pharaoh was advised to summon him to come and interpret his strange dreams. Thankfully Joseph hadn't lost his faith in God along the way and he humbly offered a God-given interpretation to Pharaoh who somehow knew it was spot-on. So at last we come to the part of the story where Joseph tastes sweet success and his childhood dreams of royal destiny begin to come true. With his time of hardship and training complete, Joseph was catapulted from inmate to influencer in just a matter of days.

If you had to say who are the most influential people in the world today, I wonder who you might suggest?

I thought it would be a simple thing to search for online, but it turns out not to be that easy to determine.

ChatGPT says Donald Trump is the most influential leader, with Elon Musk a close second, whilst DeepSeek which is a China-based AI says Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi are the most influential. (Note: AI is currently only as good as the information someone trains it with!)

Then of course there are the social media 'influencers' who have enormous followings on Instagram or Facebook, far more than political leaders – people like Cristiano Ronaldo with over 730 million followers, Mr. Beast aka Jimmy Donaldson with 410 million or Sir David Beckham with 75million, Molly-Mae Hague with 8.6 million. Even comedian Rob Beckett in the UK has 2million!

Determining who is most influential can be subjective, seems to change with the times and depends on what sphere of influence we are talking about - whether it's politics, cultural impact, tech, religious or social influence.

Forbes Magazine used to produce an annual list of the top 100 most powerful people but that ceased in 2018 because it faced too much criticism or perhaps political pressure concerning its choices.

In terms of historical influence, the front runners are Jesus, Muhammed, Isaac Newton and Buddha, but the most influential person of the past 50 years is often listed as: Nelson Mandela.

Nelson Mandela is celebrated as the hero who emerged from 27 years in prison to lead the new South Africa. Despite his violent and controversial past, he ended up being an advocate for truth and reconciliation and ushered in season of hope for that country. So clearly Nelson Mandela has a lot in common with Joseph.

Our passage today from Genesis 41 describes the moment Joseph emerged from prison and finally started to fulfil his destiny as a world leader. After so his years of suffering and incarceration, Joseph is finally restored and given a royal robe to wear.

Joseph learned humility and wisdom through his years of suffering, but let's be clear, Joseph's influence was a gift given to him by God. True Godly authority is a something that cannot only be learned by human endeavour. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus began to teach the crowds recognised that he taught as one with Authority – not like their teachers of the law. Godly influence is different.

Now the Bible does tell us to honour all those in authority over us – as it says in Romans 13:1 'There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.' But of course, some twist that authority for their own ends and we see many corrupted by pride or insecurity. But at the end of the day Jesus taught in Matthew 5 that true prophets - those who truly hear and speak Godly wisdom, will be recognised by their fruit. Proverbs 11v30 'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives.'

Joseph's life was now beginning to bear fruit and he was given a new nickname by the Egyptians – *Zaphenath-Paneah* which could mean 'explainer of mysteries'. The effect of his Godly discernment of Pharaoh's dreams was to save countless lives through his smart response.

To make a real difference in this world we not only need wisdom but more than that we need revelation. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit[□] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

The difference is having both wisdom and revelation. Smart thinking and spiritual thinking. Goodliness and Godliness.

Leadership is all about influence. Maybe you don't like to be labelled as a leader, but I believe every Christian is called to be an influencer because each of us can influence other people to one degree or another.

So what more can we learn from Joseph about how to be a Godly influencer? There are a couple of additional features of this story which are very helpful to notice.

The first thing Joseph did was to travel throughout Egypt. He didn't just sit on his backside in Pharaoh's palace issuing commands and eating grapes. He went out and about, spending time in the provinces with the people. The text also notes that he was 30 years old when he began his service. Just like Jesus was 30 when he started his public ministry.

Jesus came to be *Emmanuel* - God with us, not remote from people but sharing life with us and experiencing everything that we go through.

Joseph went out to visit the people and make sure they were storing grain for the coming years. You could say that Joseph was the original inventor of the foodbank!

Influencers take time with people to understand their needs, but always holding onto a vision of a better future. Are we noticing the people around us? Not just remotely as gossip or news but as real people who need our kindness and attention?

The second thing we learn from the text is that Joseph didn't let his past suffering define him. During the abundant years He had two sons and the names he called them show his forward-looking attitude: (v51)

⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵² The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

Manasseh means 'forget' and Ephraim means 'fruitful', and this summarises the power of God's goodness at work in a person's life.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians:

¹³ one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:13-14

On the cross, Jesus took all the sin and pain of the past onto himself, so that we can be released from its power and live fruitful lives of service with the hope of eternity compelling us forward. This is the good news of Christianity. Your past does not define you – in Christ we get a new start, with glorious hope in our hearts.

And God's blessing always seems to spread out further than we anticipate. Look at the last verse: 'All the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph.'

It wasn't only the nation of Egypt that was grateful for Joseph's storehouses of grain. The *whole world* was blessed with provision. Thus Joseph began to fulfil the original call of God on

his people through Abraham: *through your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed my voice* Gen 22:18

As we humbly respond to God's invitation to obey his commands and follow his call, then blessing surely follows as that Godly influence spreads to those around us. Isn't that what our community and our nation needs right now? Let's pray.