

## When Dreams of Freedom Don't Come True

Genesis 40

There are many 'prisons' in life, often hidden from view. Spiritual prisons are worse than physical ones. We cry out for God to deliver us, but sometimes it seems He has forgotten us. God doesn't do that. He'll never forsake you. As you dream, *never stop trusting in God!*

### Dreams of Freedom...Forgotten by God?

- *Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker join Joseph in custody (1-4)*
- *Joseph interprets dreams of his fellow-inmates (5-19)*
- *Joseph's predictions come true, but he is forgotten (20-23)*

### Lessons for Life When We Feel Forgotten

- *Discouragement results when we face unjust persecution.*
- *God gives opportunities to show faith in times of trial.*
- *God won't forget you: Seek His approval, not that of others.*



## Digging Deeper

1. The story of Joseph interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh's baker and butler recounted in Genesis 40 is well-known – it's a staple of Sunday School curriculum! We usually focus on God giving Joseph the meaning of his fellow-inmates' dreams, but behind this divine provision lies a discouraging reality: Joseph longs to be free, and while he successfully predicts the fate of others, he cannot see his own! The narrator invites us to consider what he was going through: What doubts might Joseph have had during his years in custody? Be creative! What might his 'discussions' with God have sounded like?
2. We sometimes view Old Testament characters like Joseph as if they were spiritual 'super-heroes' – as though they never battled with discouragement or depression, but this is not true. Biblical 'all-stars' like Samuel, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Jonah, John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul (to name a few) suffered with discouragement; Joseph is no different. What emotions do you 'hear' in Joseph's words to the cupbearer in Gen. 40.14-15?
3. God 'gifted' Joseph with an ability to interpret dreams; it was an evidence of God working in him, and every time he used it, it exhibited his faith in God (even though it didn't always turn out well!). Although Joseph is imprisoned in Gen. 40, he uses his ability to help fellow prisoners. What spiritual gift(s) do you have? Do you use your special spiritual abilities, whether you feel like it or not? What about when you're facing trials?
4. After Joseph interpreted the cupbearer's dream, he asked him to mention him to Pharaoh, but the guy forgot (40.23), and Joseph languished in prison for another two years (40.1). How do you think he feels *now*?! He knows God is with him (he interpreted the dreams), but why doesn't God get him out of prison? Have you ever wondered why God doesn't answer your prayers, only to discover later that God was working in your life during that time? What lessons has God taught you in your 'prison times' that you would never have learned any other way? What was God preparing you for in those difficult days?