



Don't Stop Believing

Genesis 40

(CCF 07.27.25)

Intro

On June 3, 1981, the band ***Journey*** released a song called ***Don't Stop Believin'...***

- This ballad became Journey's biggest hit and ***Don't Stop Believin'*** is considered to be one of the greatest rock songs of all time...

And although the song is over *44 years old*, it seems to be as popular as ever...

- Just yesterday, as Brandi and I were at a function in town we heard ***Don't Stop Believin'*** playing at the venue...

Amazingly, ***Don't Stop Believin'*** has been listened to on *Spotify* over ***2.5 BILLION times...***

- And though the song is a classic and admittedly very catchy, we would be wise to consider the central focus of the song...

You see ***Don't Stop Believin'*** is all about chasing after ***emotions...***

This idea is best summed up by a few lines of the song...

Strangers waitin'
Up and down the boulevard
Their shadows searchin' in the night
Streetlights, people
Livin' just to find emotion
Hidin' somewhere in the night

Don't stop believin'
Hold on to that feeling

Unfortunately, this is how we humans often operate — we end up living by ***feelings*** instead of living by ***faith***...

- As a result, many end up abandoning relationships, leaving jobs, and switching churches as soon as their feelings fade...

Thankfully, as we will see in our text this morning, Jacob's son Joseph is *not* a man who chases emotions or lives by his feelings...

- In fact, Joseph doesn't have a whole lot to feel good about at this point in his life — but that doesn't stop him from faithfully following the Lord...

Joseph *refuses to stop believing* but it has nothing to do with his emotions...

- Instead, Joseph *doesn't stop believing* because he has placed his faith ***in God*** and ***not in his feelings***...

*I love the way that author Edward Welch expresses this truth in his book, **Running Scared...***

“...God’s self-revelation is a higher authority than our feelings. When our feelings conflict with God’s communication, we must side with God’s interpretation.”

With this in mind, let’s focus our attention on **Genesis 40** this morning...

I've divided this chapter into 3 sections...

- 1) Joseph the Servant**
- 2) Joseph the Conduit**
- 3) Joseph the Forgotten**

Let's move into our first section...

1) Joseph the Servant (vs 1-4)

1 It came to pass after these things

After these things refers to what took place in **Genesis 39...**

And here is a quick refresh of Genesis 39...

Joseph was a slave in Potiphar's house — and over time Joseph became the manager of Potiphar’s entire household...

- During his time at Potiphar's house, Joseph continually resisted the illicit advances of Potiphar's wife...

Eventually, Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of trying to sexually assault her...

- At that point, Joseph went from being a **slave** to being a **prisoner** — but the hand of the Lord was with Joseph and Joseph soon became a trusted servant within the prison...

Continuing on in Genesis 40:1...

It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.

butler - *was in charge of the Pharaoh's wine, was the chief cupbearer (Nehemiah would have a similar role for King Artaxerxes)...*

baker - *was in charge of the Pharaoh's food...*

offended - *usually translated "sinned" and has the idea of missing the mark...*

Now, we don't know exactly what this sin or offense was but it may have been some type of attempt on Pharaoh's life — possibly an attempted poisoning...

Continuing on in vs 2-4...

2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker.

3 So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined.

4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them,

*It is very interesting to think about who this **captain of the guard** is... 🤔*

Genesis 39:1

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

Could it be that this **captain of the guard** here in Genesis 40 is none other than Potiphar, Joseph's former (and perhaps present) boss?...[expand]

Moving on in Genesis 40:4 we read...

the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them;

*The fact that Joseph is **serv**ing the butler and the baker is especially interesting in light of what we read in...*

Genesis 39:22-23

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing.

23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.

Ultimately, Joseph is in charge of the prison but he doesn't use that power to become a kingpin — instead, Joseph uses his position to **serve** his fellow prisoners...[expand]

- Now, as you are probably well aware, this topic of serving others is woven throughout the entire Bible and *is one of the most important things for a Christian to understand...*

And I believe that it is so important because it is only through becoming **servants** that we truly achieve **greatness...**

- In other words, it is impossible to be considered great in the eyes of God unless you are a *willing servant* — **service is the path to greatness...**

To prove my point, please turn to...

Matthew 20:20-28 [near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry]

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.

21 And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.”

- [expand — James and John getting their mom to ask for the top two spots under Jesus in the Kingdom 🤔]

22 But Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

Here the Lord Jesus is making reference to **suffering** and **death**...[expand]

They said to Him, “We are able.”

- [expand — flippant response by James and John]

23 So He said to them, “You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.”

- *"You want **suffering, death and power** -- how about 2 out of 3?"...*

24 And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.

- The other disciples were probably mad because they hadn't thought of using their mothers to get something from Jesus...

*At this point the Lord Jesus needed to call one of His **many** staff meetings to get the guys back on the same page...*

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.

The disciples would have been all too familiar with this style of leadership among their Roman occupiers...

26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—

- [expand on true greatness being found in serving — *ex. Image of an upside down triangle - leaders should be servants of all...*]

So, the Lord Jesus calls all of His disciples to live this sort of life because that is the example that He set...

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

- [expand — the entirety of the Lord Jesus’ earthly ministry was focused on *serving God the Father* and *serving humanity...*]

If we are to walk in obedience to the Lord — if we are to truly live as faithful believers then we should follow the example of the Lord Jesus and serve one another...

Let's turn back to Genesis 40 and look at the end of vs 4...

the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.

The butler and baker awaited their fate for an extended period of time and Joseph *served* them while they waited...

Let's move now from Joseph the Servant to our second section...

2) Joseph the Conduit (vs 5-19)

conduit - *a person...that acts as a channel for the transmission of something...*

- [expand on believers seeking to be conduits for the Lord — the Lord wants us to be channels that He can work through — The Lord wants to use us in His process...]

*In this section we will see that Joseph was **continually willing** to be a conduit for the Lord — and one of the ways that the Lord used Joseph as a conduit was as an interpreter of dreams...*

5 Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation.

As the butler and the baker anxiously await the Pharaoh's decision, they each have a dream and each of these dreams has a specific *interpretation or meaning*...

6 And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad.

This simple verse gives great insight into the **character** of Joseph...

- *And to truly appreciate Joseph's attitude toward these prisoners, let's quickly remind ourselves of all that Joseph has endured up to this point...*

He was assaulted by his brothers, thrown into a pit and then sold into slavery...

- Joseph was then carried down to Egypt where he was sold to a man named Potiphar...

For years Joseph served Potiphar faithfully, resisting the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife until Joseph was falsely accused and subsequently imprisoned...

- Think about all that Joseph had encountered during his years in Egypt — it is enough difficulty for a lifetime...

And yet, through it all, Joseph didn't get ***bitter*** — he got ***better***...

- You see, ***bitterness*** causes a person to ***turn inward*** and it clogs up the conduit...

The bitter individual is focused on self, on nursing wounds and holding grudges...

- But Joseph refused to go down that road — instead, his misfortune built him into a man of incredible character...

As we look again at verse 6 we see the character of Joseph being manifested...

And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad.

A person consumed with bitterness doesn't notice the sadness of others — the bitter person is too focused on self to be concerned with the troubles of others...

- Joseph, though he definitely has his own problems, **chose** to serve the butler and the baker and as a result he noticed when those two guys were struggling with sadness...

And here we find an essential connection — when we choose to **serve others** we will **notice others**, we will be **concerned for others**, we will **love others**...

- If you find yourself in a place where you don't really care about other people, if you aren't really concerned with the emotional distress of others — **then start serving those people**...

When you choose to serve others you will begin to care about them and get to know them and notice when there are in the midst of difficulty...

Also, serving others is a great cure for bitterness...

- As you focus time and effort on serving others, on meeting their needs, you will have less time and energy to pour into staying bitter...

Moving on in Genesis 40 to vs...

7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, “Why do you look so sad today?”

- Please notice that Joseph not only took note of the sadness of the butler and the baker -- he also asked them **why** they were sad...

Joseph could have used any number of excuses to avoid getting involved...

- ***“I have my own problems -- I'm too busy -- It's not my job to keep people happy” -- and on and on the list could go...***

Instead, Joseph chose to be a conduit for the Lord by choosing to ask the butler and baker why they were sad...

8 And they said to him, “We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.”

Both the butler and baker are disturbed by the dreams that they have had...

- They believe that the dreams are a message of some kind but they don't know what that message is...

Continuing on in vs 8...

So Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God?”

There are a three things to notice here...

1) Throughout all his hardships, Joseph hasn't lost his faith in God...[expand]

2) Joseph not only still believes in God, he still believes in the validity of the dreams that God gives...[expand]

3) Joseph has confidence that God will give the interpretation by using Joseph as a conduit...[expand]

Now to the last part of Genesis 40:8...

Tell them to me, please.”

Far from the extremes of *ignoring* or *demanding*, Joseph politely asks the butler and baker to share their dreams with Joseph...

- I love the humility with which Joseph seeks to serve these two prisoners who are under his care...

[expand — important to be *humble* conduits — not being presumptuous or demanding as we serve...]

9 Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, “Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, 10 and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes.

11 Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.”

The butler's dream is consistent with what the butler did — he was a cupbearer for Pharaoh...

- I believe this speaks to the fact that the Lord meets us where we are — He speaks to us in a way that we can understand...

[ex. The Lord Jesus taught using examples from farming, fishing, shepherding, etc...]

LESSON -- As we desire to be conduits that the Lord speaks through, we should use examples and imagery that people can relate to...

- We do this by learning about the lives of those who we are seeking to minister to...

We get to know what they do for a living, what interests them — and then we tie those things to the spiritual truths that you are trying to share...

Moving on to vs 12-13...

12 And Joseph said to him, “This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days.

13 Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler.

Refusing to hedge his bets, Joseph gives a very specific interpretation of the dream...

In three days time the butler will be acquitted of all charges and be restored to his position as the cupbearer of Pharaoh...

Now, after Joseph gives the interpretation of the dream he makes a request of the butler...

14 But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house.

Joseph basically says, "Please put in a good word for me with Pharaoh so that I can get out of this prison"...

15 For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.”

Joseph lets the butler know that he was brought to Egypt against his will and that he has done nothing deserving of incarceration...

Joseph's plea reminds me of what Paul wrote in...

1 Corinthians 7:21 NIV

Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.

In other words, serve the Lord as a conduit right where you are — but if you can move into a position that allows you more freedom for serving the Lord then make the move...

- And I believe that is exactly what Joseph is doing as he asks the butler to put in a good word for him...

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good,

The baker sees that the butler received good news so now he wants his dream interpreted as well...

he said to Joseph, “I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head.

17 In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.”

18 So Joseph answered and said, “This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days.

19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.”

Ouch -- apparently the baker was the guilty party and he would pay for his crime...

- In three days the baker would be hung from a tree and his body would be left there for the scavenging birds to eat...

Not the news that that baker was hoping for -- and Joseph doesn't ask for anything from the baker -- because the baker won't be any help to him... 😬 [expand]

- Now, before we move into our last section I want to point out the fact that Joseph was willing to tell the ***hard truth***...

Joseph was committed to sharing the truth with the baker even though it wasn't what the baker wanted to hear...

- And I believe this example is vitally important for all who seek to be conduits for the Lord...

As faithful conduits we must be willing to share the truth of God as clearly as possible...

- We must not shy away from "bad news" because it will upset the hearers...

It is not the job of a conduit to **decide** the message, it is the job of the conduit to **deliver** the message...

Let's move now from Joseph the Conduit to our final section...

3) Joseph the Forgotten (vs 20-23)

20 Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

It seems that at this feast for all of Pharaoh's servants that Pharaoh wants to make a strong point...

- Pharaoh brings out the two accused men — the butler and the baker — and Pharaoh displays these men for all of the other servants to see...

21 Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

In the presence of all of the servants, Pharaoh reinstates the chief butler to his former position...

- In doing so, Pharaoh would encourage his servants by showing that faithfulness would be rewarded...

On the other side of the equation we have vs...

22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

The chief baker was found guilty and summarily executed...

- This would send a message to any would-be traitors among Pharaoh's servants — unfaithfulness would not be tolerated...

Notice again the last part of vs 22...

as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Joseph is proven to be a true conduit of the Lord — his interpretation of the dreams come to pass just like he said they would...

23 Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Sadly, ***servant-conduit Joseph*** becomes ***forgotten Joseph***...

- Perhaps in the midst of all the festivities and exulting in the relief of not being executed, the chief butler completely forgets about Joseph...

Once again, Joseph is treated unjustly and continues to suffer through no fault of his own...

LESSON -- You can be a true servant of the Lord, you can do the right thing and things may still go poorly for you...

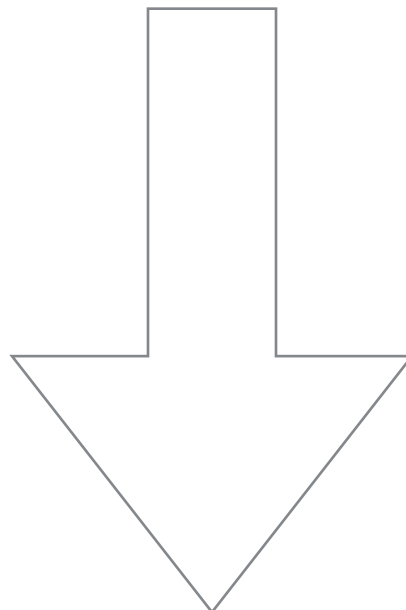
Serving the Lord faithfully does not guarantee that others will treat you well — in fact, the opposite is often true...[expand]

Thankfully, though others may forget us and the good that we do for them, the Lord never forgets...

Hebrews 6:10

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

We will stop here for today and I would encourage you to read the rest of Joseph's story sometime this week — to remind yourself that God is working it all together for the good...



Conclusion

And as we close our time together, I want to leave you with three closing application questions taken from our study...

1) Are you willing to seek greatness through serving others?...[expand]

2) Are you willing to be a faithful conduit of the Lord — loving the people that you speak with?...[expand]

3) Are you willing to be forgotten by others as you faithfully serve the Lord — knowing that the Lord sees and remembers?...[expand]

I encourage you — Don't stop believing! — Walk by faith and not by feelings and you will see the Lord work through you!...

• Let's pray...