

QUESTION 6

- a) Things in our lives might seem not to fit together. However, we need to be like Joseph and trust God's overruling.
- b) What we see as a delay or a failure, is part of God's providence.
- c) In William Cowper's hymn, we read:

*Deep in unfathomable mines
of never-failing skill
he treasures up his bright designs
and works his sovereign will.*

*You fearful saints, fresh courage take;
the clouds you so much dread
are big with mercy, and shall break
in blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
but trust him for his grace;
behind a frowning providence
he hides a smiling face.*

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES – STUDY 7

QUESTION 1

- a) Chapter 41 has a similar beginning to chapter 40. On both occasions, there is a time lapse between events.
- b) "Two whole years" emphasises again a significant period during which Joseph's situation doesn't change. Here is a young man of 28 years old (see **41:46**) and in his prime; yet seemingly having this time needlessly wasted (see **Romans 8:28**).
- c) It is also two years of forgetfulness by the cup-bearer (see **40:23**).
- d) As we saw in our last study; in God's plan, the story continues unbroken. God hasn't forgotten Joseph.
- e) It can be hard when there are periods where our situation doesn't change.
- f) Yet as **40:1** show us; God is in control. His timing is always perfect; and His will always best.

QUESTION 2

- a) This is reminiscent of Joseph's dreams back in chapter 37. Two different dreams to reaffirm one message.
- b) Cows are often seen in ancient Egyptian artwork. They represent the fertility of the country.
- c) The dream suggests that this will be lost.
- d) These are not the sort of dreams we might laugh at when we wake the next morning.
- e) Verse 8 shows how seriously Pharaoh took what had happened. "His spirit was troubled" is a strong way of expressing that he had experienced something important.
- f) So important was it that he felt the need to have them interpreted by the best minds of the land.

QUESTION 3

- a) The magicians were not people who did card tricks. They were priests who taught wisdom and looked into all sorts of mysteries. Pharaoh was obviously confident they could interpret for him.
- b) But this was a message from God and only God could give the meaning (refer back to **40:8**).
- c) We see a similar situation later with the Babylonian magicians when they are told to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams in **Daniel 2:2,10; 4:7**.
- d) Not even Joseph suggested that he could interpret Pharaoh's dreams without God's leading (see **verse 25**).
- e) This shows all concerned that God is in control.

QUESTION 4

- a) Those dreams had been the reason for the beginning of Joseph's troubles when his brothers had taken offence at him.
- b) It had even got him the mocking nickname 'this dreamer' in **37:19**.
- c) However, in chapter 41 we begin to see those dreams coming to fulfilment.
- d) This is nothing random. God is working His purpose out and allows every event in the timeline of this story to bring about the required end.

QUESTION 5

- a) It is no coincidence that verse 9 begins with the word 'then' (ESV).
- b) There is an order in events here. An order in God's timing.
- c) It is now the moment to bring Joseph back into the story.
- d) As Christians, we believe that what others may call 'chance happenings' or 'coincidences' are in fact, all part of God's providential plan.
- e) Had Joseph not been sold in slavery; had he not been falsely accused by Potiphar's wife; imprisoned; put in charge of the other prisoners; able to interpret the cupbearer's and baker's dreams etc.; then Joseph would not be where he is now. He would not be in a position where he can now save a nation!
- f) Quote: *"If the cup-bearer had remembered to mention Joseph's plight to the king earlier, Pharaoh might have released Joseph and sent him back to Canaan, from where he had been kidnapped. Joseph's dreams would never have been fulfilled and he would have failed to be a blessing to Israel and others"* (Philip Eveson).