



Faith Pulpit

Effective Instruments for the Master

Tragic current events, degradation of moral standards, and today's warped philosophy may lead some to believe that we live in a hopeless situation. However, God is very much at work changing people's hearts as He carries out His program for the ages. He has placed many of us in leadership positions in the local church, the primary vehicle for accomplishing His program in this present dispensation. To be effective instruments for the Master and His work in the church, we must be Godly leaders.

We can go to the Old Testament and find examples of Godly men whom we can emulate. In the book of Genesis, we read about an upright young man named Joseph who illustrates effective servant hood. We can learn two main lessons from him.

First, to be effective instruments for the Master, we must proclaim God's Word faithfully. Before the written Scriptures were completed, God sometimes revealed truth by means of visions and dreams. Joseph's dreams, like those of his father Jacob, were divine in origin, as were the dreams of the butler, the baker, and Pharaoh. Joseph faithfully proclaimed God's message by telling others about his dreams and by interpreting other people's dreams for them.

Joseph's proclamation of God's Word began at home. Through the first dream, God revealed that He would make Joseph supreme over his older brothers. In this dream Joseph and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly Joseph's sheaf stood upright and his brothers' sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf. When Joseph declared his dream to his brothers, they clearly understood the meaning of the dream, and they hated him more because of it. Through the second dream, God revealed that He would make Joseph supreme not only over his brothers but also over his parents. Joseph saw the sun, moon, and eleven stars bow down to him. The meaning of this dream was also obvious. When he told it to his father and brothers, his father rebuked him and his brothers envied him; but his father kept the matter in his mind. Today, we have God's complete revelation readily available

in written form. We must make every possible effort to impart it to our family, and above all to our own children. We must do this regularly and methodically in a structured setting like family devotions. But most importantly, we must take advantage of every situation, like being in the car or going on a walk, to tell our children about God and the promises and warnings in His Word. We must faithfully proclaim God's Word to other members of our family, too. It may be that they will reject it, as Joseph's family did, but we must not give up.

Joseph's proclamation of God's Word took place under all circumstances. In prison, Joseph proclaimed God's Word by interpreting God's dreams to the king's cupbearer and the king's baker. These court officials did not understand their troubling dreams, until Joseph interpreted them. Because he realized that their dreams were from God, he renounced any supernatural powers of interpretation and gave all the credit to his God, setting himself apart from the pagan mediums of that day. Joseph endured this imprisonment resulting from a false accusation. However, he displayed no bitterness or self-pity, but remained faithful to his God and the proclamation of His Word, even in prison. We too must take advantage of every opportunity to proclaim God's Word, regardless of our circumstances.

Joseph's proclamation of God's Word was complete, leaving nothing out. Joseph's interpretation of the cupbearer's dream was good news: he would be restored to his position within three days. Motivated by the encouraging report, the baker put forth his dream for Joseph's interpretation. However, this time the interpretation was alarming. The baker would be executed within three days. For two years afterwards, Joseph sat forgotten in prison until Pharaoh had his dreams. When no pagan magician was able to interpret his dreams, Pharaoh was greatly distressed. Then, the cupbearer remembered Joseph! When summoned to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph again disclaimed any credit by saying, "It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (Gen. 41:16). Then he boldly proclaimed the complete Word of God. It involved both good news and bad news. The seven fat cows and the seven plump ears of grain meant that the land of Egypt would produce seven years of abundance. It was easy to tell the king this interpretation, for it would please him. In contrast, the seven ugly and gaunt cows and the seven thin scorched ears of grain stood for seven years of famine in the land. Joseph jeopardized his chance for freedom and boldly told the king the dreadful interpretation.

Today, some church leaders proclaim only God's love but never mention sin with its grave consequences; and hell, as a real place of eternal torment for lost sinners, is nonexistent in so much preaching. On the other hand, some church congregations hear only sermons on separation or giving. Neither situation is biblical. Like Joseph, we must boldly proclaim the whole counsel of God found in His Word.

Joseph's proclamation of God's Word had far reaching results. When Joseph proclaimed the revelation of God to his family, the response was hatred. His brothers were envious, and even thought of killing him. When Joseph proclaimed the interpretation to the cupbearer and asked to be remembered, the

cupbearer forgot him, but the seed was planted. When Joseph interpreted the dreams to Pharaoh, he exalted Joseph, who then provided for his own family, which grew and ultimately became the nation of Israel, from which our Savior was born. As we proclaim God's Word, we may not always see the immediate outcome, but we must not waver, knowing that the results are in God's hands.

Second, to be effective instruments for the Master, we must fervently strive to be men of integrity. Joseph's integrity was reflected in his work ethic. He worked faithfully at home, along with his brothers, feeding the sheep. In Egypt, he became a trusted servant of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. So trustworthy was Joseph that Potiphar committed all that he had into Joseph's hand. When Joseph, an innocent victim, landed in prison, the prison keeper entrusted to Joseph's hand all the prisoners in the prison and did not worry about anything under Joseph's care. Joseph's integrity in his work ultimately granted him a high position under Pharaoh, who put Joseph over all his house as ruler over all the people. Again, Joseph carried out this privileged responsibility superbly! As pastors, we must have the reputation of being diligent workers. The duties of the ministry may sometimes be overwhelming, and study for sermon preparation may take hours; but faithful labor in the Lord's work is rewarding. Therefore, we must manage our time wisely.

Moreover, Joseph's integrity was evidenced in his personal life. He had purposed in his heart to be morally pure. Joseph refused the immoral advances of Potiphar's wife and fled from her. He did not glance back for a second look, like David did with Bathsheba, and Joseph remained free from the terrible consequences that later oppressed David. Joseph refused to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife because he wanted to be faithful to his master and to his God. His refusal angered the woman, who then falsely accused him. Potiphar believed his wife's lie and sent an innocent man to prison. The Genesis account does not elaborate on Joseph's imprisonment. However, the psalmist describes Joseph's initial prison life with these words: "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron" (Psalm 105:17-18). Joseph's conviction to remain morally pure was unwavering, and he was willing to suffer the consequences of a false accusation. "But the Lord was with Joseph." What beautiful, glorious words! Four times, Genesis chapter 39 affirms God's presence with Joseph (vs. 2, 3, 21, 23). God honored Joseph's faithfulness with His presence, and He also prospered those whom Joseph served. God's presence was also Joseph's source of strength for overcoming temptation.

The leadership positions with which God has entrusted us may bring along many temptations, so we must determine to remain morally pure. Besides the Lord, our wives must be the dearest objects of our affection, and we must avoid all compromising situations and things that may produce immoral thoughts (i.e., counseling women by ourselves, riding alone in a car with a woman, television, the internet, videos, etc.). Lately, some in our ranks have fallen because of the Internet. If it is a temptation, avoid it. Someone has said, "The only woman with whom you should have dinner alone, besides your wife, is your mother!" Every morning, when we get up, we must pray, "God help me be a

loving, faithful husband today.” God has promised His presence and His power to every believer. He can be our source of strength to overcome temptation, protecting our integrity.

God is at work today, just like He was during the days of Joseph. From him we can learn that to be effective instruments of the Master we must proclaim God’s Word faithfully, and we must fervently strive to be men of integrity. May God help us!

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Dr. John Hartog II (D.Th., Grace Theological Seminary and D.Min., Central Baptist Theological Seminary), was a beloved professor, pastor, and scholar who faithfully served the Lord for over 50 years. He earned degrees from Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College, Grace Theological Seminary, and Central Baptist Seminary. Dr. Hartog was a passionate teacher and pastor, spending much of his life at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary, where he taught for 23 years.

Known for his deep love of Scripture and engaging teaching style, he made a lasting impact on students and congregations alike. Dr. Hartog’s legacy is one of unwavering devotion to Christ, a love for God’s Word, and a heart for ministry. He went home to Heaven on August 18, 2024.