Prison comes in different forms for different people. We can be imprisoned by our circumstances, trapped in situations that we are powerless to change. You can be imprisoned by the expectations of others. You may be imprisoned by guilt. Many of us are walking around with a load of guilt, from things that may have happened years before. Others may have forgiven us but we have not forgiven ourselves. Regardless of what “prison experience” we may find ourselves facing, Joseph can provide us with insights for coping.

One of the things that we must keep in mind as we examine Joseph’s life is that God is not as much interested in our circumstances as he is of our response to our circumstances.

Now that Joseph is in prison, we learn that although Joseph did not deserve to be in prison, he responded to it beautifully. What is important was the way in which his character grew during his imprisonment. In similar circumstances another man might have become harsh, bitter or withdrawn. Not Joseph. Prison actually strengthened Joseph’s character.

Psalm 105:18 refers to Joseph’s imprisonment, “They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons.” The iron collar around his neck and chain around his ankles scrapped his skin and must have made it difficult to even sleep. An interesting alternate translation of this verse says, “His soul entered into iron.” Turning that around rendering it reads, “Iron entered into his soul.” This would seem to indicate that this was more than a physical impairment this was a time of maturing spiritually.

Verse twenty-one reads, “But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. (39:21)”

In this verse read although the circumstances have changed this truth remains the same. Where is God when Joseph is thrown in the dungeon? Does His silence mean He’s absence? We’re not left to wonder. According to verse twenty-three, “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.” The Lord was with Joseph in the palace of Potiphar and when Joseph went to prison, the Lord went there too. The only thing that severs us from God is sin.
False accusations put Joseph in prison, but it was the Lord who stayed near him and nurtured his soul while he was there. When a dungeon experience comes, the quickest and easiest response is to feel that God has forgotten us. When fear threatens to over-whelm us we need to stop and remember that the Lord is still with us. No promise of scripture is more comforting than “I will never leave you nor will I ever forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5). In spite of our feeling to the contrary God uses painful experiences to mature us. And spiritual maturity is learning to walk by faith regardless of present circumstances.

One of the tragedies of our day is that some Christians are teaching that if a Christian merely has enough faith, they will never suffer, for they say that the death of Christ provides deliverance from all adversity and affliction. Had Joseph believed that if he only had enough faith, he could instantly be delivered from his trouble his faith would have been devastated by the fact that his troubles did not go away. The truth is that God is not obligated to make us wealthy, or well liked or free of trouble. God has promised to be with those who belong to him wherever they find themselves and to bring them to maturity, but he does not promise to pamper us or to jump through our hoops.

Look at somebody and say, “When you get where God is taking you, nobody else is going to be able to take credit for it but God.”

He woke up that morning in the prison. He went to bed that night in a palace. You don’t know how quick your change is going to come. Don’t you know God can bless you in a moment, in the twinkle of an eye?

I. Trust God’s Timing.

Delayed by God’s Design

A delay is not denial, but a time of preparing you for the promise. It is very hard when we cannot “see” God in action. But that doesn’t mean He isn’t acting on our behalf. I am sure there may have been times while he was in prison that Joseph quietly called out to God for strength. It’s okay to do the same.

But, like Joseph, never give up on God because — whether you see evidence of it or not right now — God will never give up on you.

A. God uses His delays to teach us to trust Him more fully.
Trust Him even when life doesn’t make sense. There is a purpose in what you are going through. Perhaps God is trying to correct your course. It could be that He is using these trials to teach you to lean more on Him, trust His timing, and strengthen your faith. You may be going through this because how you respond may influence others in their decisions to follow Christ. It is possible that wading through all of this mess in your life will help you lead someone else through a similar circumstance later on. Like Joseph, we may not see the purpose for our struggles until much later. But also, like him, we should remain faithful and trust that God knows what is happening.

God may seem silent but that doesn’t mean He has walked away. He is actually at work in the background. Like a building going up behind a wall, we can’t always see the progress. But that doesn’t mean nothing is happening. God’s good plan is being carried out and this set of circumstances is needed to prepare you for those plans. As Joseph’s life points out, even tragedy and evil can be part of God’s plan for good. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

B. God uses His delays to teach us to submit more thoroughly to His lordship over our lives.
C. God uses delays to prepare us.
D. God uses delays to test us.
E. God uses delays to train us

A. Be Ready for the Call.

Genesis 41:9-14 (NKJV) 9 Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker, 11 we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. 12 Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his own dream. 13 And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him." 14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

B. Point People to God.
**Genesis 41:15-16 (NKJV)** 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

**C. Speak the Truth.**

**Genesis 41:25-32 (NKJV)** 25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29 Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; 30 but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. 31 So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. 32 And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

**II. Initiate A Plan**

**Genesis 41:33-39 (NKJV)** 33 Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine." 37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.

A. Follow the Leading of the God’s Spirit.

B. Be Discerning: showing insight and understanding:
C. Be Wise: The ability to make sound judgement based on experience.

III. Move into Your Position.

**Genesis 41:40-44 (NKJV)** 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

A. Walk in the Authority God has Given You.
B. Walk in the Righteousness of God.
C. Walk in and Honor.

IV. Enjoy the Rest of Your Life:

**Genesis 41:50-52 (NKJV)** 50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

A. Manasseh, God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.
B. Ephraim, "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Joseph refused to hold on to the pain of the past. He refused to be defined by his past. He absolutely refused to allow the past to dictate or control his present situation or the outcome of future events in his life.

He had arrived at the place God had destined him for. Now he was to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

Conclusion
There was one great constant in his life and we see it shining through in each situation that Joseph encounters. What was this abiding constant in Joseph’s life? It was God. In every situation encountered by Joseph we see him give priority to God in his life. Joseph had hope beyond mere earthly hope. His faith was in God, not in Potiphar, not in the cupbearer, not even in the king of Egypt. When men failed him, he knew that God was still with him, even in prison. The forgetfulness of man should cause us to reflect upon the faithfulness of God. The prophet Isaiah (44:21) reveals that God has promised, “.... you will not be forgotten by Me!” This is what enabled Joseph to endure in the midst of deep sorrow and distress and to never waver from his belief that “the Lord was always with him.”