CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

The Secret's in the Sand

Practical, Private Preparation Before the Public Assignment

There is no secret sauce behind people who accomplish things. There is a season of practical, private preparation, time in the sand, and whether you choose the sand or get forced into it, God uses it, and nothing in your past disqualifies you from the future He has for you.

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Stand-alone message

MAIN TEXT
Galatians 1:11-18

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Sermon Transcript

Well, between my experience in ministry and business, I've watched a dynamic play out that separates driven people. Two people can start in the same place, same capacity, same gifting, same passion, and ten years later, one of them is thriving and the other one is still wondering why they're always behind. The difference between these two people isn't something magical. It's a quiet element that often goes overlooked and ignored. If you would, I want to ask you to join me in your Bibles in Galatians, chapter number one, and I'm going to share something with you this morning that the Lord spoke to me at District Council a few weeks ago. And we went over — for those of y'all that know — our former pastor, [a former pastor], he has been over the state of Alabama's Assemblies of God churches for the last, I would say, I think 17 years or so, and he is stepping into retirement. Amen. And I went over there because as the pastor of his former church, I got free dinner. Amen. But we wanted to go over there and celebrate him and the accomplishment that he's had in the district. But while I was there just meeting some different preachers or seeing people that I know, I saw a young man, and as soon as I saw him, the Lord spoke what I'm going to share with you today. I don't normally do this.

I don't normally preach at people, especially people who aren't in my church, but I am going to preach at somebody today. And y'all are going to be the beneficiaries of it. Amen. Over the week, the Lord's helped me to tailor this to where I think it's going to be beneficial to everybody, but the Lord dropped this in my spirit. And I'm just going to, if it's all right with you, I'm just going to preach out of my spirit this morning. Amen. Hallelujah. All right. Let's do this.

> **GALATIANS 1:11-18** ESV
>
> 11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

Galatians chapter one, starting in verse 11, it says, "For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his Son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me."

I want you to hear this line. “But I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.” I want to share a message with you this morning that I’m calling “The Secret’s in the Sand.” The secret’s in the sand. I want to let you know this — this is going somewhere — but a lot is happening with our church music. A lot is happening with our church music right now that you don’t see. It’s behind the scenes. In the next few weeks, we are going to start having live musicians gradually incorporated into our worship services.

Somebody should have shouted in this Holy Ghost church. I want you to know that’s a breakthrough. That’s an answer to prayer. The way that it’s come about has been incredibly supernatural. And I feel we’ve been praying for a present need, but I will be honest with you: I feel like I’m reaping off of a 25-year-old seed for this. So I’m very excited about this season in our church. And for those of y’all that don’t know, right now when I lead, I can play the keyboard. Okay. Just to prove it to you. So see, I got skills. Okay. So I can play, but we use the computer.

So the band is in the computer. When you hear people helping me sing, we’re using the computer, and the sound guys have control over what’s coming out of the computer. This is very helpful. I’m thankful for technology because we don’t have to kumbaya every week. Amen. We have a full band and I’m excited about that, but this lady tells me everything I can do. There’s a lady in my ear that comes out of the computer and she tells me what I can do. That’s just... how many men, you got a lady telling you what you can do? Amen. So this has been helpful, but we’re having to change that system over because we’re not bringing in all the musicians at once.

So we got to make sure we have some flexibility and we can do some different things. So I’m having to change the whole computer system. And one of the things that I’m changing — and I want to apologize to you if you felt this or experienced it — all of the songs have different musicians playing right now, which doesn’t really affect us on anything except the bass. And so sometimes if we don’t catch it quick enough, we can have one song that’s sounding real good and then we got another song that some of y’all are having to secure your hairpiece. Amen. And so what we’re doing to solve that is I’m going in — for those of you that don’t know, I’m a bass player.

So I’m going in and recording bass on all of the songs so it’s the same sound through the whole morning. Okay. Until we have a bass player playing, it’ll just be me playing bass. And I’m going to tell you right now, I was listening to it this week and it’s not the best player I’ve ever heard, but he knows exactly what I want. Amen. And so as I’ve been recording bass tracks, I just had something happen the other day. I was getting ready and I got up in the morning. I’m just warming up on the bass because I’m bringing them into the office to record. And I’m just warming up in the morning and I realized all the strings are kind of making sounds.

My fingernails were too long. So I got to trim my fingernails before I go. And as soon as I started to trim my fingernails to come play the bass, I was reminded of something that happened when I was 14, 15 years old. So I was in a band named Roswell Crush, if you’ve ever heard of us. I’ll sign your t-shirt before the day is over. Amen. And so I was in a band and we rehearsed at our drummer’s house. His dad was the drummer for the church. And so the son was in the band and I would go over there and all these guys were several years older than me. And so I would go over there and we would rehearse.

And back in the day, if you played any instrument, it was without a doubt that you would have VHS tapes of people showing you how to play stuff. Right? So, just for the bass players that watch this online, amen, I had Beaver Felton tapes. Beaver Felton taught me how to do a lot. And I had a tape with Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Come on,

somebody. Flea was teaching me how to do some bass stuff. But my favorite tapes were from a guy who people my age would tell you, bass players my age would tell you, is the greatest bass player of all time.

Now, some people say it's Jaco Pastorius, and no shade to Jaco. I love Jaco. Come on. I listen to Jaco, try to play some Jaco, love Jaco. But I don't think he's the greatest bass player of all time. The greatest bass player of all time is a man named Victor Wooten. Does anybody know who Victor Wooten is in here? Okay. Ashleigh is the only one allowed to play on my worship team. Amen. Okay, you too. Because if you don't know who Victor Wooten is, you out. Because he's the greatest bass player of all time. Amen. And so we were over at my drummer's house and I had put in a Victor Wooten tape.

And Victor's showing how to do all this stuff. And I'm watching. And while he's doing it — and I want you to keep in mind, Victor Wooten is probably the greatest bass player on the planet right now. He is the greatest bass player potentially of all time. And if he's not, he's in the top 10 objectively. Top in the world. My drummer notices that Victor Wooten's got real short fingernails. And he looks at me and he says, "Hey, if you want to play like that, you got to have short fingernails." Greatest bass player in the world. And in Helena, Alabama, Ryan O'Neal has figured out what the secret is.

Short fingernails. If you have short fingernails, you can be the greatest bass player on the planet. That's all it takes. Go home, trim your fingernails today. And Ryan O'Neal has said that you can be the greatest bass player in the world. Look at your neighbor and say, "I've got a chance." I've got a chance. This is how most people look at success. Most people look at successful people or people who've accomplished things, and they say they are successful because of this thing. It's this piece. There's a little something that they do.

And that's what makes them the greatest. That's what does it. Well, when the Holy Spirit spoke this to me the other day, when the Holy Spirit gave me this word, this is exactly what dropped in my spirit. He said, "The secret isn't in the sauce." The Holy Ghost talks to me good, y'all. He goes, "The secret isn't in the sauce, the secret's in the sand." And like I've taught y'all how to hear from the Lord, I immediately went to the Scripture. I knew exactly what the Holy Spirit was reminding me of in the Scripture. And I immediately went to this verse where Paul goes off into Arabia.

He goes off into Arabia. And I'm going to talk about that in a moment, but I want to just encourage you this morning as we talk about successful driven people, people who actually accomplish things in their life. I want you to know that there's no super special secret. It is often and always a practical private preparation. It is something that happened in a private place that you never saw. What I knew that my drummer didn't know, while he's looking at the size of the guy's fingernails... I'm shocked. Y'all don't think that's hilarious, by the way. Every time I say it, I'm expecting a huge roar of laughter because it is the goofiest thing I've ever heard.

Right? So while he's looking at the size of the guy's fingernails, I'm knowing that Victor Wooten's been playing bass since he was three years old. Anything you do from three years old, you're going to be great at. Amen. Some of y'all been eating since you were three years old. Look how you do it. Amen. Hallelujah. It's practical, private preparation. Too often we look at people who have success in their life and we think that success comes by default, that it's something that's special about this person that they're doing and that's creating success to come, but actually it comes by design.

Now I want to tell you where I see this the most, and hopefully this will help you. There are careers that I see it in, but often I see it in ministers. I see ministers not apply this principle, and so that's why I'm preaching to a preacher this morning. Amen. And the other one is with people who do side hustles. So how many of you want a little extra money on the side? It's called a side hustle. People try to start something. They got their main gig and then they got something on

the side, and when people try to do something on the side, they almost always underestimate what it will take to succeed and they think that there's some secret to get to go.

If you have a side hustle, I want you to go look at your YouTube watch history and I want you to see how much you watch videos about what it takes to do the thing. You're constantly looking for a shortcut, probably, but there is no shortcut. It takes time. The secret's not in the sauce, it's in the sand. So I want to go back to Paul for a moment. The apostle Paul is a very interesting character in the Bible. He was not one of Jesus' disciples, though he was one of Jesus' contemporaries. He was a couple of years younger than Jesus. He ends up writing 13 of the 27 New Testament books.

At word count, that's about 25 percent of the New Testament. So he writes about a quarter of the New Testament. Paul's background is interesting compared to the other disciples of Jesus because you had some very blue collar people or middle management people. So you had people who were fishermen following Jesus and then you had people who were tax collectors following Jesus. You had a very, very certain type of person that was in Jesus' inner circle. Paul was not like any of these men. Paul was a trained religious scholar. Paul trained under a man named Gamaliel, who the Talmud says was the last great Jewish rabbi.

> **ACTS 22:3** ESV
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> 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.

In fact, someone had said once, a rabbi somewhere had said, that the glory of the Torah died with Gamaliel. This is who Paul trained under. Can I tell you why the glory faded, by the way? The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, it's because Jesus Christ, a better covenant, came.

> **2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-11** ESV
>
> 7 Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at
> Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even
> more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed
> it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that
> surpasses it. 11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have
> glory.

Amen. That's why the glory faded on it. So he trained under Gamaliel. The Bible also says that he was a Pharisee of Pharisees.

> **PHILIPPIANS 3:5** ESV
>
> 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the
> law, a Pharisee;

> **ACTS 23:6** ESV
>
> 6 Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council,
> "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I
> am on trial."

We think of Pharisees as uppity religious people, but that's really not true. They were really just a very strict — probably the best modern day correlation we would have would be like a very reformed Christian, just very, all the right answers, knows all the stuff, all the loopholes, all the theology, knows everything.

That was really what a Pharisee was. Paul was an encyclopedia. He was the internet of the Torah in his day. He knew all of this stuff. So when he is called and is saved, he's called by the Lord, he's saved, he becomes a Christian, he comes into the faith with all of this skill set. He comes into the faith with a lot of information, a lot of knowledge. In fact, he came into the faith more qualified than any of the disciples that had traveled with Jesus. So he has all of this. And yet he says in Galatians chapter 1 that when he comes into the faith, when he gives his life to Jesus Christ, that at that moment he realizes, I need to hit pause and I need to pull away into the desert of Arabia.

And he does that for three years. He's qualified, yet he withdraws. By the way, any time that you hear people say this, that God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called — Paul would be the proof of that not being true. There are times that God will speak to someone who is well able and well capable to accomplish something for his purposes. Amen. That means that people who you know, who are competent people, they can get saved too. Amen. Hallelujah. The gospel is for everybody. He'll use you every which way. And so when he goes into Arabia, this is where he goes into the sand.

He spends time in the sand. He doesn't go and get into a performative mode. He doesn't go do the thing. He pulls away, he gets away, and he begins to develop himself. And so this morning, I want to just look at three people who got away into the sand before they ultimately stepped into their destiny. And I want to show you some things that they received. And since we're talking about Paul, let's start with him. If you're ready, say yes. All right. Number one, Paul went into the sand and he developed knowledge without demand. Knowledge without demand. He is in the desert of Arabia and he is learning.

He is taking everything that he knew — a student of Gamaliel, a Pharisee of Pharisees, well-equipped, zealous for the traditions of his father, as he says right here in the text. And he goes away into the desert of Arabia and begins to develop his knowledge. There are theologians who have said this throughout the years, that while Paul is radically saved, he makes a decision to go into Arabia because he wanted to take the Torah scrolls with him. But when he came out of Arabia, he had Romans and Galatians and Ephesians written on his heart. He went into Arabia to internalize the revelation of Jesus Christ.

There is a psychological study that was done and the result of it has a name now. It's called the Dunning-Kruger effect. Has anybody ever heard of this? The Dunning-Kruger effect? The Dunning-Kruger effect basically means that the less you know, the more confident you are. That's why it's easy around the dinner table to solve all of the political problems in the country. Am I preaching too much truth this morning? Am I up in y'all's business or something? Amen. That means say something. And basically, if I'm talking, it means say something. Amen. Hallelujah.

We're a spirit-filled church. In three minutes, if y'all don't start, amen, then we're going to do a jog. We'll do a Jericho march to get the blood flowing. Amen. But the Dunning-Kruger effect is essentially a term that means the less you

know, the more confident you are. And the more you know, the less confident you are. I've found that the smarter theologians get, the more to the middle they gravitate. Because black and white is a color palette of the ignorant. I just feel like getting real now all of a sudden. Amen. I normally wouldn't have said that in church.

Black and white is a color palette of the ignorant. Nothing is as easy as it looks. There's always something to think about and consider. There's always a little bit more to the story than you know. I heard somebody say one time that when we make judgment calls on people's lives, that it's your opinion, but they have to live in it every day. Amen. And so the Dunning-Kruger effect: the less you know, the more confident you are. We had a young man come preach for us one time when we were in Michigan. He had been sent to Southeastern University down in Lakeland, Florida.

Any Southeastern grads in the room? I got one right here. I almost got two. Amen. We're going to get there. Praise the Lord. And Southeastern is an Assemblies of God school, and he was down there studying to be a youth pastor. And so when he was coming back home, the pastor thought, I'll be kind and I'll give him a Wednesday night to preach. He's in Bible school. Let's let him preach. And so he lets him preach. Well, Wednesday night, I would go and I would sing. I was the worship leader of the church. I would sing. And then this night, I had to run to my office for some reason.

So I was in my office for about 10 minutes, and all of a sudden my secretary walks in the office. Well, immediately I'm up. I'm going, what's going on? I'm thinking the soundboard ain't working. The screens have gone off. Something is happening in the room. And so I pop up from behind my desk. What's wrong? And Stacey looks at me and goes, "Oh, it's all right. We're done. You're done. Yeah, we're done." Ten minutes after I stopped singing, the service has ended. I said, "What?" And she goes, "Well, he got finished and he just missed." And I'm thinking, what in the world is going on?

I walked down to the foyer and I see him in there. I go, "What happened?" He goes, "Man, I got to the end of seven minutes. I didn't have any more content." To which I said, "Man, I've given the announcements longer than seven minutes." Amen. And he said, "I didn't have any more content." I said, "Why didn't you just go back through it?" He goes, "I preached it twice." My guy had three and a half minutes of a sermon, and he thought that was going to fill it. We preached for an hour on Wednesdays. He thought he had an hour of content. No, but here's what I want you to hear.

You can get on stage. You can get on the platform. You can launch the business today. You can take those steps, but if you don't have a well in you that you can draw from, you're not going to be able to do the thing that it calls for. And so while Paul goes into the desert, he doesn't really go into the desert to be in the desert. It's not about isolation. It's not about punishment. It's not about withdrawal. He went into the desert so he could dig a well. Amen. He went in there so he could dig a well and he could have something he could draw from and he could preach.

Amen. And so that way he wasn't preaching three and a half minute sermons when he went into Corinth. Amen. He could preach a little while longer. Hallelujah. That's Paul. Number two, number two, Paul got development without knowledge. I'm sorry. He developed knowledge without demand. Some people do get development without knowledge. Amen. Number two, Joshua went into the sand. Joshua, who served under Moses, Joshua, son of Nun, and he served another leader.

> **EXODUS 33:11** ESV
>
> 11 Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

He served another leader. I'm going to tell you, while there's no secret sauce, this is probably the closest thing to a cheat code you can get.

This will get you through the game faster, because when you serve another leader like Joshua did, who served under Moses in the wilderness for 40 years, when you serve under another leader, it accomplishes a handful of things. Number one, it gives you exposure to behind the scenes. When you serve another leader, you start to get to see the stuff you don't know that you don't know. Amen. Y'all are quiet this morning. Miss Jackie, I want to double the caffeine we're putting in the coffee for the rest of the summer. And so you get to see the behind the scenes.

You get exposure to the behind the scenes. It's also a form of sowing. Galatians chapter six says that God is not mocked.

> **GALATIANS 6:7** ESV
>
> 7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

Whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. When you serve another man or you serve another leader, you have an opportunity to sow into the future. The way that you serve them is the way that you will be served in the future. It gives you an opportunity to sow. It also helps you to develop connections. When you serve another man or serve another leader and you get in there and you get into an environment of the arena that you want to move into — let's say you want to build houses and you're working for a general contractor and helping them out.

Well, it helps when you can know a couple drywall guys you can call on and a carpet man you can holler at and a plumber, and you're making connections. But the biggest asset that it gives you is you learn how to treat people on your team. You learn how to treat people on your team. Listen to this. Your biggest investment — I'm sorry, your investment in the people who work for you will produce your biggest success. Your investment in the people who work for you will produce your biggest success. Unfortunately, when people launch to do things too quickly and they've never served another leader, they have a gap in their education.

And I want you to know I've been in ministry for a long time and I'm not trying to put condemnation on anybody. But I'm the pastor and I can say whatever I want now. Amen. The chains have fallen off. I've served another man. Hallelujah. There are no worse preachers you can work for, no worse preachers you can work with, than guys who have never worked for another pastor. They have the most unreal expectations. There's a line — and I'm quoting a lot of Ocean's 11 quotes here in my sermons lately — but in Ocean's 13, Willie Bank, the Al Pacino character, he looks at a contractor and he goes, "I want the baby without the labor pains."

That is senior pastors who have never worked for another pastor. I want the baby without... They don't understand why you can't do anything. Well, because you've never been put under the pressure of demand of another man. And I also think that's true of people who run their own businesses and have never taken time to serve under another person. There is something about having a visceral understanding of what it's like to serve under someone that helps you to take care of those who serve under you. So when Joshua went into the sand, he went away to serve another leader.

And ultimately Joshua would be the one who led all of Israel out of the wilderness and into the promised land, because he served under another man.

> **JOSHUA 1:1-2** ESV
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> 1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant,
> 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.

He stepped into his destiny. Can I get an amen in the house? Amen. Number three, number three — I'm going to get done here in a minute. As [a former pastor] would say, be confident. I'm halfway through. Amen. Joseph, Joseph, the son of Jacob, the son of Israel, Joseph went into the sand as well. Joseph gained experience without benefits. Experience without benefits. Joseph dreamed of being a high ranking government official.

> **GENESIS 37:5-8** ESV
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> 5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: 7 Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

We know as much because Genesis chapter 37 verse five says, "Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more." Once, some of the best advice I got, by the way, for going into the sand: I felt called to the ministry when I was very young and I had an older — well, he was older to me, he was only like 21 — but an older, more seasoned brother in the faith. Amen. He looked at me and he goes, "Don't tell anybody." He said, "Don't tell people, just don't tell anyone you feel called to the ministry.

Just keep it to yourself. Keep it between you and the Lord, because people will hate you for your dream." Verse six: "He said to them, 'Hear this dream that I've dreamed. Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf rose and stood upright, and behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.' His brothers said to him, 'Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to rule over us?' So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words." You do have a choice. They can hate you for your dreams. Don't let them hate you for your words.

Amen. And so he had a dream of being a ruler, and ultimately his dream of being a high ranking government official, it came to pass. Joseph eventually realized his dream and he ruled over all of Egypt.

> **GENESIS 41:41** ESV
>
> 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

How about that? He's a kid. He had a dream and it came true, but before it came true, he had to go find the secret in the sand. Amen. And so he had an opportunity to serve a handful of leaders along the way and gain certain types of experience along the way that helped him to be dramatically successful. He had the opportunity to serve in a managerial role with his father.

He looked over his brothers. If you want to know where the contention started with him and his brothers, it started because he brought a bad report to his dad one time about the work they were doing.

> **GENESIS 37:2** ESV
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> 2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

Middle managers, right? Amen. And so he brought a bad report, and that's when his brothers started having trouble with him. But he served under his dad. You know what that gave him an opportunity to do? It gave him experience without consequences. He just got to try some stuff on, try some things, feel some things. He didn't have to worry about what was going to happen because his dad wasn't going to get on to him.

Amen. He was going to be able to do whatever he wanted to do, whatever he needed to do. So he worked with his dad. Then he got sold into slavery. I'm giving you the highlights here if you're not familiar with the biblical story, but he got sold into slavery and he goes really into the sand, and he goes out to serve a man named Potiphar.

> **GENESIS 39:1-6** ESV
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> 1 Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an
> Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and
> he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the Lord was
> with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and
> attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that
> he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake;
> the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and
> because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and
> appearance.

Potiphar was a wealthy man, and when he served Potiphar, what Joseph got to experience is he experienced what it was like to be able to do the job with resource, but he had no latitude. He had no control. He was a slave. Ultimately, he had to do whatever Potiphar wanted him to do.

Potiphar wanted his house to run a certain way, and it was Joseph's job to make sure that that happened. Joseph grew under Potiphar, being Potiphar's slave. He had, as slavery goes, a pretty good spot. He was the number two to Potiphar, but he had no control. He had no latitude, but he had unlimited resource because Potiphar was rich. So he had enough money to get the job done. And then something happens, I'm going to talk to you about in a minute, and he ends up having to leave Potiphar's house and he's put into a prison. And when he goes to prison, the prison guards realize that he's good at stuff and they go, "Hey, we're going to let him just run this whole thing."

And because — I'll be honest with you, I don't think they really cared. Amen. "And so out here getting paid minimum wage to deal with all these criminals, I don't want to do this. I'm going to let this guy run this thing." And they let him run the prison. They didn't pay — the Bible says they didn't pay any attention to him.

> **GENESIS 39:21-23 ESV**
>
> 21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

You know what that means? That means he had unlimited latitude. Here's the problem though. It's a prison. He had no resource. He had no resource. So now he's learning how to do the job with unlimited control, but no resource. Come on, somebody.

I feel like this is better than y'all are letting on. So he's got three experiences now, and he's learned how to do it with no consequence. He got to try some things out, feel how it feels. His dad literally gave him a coat of many colors.

> **GENESIS 37:3 ESV**
>
> 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.

He got to put the clothes on and give it a shot. And then he got over here and he's able to do it with unlimited resource. So if y'all think you need more money, money ain't the only thing that you need, because he had no control. He had all the money, but he had no control. But then he got over here. And if you think all you need is the control, baby, stuff costs.

Amen. And so he's over here. He has the experience now that he can do anything that he wants, so long as it's free. We'll go anywhere we want, so long as it doesn't cost anything. Amen. Some of y'all are planning vacations for the summer like that right now. Amen. And so he has this experience, but these different experiences, they gave him no benefit other than the experience. I want you to hear me. And I don't want to be one of these preachers that gripes on this generation, but I'm going to tell you, we've gotten into a place where nobody values just getting into it anymore.

We live in a world where, you know, at 18 years old to go to work, you need six figures or the fringe benefit of being able to wear your AirPods all day. And so nobody is saying today, I just need to experience some things. I had this land on me because of a preacher. I'll just tell y'all the situation. I'm watching a young man who genuinely has the call of God on his life. And he has decided that he would rather be a preacher today and have no future. This guy is destined to lead 13 people at his current pace.

This guy's going to be out in oblivion. He has the touch of God on him. He could do great things, but he's refusing the preparation period and he's running from it. He wants to be the man of God. Can I tell you what nobody needs? And I wouldn't have liked hearing this when I was that age, because God called me young. I was in the ministry young. Thank God I was in subordinate roles, but nobody needs a 19 year old man of God to roll up in the church and start calling the shots. Nobody needs that. Nobody. You got to grow and develop and learn and probably deal with your stuff.

Amen. And you got to deal with — I mean, you got to grow, and he's avoiding all of that because now we often do not value the time of preparation. And I want to tell you, for him it is the difference between — I think he's 20 years old now. He could hit the brakes at 20 and by 25 he could be a formidable force. Like he could be unstoppable. He could walk in a room and be the most anointed 25 year old in the room, but he doesn't want to stop and go through the process. He

doesn't want to dig a well, doesn't want to serve another man, doesn't want the experience without the accolades or without the adoration, if you will.

Some of you are like that in areas of your life. You want to do the thing, but you don't want to take the time. You don't want to take the time. You don't want to go into the sand. There's something about going into the sand. There's something about spending time in the sand. There's something about not looking for the secret, not looking for the shortcut, not looking for the quick way, not to get a form of the thing, but to actually wait and prepare yourself so you can take on the thing. I wasn't going to share this, but 10 years — well, about 12 years ago now — we tried to go pastor.

We tried to go pastor, and the fact that we didn't is really unreal, because we had so much favor to go pastor a church. And I want to tell you, 12 years ago I could have done it. I was 28 years old. I had more experience than most of my peers. I'd already been in ministry for a long time. I had been in churches big and small. We had grown them, turned them around. I knew a lot of stuff and I had the word in me. There's something about being in the sand though. It's weird talking about myself like this, but I spend the most time with me.

So my illustrations are here. Amen. When I think about me now versus me 12 years ago, my well is so deep. I'm not downloading stuff from the internet to preach. I'm not seeing what other guys are doing. So I have a word when I get up here. If I don't know what to preach, I just kind of say, "Well, Lord, give me some intuition here." And then something will come out and I'll just have it. It just hit me. The Lord gave me this word at District Council. And then I got the other two messages, the release to preach them.

One I might have already written, but I got the release to preach it. And so, you know, there's a deep well there now. That takes time in the sand. That takes time in the sand. You got to get in the sand. You can't keep looking for the secret. Some of y'all want to start a business or you want to do a second career, or what some people call the second mountain in your life. And it's tough when you've been the supervisor in one company, and then you go for your second mountain in life. You go for the second thing that you want to do.

It's tough to go back down to the bottom, but I'm telling you, it's not the bottom, honey. It's the sand. You got to get back in the sand so you can relaunch into the next thing, but you don't get no shortcuts to a totally different world. You got to take a moment. You got to pull away, go into the desert of Arabia, maybe serve another leader. You got to get some experience where you don't get the benefit. And hey, guess what? Once you've done that for maybe just a couple of years, God will give you favor, because you'll have something to work with on the inside of you.

Amen. Now I mentioned just a moment ago that we tried to pastor 12 years ago, and it was just totally unsuccessful. Now, let me tell you, the Lord blessed us greatly. Amen. My first book that I wrote was called Money from the Master's Hand. That book is only possible because I didn't go pastor 12 years ago. Come on, somebody. Amen. I feel like running, even if you don't. And so there are benefits to that. And I look back over the course of my life and I do say that anytime that I was forced back into the sand, that it has been for my good.

It has been for my benefit. I am grateful for it. Now I want to talk to you just for a second — I'm going to let you go — about the force that forces you into the sand. So you get a choice. You can either go into the sand or you're going to get forced into the sand, but you're going to the sand. I'd rather it be my own decision, so I don't have to get over the hurt before I get the benefits of it. Amen. When Joseph had gone to Potiphar's house, he really had a great situation. I have a feeling that he probably would have been okay hanging with Potiphar forever.

There was resource, there was money, the food was good, the living conditions were good. Like I said, as slavery goes, it was a win-win situation for him. He had authority over people. Maybe he couldn't make the decisions, but he did have resource. Things were good. Food was good. It was good. Meals were catered. Come on, somebody. And Joseph caught the eye — because he's a man of excellence, he had a good-looking young physique, amen — caught the eye of Potiphar's wife.

> **GENESIS 39:7-20** ESV
>
> 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his
> master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put
> everything that he has in my charge. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from
> me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" 10 And as
> she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 But one day, when
> he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, 12 she caught him
> by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. 13 And
> as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, 14 she called to the men
> of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie
> with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. 15 And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left
> his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house." 16 Then she laid up his garment by her until his master
> came home, 17 and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us,
> came in to me to laugh at me. 18 But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and
> fled out of the house." 19 As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your
> servant treated me," his anger was kindled. 20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place
> where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.

And Potiphar's wife tried to put the moves on him, and Joseph did the right thing. Joseph said no.

And doing the right thing cost him, because his wife — Potiphar's wife — was offended by his resistance, and so made up a story and said he did it anyway, and told it worse than it would have been. And ultimately Potiphar — there was a great movie, Ben Kingsley was Potiphar in it, but it's a movie about Joseph, it came out years and years ago. In the movie, it portrays Potiphar as not really believing what his wife said, but he had to make a decision. Do I want peace in my house, or do I want to keep this slave kid? I want peace in my house. So ultimately, he sends Joseph to prison.

Joseph was doing the right things, he had success, he had God's favor on his life, he was producing, he was performing well, and yet there was a force that came in called Potiphar's wife that caused him to have to be removed from that situation. In your life, if you want to accomplish things, if you want to do things, if you want to do something great in your life, if you want to take your life — maybe it's not something great on the world scale, maybe it's just taking your life to the next level. Some of y'all, if you play golf, you don't need to be Arnold Palmer or Tiger Woods, you just need to go out there and, like, you know, get a little better.

Amen. I'm just talking about taking your life to the next level. And when you try to do that, there's going to be forces that come in, and Potiphar's wife represents that force. It's the external force that causes failure. It's the external force that causes failure. It is unexplainable, it comes out of nowhere, it usually will have nothing to do with you. When we went to try to pastor 12 years ago — I really wasn't going to talk about this, this is a good illustration — when we went to

try to pastor 12 years ago, every church wanted us. We were at like the finish line with every church, and then something would come out of nowhere.

Something would pop up, and all of a sudden we would no longer be an eligible candidate. And it was the strangest thing, because it didn't make any sense. Because some of the stuff, some of it was so dumb it didn't make sense. And it would always be a last minute board member who came in and got on the search committee, who had — these are the kind of things that happen — who'd been on vacation or something, but then he came in and he's behind the eight ball on the whole conversation and starts asking bizarre questions. That kind of stuff happened. I had a lady on a search committee one time, pretty positive she was demon possessed.

I mean, I'm serious. I'm serious. I think it was a stronghold in the church. And out of nowhere, we started having people call and give recommendations about us that did not know us. By the way, I've gotten jobs where that's happened. I've had other people call churches who didn't even know me and give a bad reference for me, to pastors who had already hired me. I'd get called going, "Hey, do you know this guy? I've seen him online." Don't know the guy. Weird stuff like that. But what that is, is that it's a force that comes in and it derails the situation.

This is what can happen. And I think it's understandable for it to happen for a season, but this is what can happen. You can have an external force come in and disrupt the thing that you're called to do, and then all of a sudden bitterness creeps in, and rather than moving forward, you anchor down and you're constantly replaying that over and over. And there's a season of that, folks, that's understandable. Like, if something blows up in your face and you don't take a week being real upset about it, you know, you don't have a central nervous system. That's a human response, right?

But at some point, you have to ask yourself, am I going to live here, or am I going to live moving my life forward? And if you will just in those moments say, "I'm going to trust the Lord in this, and we're going to see how it pans out." Let me just give you a little hindsight experience. This is easier for me to say about the stuff I've already been through than maybe it is for you to recognize about the stuff you are or are about to go through, and that is this. Every time Potiphar's wife has come in and pulled me out of what I thought was my assignment, what I thought was God's best for me — because you're so smart to know what God's best is for your life.

Every time I've thought that I knew this is God's will for my life, and sometimes still even confident that it was, and the Lord was teaching me something in the process — every time that's happened, in hindsight, if you walk the timeline through, it has always worked out for my benefit. There has always been something that came out of that moment that ultimately shifted our life to the next level. There are things that we walk in today that we could not walk in if we had not been through the certain experiences that we've been through with Potiphar's wife.

When the job doesn't go through, when the relationship doesn't work out, when the doctor report isn't what you thought it was going to be, when it turns out that you aren't getting the refund from the IRS that you thought you were getting — when these things happen, I'm telling you folks, if you'll just trust the Lord through the process, if you'll not reject and not resent your time in the sand, make the most of it, take that moment, grow yourself, develop yourself, go through the process, I'm telling you, God will do a great work in your life. And I just want to say this prophetically over the room, and I'm going to close.

Some of you are in here, and whether it be the result of the environment that you've been raised around, whether it be the result of the people who you've associated with, whether it be because of experiences that you've had or even mistakes that you've made, some of you are wondering, can my life actually go to the next level, or is this just my lot in life? And I want you to know today, I believe this is a prophetic word for somebody, if not several people in the room,

that there is nothing that you have done, nothing that you have had happen to you, and no one that you've been associated with that will disqualify you for the future that God has for you, and for next level living that is available to you through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

It's time to drop a marker in the ground and to say, this is far enough, now my life is going to change, and I'm going to do what it takes to go where I need to go. Maybe it's time for you to make a decision this morning. With every head bowed, every hand raised all across this room, maybe it's time for you this morning to say, "I'm committing to go back to the sand. I'm committing to go back to the place where I can develop myself and move to next level living that is promised in the cross." John chapter 10, verse 10, saying that the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus Christ has come that you might have life and life to the full, life more abundantly.

> **JOHN 10:10** ESV
>
> 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Romans chapter 5, saying that you have received the free gift of righteousness, and now you can reign in life.

> **ROMANS 5:17** ESV
>
> 17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

You received an abundance of grace, you can reign in life. Romans chapter 8, saying that if he did not withhold his Son, how will he not also with him freely give us all things.

> **ROMANS 8:32** ESV
>
> 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Romans saying that you are more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus.

> **ROMANS 8:37** ESV
>
> 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

You're not just a conqueror, not just an overcomer, you are more than a conqueror, in Jesus' name. And all you need is you need to take the word and mix it with a little time in the sand, and I believe today in Jesus' name your life is going to go to a whole nother level.

If you received that today, give the Lord a hand clap of praise. Amen.

02

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This is a stand-alone message with a prophetic edge. Pastor Jason received the core of it at a District Council gathering, as a word for one young preacher, and then shaped it for the whole church. Say that up front: you are going to "preach at somebody," and everyone in the room gets to benefit.

The structure is simple. Three men went into the sand, and each one came out with something different: Paul developed knowledge without demand, Joshua served another leader, Joseph gained experience without benefits. Then turn to the force that pushes people into the sand when they will not go on their own, Potiphar's wife, and close with a prophetic word that nothing disqualifies a person from the future God has for them.

Speak to two groups by name: ministers (especially young ones who want the platform before the preparation) and people with side hustles or second careers. Keep the humor light and the landing serious.

Introduction

Between ministry and business, you watch a dynamic play out that separates driven people. Two people can start in the same place, with the same capacity, the same gifting and the same passion, and ten years later one is thriving while the other is still wondering why they are always behind. The difference is not magic. It is a quiet element that is often overlooked.

The Lord spoke this message at a District Council gathering, where the church had gone to celebrate the retirement of one of its previous pastors from district leadership. While there, seeing a young preacher across the room, the word came. "I don't normally preach at people, but I am going to preach at somebody today, and you are going to be the beneficiaries."

> GALATIANS 1:11-18 ESV
>
> 11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did
> not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you
> have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.
> 14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I
> for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by
> his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not
> immediately consult with anyone; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I
> went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to
> visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

Hear this line: “but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus” (Galatians 1:17). Only after that does Paul go up to Jerusalem.

Today’s message: **The Secret’s in the Sand.**

Illustration: short fingernails. The church is moving toward live musicians, and in the meantime the bass parts are being recorded so every song sounds the same. While warming up to record, the strings were buzzing: fingernails too long. Trimming them brought back a memory from age 14 or 15, rehearsing with a teenage band at the drummer’s house. Every player back then had VHS lessons, and the favorite was Victor Wooten, arguably the greatest bass player of all time. Watching the tape, the drummer noticed Victor’s short fingernails and announced, “If you want to play like that, you got to have short fingernails.”

Have the church look at a neighbor and say, “I’ve got a chance.”

That is how most people look at success. They look at someone who has accomplished something and decide it is because of one little thing they do.

When the Holy Spirit gave this word, it came in one line: **”The secret isn’t in the sauce. The secret’s in the sand.”**

- There is no super special secret. It is **practical, private preparation**, something that happened in a private place you never saw.
- What the drummer missed: Victor Wooten has been playing bass since he was a small child. Anything you do from childhood, you are going to be great at.
- Too often we think success comes by **default**, something special about a person. Really, it comes by **design**.

WHERE THIS SHOWS UP MOST

- **Ministers.** Many do not apply this principle, which is why this message is preached “to a preacher.”
- **Side hustles.** People with a main gig and something on the side almost always underestimate what it will take to succeed. Look at your YouTube watch history: how many videos are you watching about the secret to doing the thing? There is no shortcut. It takes time. The secret’s not in the sauce; it’s in the sand.

PAUL’S RÉSUMÉ

Paul was not one of the twelve disciples, but he wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament, roughly a quarter of the New Testament by word count. Many in Jesus’ inner circle were fishermen and tax collectors. Paul was a trained religious scholar.

- He was “educated at the feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3), one of the most honored teachers in Jewish history. Jewish tradition remembered him this way: “When Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, the glory of the Torah ceased” (Mishnah, Sotah 9:15).
- Why did that glory fade? “Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it” (2 Corinthians 3:10). A better covenant came in Jesus Christ.

- He was, in his own words, “a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6), and “as to the law, a Pharisee” (Philippians 3:5). Pharisees were not simply uppity religious people. They were strict, trained experts in logic, argument, interpretation and debate. Paul was an encyclopedia, the internet of the Torah in his day.

Paul came into the faith more qualified than any of the disciples who had traveled with Jesus. And yet he hit pause and withdrew into Arabia. Galatians 1 puts about three years between his conversion and his first visit to Jerusalem.

He was qualified, and he still withdrew. People say, “God doesn’t call the qualified, He qualifies the called.” Paul shows that God also calls people who are well able and well capable. Competent people can get saved too. The gospel is for everybody.

Today, look at three people who went into the sand before they stepped into their destiny, and what each one received there.

1. Paul Went into the Sand: Knowledge Without Demand

In Arabia, Paul was not performing. He was learning. He took everything he knew as a student of Gamaliel and a Pharisee, and he let the revelation of Jesus Christ sink in. It has been said that Paul went into Arabia with the Torah scrolls and came out with Romans, Galatians and Ephesians written on his heart. He went into the sand to internalize the revelation.

The Dunning-Kruger effect. Psychologists have a name for a pattern: people with the least knowledge of a subject tend to be the most confident about it. That is why it is easy to solve every political problem in the country around the dinner table. The more you know, the more you realize there is to know. Nothing is as easy as it looks; there is always more to the story. When we make judgment calls about other people’s lives, it is our opinion, but they have to live in it every day.

Illustration: the seven-minute sermon. At a church in Michigan, a young Bible college student came home and was given a Wednesday night to preach. After leading worship, Pastor Jason stepped out to his office. About ten minutes later the secretary walked in: “We’re done.” In the foyer, the young man explained, “I got to the end of seven minutes. I didn’t have any more content.” Why not go back through it? “I preached it twice.” He had three and a half minutes of sermon for a service that normally ran an hour.

You can get on stage. You can get on the platform. You can launch the business today. But **if you don’t have a well in you that you can draw from, you won’t be able to do what the moment calls for.**

Paul did not go into the desert to be in the desert. It was not isolation, punishment or withdrawal. **He went into the desert to dig a well,** so he would have something to draw from when he got to Corinth.

2. Joshua Went into the Sand: He Served Another Leader

Joshua the son of Nun served under Moses in the wilderness for forty years. “His assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent” (Exodus 33:11). There is no secret sauce, but this is the closest thing

to a cheat code you can get.

Serving another leader accomplishes several things:

- **Exposure to the behind the scenes.** You start to see what you don't know that you don't know.
- **A form of sowing.** "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). The way you serve a leader is the way you will be served in the future.
- **Connections.** If you want to build houses, work for a general contractor. You will meet the drywall guys, the carpet man and the plumber you will call later.
- **The biggest asset: you learn how to treat people on your team.**

Your investment in the people who work for you will produce your biggest success.

When people launch too quickly without ever serving another leader, they have a gap in their education. Senior pastors who have never worked for another pastor often carry unrealistic expectations of their staff. They want "the baby without the labor pains." The same is true of business owners who never served under anyone. A visceral understanding of what it is like not to be the one in charge sharpens your leadership and helps you care for those who serve under you.

Joshua served another man, and Joshua was the one who led Israel into the promised land (Joshua 1:1-2). He stepped into his destiny.

3. Joseph Went into the Sand: Experience Without Benefits

Joseph dreamed of ruling.

> GENESIS 37:5-8 ESV
>
> 5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. 6 He said to them,
> "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: 7 Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf
> arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His
> brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him
> even more for his dreams and for his words.

Illustration: "Don't tell anybody." Some of the best advice for the sand came from an older brother in the faith (he was about 21) when Pastor Jason first felt called to ministry as a teenager: "Don't tell anyone you feel called. Keep it between you and the Lord, because people will hate you for your dream."

They may hate you for your dreams. Don't let them hate you for your words.

Joseph's dream did come true: "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt" (Genesis 41:41). But before it came true, he had to find the secret in the sand. He served under three very different situations, and each gave him experience without the benefits.

- **Under his father: experience without consequences.** Joseph oversaw his brothers' work, and "Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father" (Genesis 37:2). That is where the trouble started. But with his father he could try things on without fear. His father even "made him a robe of many colors" (Genesis 37:3). He got to put the clothes on and give it a shot.
- **Under Potiphar: resource without control.** Sold into slavery, Joseph became the number two in a wealthy man's house. Potiphar "left all that he had in Joseph's charge" (Genesis 39:6). He had all the money he needed, but no latitude. If you think all you need is more money, money is not the only thing you need.
- **In the prison: control without resource.** "The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him" (Genesis 39:23). Unlimited latitude, but it was a prison. If you think all you need is control, stuff costs.

Before Joseph stepped into his greatest opportunity, he spent years gaining experience that was not his dream come true, and he learned how to execute from every angle.

NOBODY WANTS THE SAND ANYMORE

Without griping on a generation: we have come to a place where very few people value simply getting the experience. Many expect six figures, or at least the perk of wearing their AirPods all day, before they will start.

Illustration: the young preacher. This whole message landed because of a young man, about 20, with a genuine call of God on his life, who would rather be a preacher today than be prepared for tomorrow. Nobody needs a 19-year-old man of God to roll up in the church and start calling the shots. You have to grow, develop, learn and deal with your stuff. If he would hit the brakes at 20, by 25 he could be a formidable force, the most anointed 25-year-old in the room. But he does not want to dig a well, serve another man, or gain experience without the accolades.

Some of us are like that in areas of our lives. We want to do the thing, but we do not want to take the time.

Illustration: twelve years ago. About twelve years ago, Pastor Jason and Ashleigh tried to go pastor. At 28 he had more experience than most of his peers, had served in churches big and small, and had the Word in him. It did not happen. Today the well is deep: no downloading sermons from the internet or copying other preachers. That takes time in the sand.

Second careers. Some of you are going after a second career, the "second mountain." It is tough to go from supervisor back to the bottom. **It's not the bottom. It's the sand.** Pull away, serve another leader, get experience without the benefit, and after a couple of years God will give you favor, because you will have something to work with on the inside.

That failed season of trying to pastor is the reason Pastor Jason's first book, *Money from the Master's Hand*, exists. Every time he was forced back into the sand, it was for his good.

4. Potiphar's Wife: Choose the Sand or Get Forced into It

You have a choice. You can go into the sand, or you will get forced into the sand, but you are going to the sand. It is better to make it your own decision, so you do not have to get over the hurt before you get the benefits.

Joseph had a great situation in Potiphar's house. As slavery goes, it was a win-win: authority, resource, good food. He might have been content to stay forever. Then Potiphar's wife pursued him, and Joseph did the right thing. He said no. Doing the right thing cost him. Offended, she made up a story, and Potiphar chose peace in his house over keeping a slave, and Joseph went to prison (Genesis 39:7-20).

Potiphar's wife represents the external force that causes failure. It is unexplainable, it comes out of nowhere, and it usually has nothing to do with you. Joseph was doing the right things, had success and God's favor, and still got removed.

Illustration: the search committees. When Pastor Jason and Ashleigh tried to pastor twelve years ago, they got to the finish line with church after church, and then something would come out of nowhere: a last-minute board member asking bizarre questions, strangers calling in bad references for someone they did not know. It is a force that comes in and derails the situation.

When that happens, bitterness can creep in. Instead of moving forward, you anchor down and replay it over and over. A season of being upset is human. But at some point you have to ask, "Am I going to live here, or am I going to move my life forward?" Say, "I'm going to trust the Lord in this."

From hindsight: every time Potiphar's wife has pulled you out of what you were sure was your assignment, if you walk the timeline through, it has worked out for your benefit. There are things we walk in today that we could not walk in without those experiences.

When the job doesn't go through, the relationship doesn't work out, the doctor's report isn't what you hoped, or the tax refund isn't what you expected: trust the Lord through the process. Do not reject or resent your time in the sand. Make the most of it, grow and develop yourself, and God will do a great work in your life.

Conclusion

Close prophetically. Some here are wondering, because of how they were raised, who they have been around, what has happened to them, or mistakes they have made, "Can my life actually go to the next level, or is this just my lot in life?"

There is nothing that you have done, nothing that has happened to you, and no one you have been associated with that will disqualify you from the future God has for you, and from the next-level living available to you through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

It is time to drop a marker in the ground and say, "This is far enough. My life is going to change, and I'm going to do what it takes."

With heads bowed, invite people to say, “I’m committing to go back to the sand, to the place where I can develop myself and move into the life promised at the cross.”

- “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).
- Those “who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17).
- “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).
- “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).

All you need is to take the Word and mix it with a little time in the sand. Close with praise for what God is about to do.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

GALATIANS 1:11-18	11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.
GENESIS 37:5-8	5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: 7 Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:7–11	7 Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.
GALATIANS 6:7	7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.
JOHN 10:10	10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.
ROMANS 5:17	17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.
ROMANS 8:32	32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
ROMANS 8:37	37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

ACTS 22:3	3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.
PHILIPPIANS 3:5	5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;
ACTS 23:6	6 Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial."

EXODUS 33:11	11 Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.
JOSHUA 1:1-2	1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.
GENESIS 41:41	41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."
GENESIS 37:2	2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.
GENESIS 39:1-6	1 Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.
GENESIS 39:21-23	21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.
GENESIS 37:3	3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.

GENESIS 39:7-20

7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me."
8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has
no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my
charge. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from
me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and
sin against God?" 10 And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to
her, to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 But one day, when he went into the house to
do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, 12 she caught
him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled
and got out of the house. 13 And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her
hand and had fled out of the house, 14 she called to the men of her household and
said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to
me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. 15 And as soon as he heard that I
lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out
of the house." 16 Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home,
17 and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have
brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. 18 But as soon as I lifted up my voice
and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house." 19 As soon as his
master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant
treated me," his anger was kindled. 20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into
the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in
prison.

Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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