



# PRACTICING THE PRESENSE OF GOD

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





# Practicing the Presence of God

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# Practicing the Presence of God

**SERMON REFERENCE:** Genesis 37

**LWF SERMON NUMBER:** #2247

There are many people who are existing, but they are not living. The secret to an abundant life is practicing the presence of God.

Perhaps the most Christ-like character in the Old Testament was Joseph. No matter what happened to him, Joseph practiced the presence of God. The Bible says, "...the Lord was with him." (Genesis 39)

There are four principles in Genesis 37 that reveal how to prosper like Joseph.

Joseph expressed his God-given difference. Joseph was different, distinct by his nobility. His brothers hated him because he would not conform. When God saved us, God made us different; we are somebody in his sight. Romans 12:2 says, "Be not conformed to this world." The world wants to squeeze us into its mold. When we refuse to conform, it resents our nobility in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joseph explored his God-given dreams. When Joseph was just a teenager, God put a dream into his heart. God has not promised to fulfill our fantasies; rather, He has plans for us and wants us to dream God-given dreams. How can we know what we are supposed to hope for?

We must present ourselves to Him and ask Him for the mind of Christ. Adrian Rogers says, "You don't find the will of God; God's will finds you."

Joseph endured his God-given difficulties. Joseph did not have an easy life. He was sold as a slave by his brothers. He's falsely accused and thrown in prison. However, in Genesis 50:20, when confronted by his brothers, Joseph said: "As for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good..." God allows us to have difficulties in life; He does not cause these things, but wherever man rules, God overrules.

Joseph enlisted his God-given dynamic. When the Bible says that, "God was with him," it means that God was for him, working on his behalf. God was with him in times of persecution, of responsibility, of temptation, of slander and suffering. God was with him.

How humbling it is to know God is with us, too!

## LIFE APPLICATION

Would you like to prosper as Joseph prospered? Prosperity is the progressive realization of the will of God for your life. Express your God-given difference, explore your God-given dreams, endure your God-given difficulties and enlist your God-given dynamic.



# Practicing the Presence of God

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- 1) INTRODUCTION
  - a) The greatest tragedy of all would be to come to your deathbed, being ready to die, and to discover that you've never lived.
  - b) John 10:10
  - c) Many people are enduring and existing, but they are not living.
  - d) There are some people who seem to be born with so little, and yet, they accomplish so much; there are others who are born with so much, and yet, they accomplish so little.
    - i) The difference, the secret, is the presence of God.
  - e) The Old Testament shares with us the life of a young man named Joseph who learned how to practice the presence of God.
    - i) There is a continual refrain throughout the life of Joseph that states, "And God was with him."
  - f) 25% of the book of Genesis is about Joseph.
    - i) This is an amazing fact given that the creation of the universe is summed up in only five words: "He made the stars also."
      - (1) Genesis 1:16
  - g) Perhaps the most Christ-like character in the Old Testament is Joseph.
  - h) Joseph came from a dysfunctional family.
    - i) His father, Jacob, was a con artist by nature.
    - ii) Joseph's mother, Rachel, died when he was in his mid-teens.
    - iii) He lived in a swarm of wicked, ungodly brothers.
  - i) Joseph was his father's favorite son.
    - i) Joseph's mother, Rachel, who was Jacob's favorite wife.
    - ii) Jacob loved Joseph so much that he gave Joseph a coat of many colors.
    - iii) Joseph had some dreams, in which God told him that one day all of the world's resources would be at his disposal, and all of the world's rulers would bow at his feet.
      - (1) Genesis 37:5-11
      - (2) Joseph was seventeen years old at this time.
      - (3) Joseph shares these dreams with his brothers.
        - (a) His brothers envy him because of his coat of many colors and his distinctiveness.
        - (b) The brothers are jealous of Joseph because of their father's love for him.
        - (c) The brothers resent Joseph because of his dreams and visions.
  - j) Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him, and they stripped him of his coat and threw him into a pit to die.
    - i) But a caravan heading to Egypt passed by, so the brothers sold Joseph to them for the price of a slave.
  - k) When he gets to Egypt, Joseph is put on the slave block and sold to Potiphar, the chief of



Pharaoh's guard.

- i) Potiphar was the one who protected Pharaoh.
  - ii) Potiphar made Joseph a household slave, but Joseph was of such character and ingenuity that he began to rise up in the ranks.
  - iii) Soon, Joseph was running Potiphar's household for him.
  - l) Potiphar's wife tried to entice Joseph into an adulterous affair, which Joseph refused.
    - i) Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of assault, and Joseph was thrown into prison.
      - (1) Joseph was in prison, not for doing something wrong, but for doing something right: for keeping himself pure.
  - m) In prison, Joseph began to rise to the top again.
    - i) He helps a man who is released from prison.
      - (1) This man promises to speak a good word for Joseph, but he forgets about Joseph upon his release.
  - n) Then, Pharaoh has a dream and needs someone to interpret it.
    - i) Joseph is taken out of prison because he has the wisdom of God about him and can interpret dreams; so, Joseph is brought to interpret Pharaoh's dream.
      - (1) The dream means that there will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine.
    - ii) Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he put Joseph in charge.
      - (1) Joseph began gathering grain and became the savior of that known world in the physical, material sense.
  - o) Pharaoh exalts Joseph to Prime Minister of Egypt.
  - p) Joseph's wicked brothers have to go to Egypt to buy grain because of the famine in the land.
    - i) The brothers do not recognize Joseph.
      - (1) Joseph is grown up and dressing like an Egyptian.
    - ii) The brothers appear before Joseph to ask for grain.
    - iii) Finally, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and forgives his brothers.
  - q) There is a theme throughout Joseph's story.
    - i) Genesis 39:2
    - ii) Genesis 39:21
    - iii) Genesis 39:23
    - iv) The Lord was with Joseph.
  - r) No matter what happened, Joseph was practicing the presence of God.
  - s) The story of Joseph shows us four principles to having real prosperity.
    - i) Prosperity is the progressive realization of the will of God for our lives.
- 2) EXPRESS YOUR GOD-GIVEN DIFFERENCE (Genesis 37:1-4)
- a) When God saves us, He makes us different.
  - b) Joseph was distinct and different.
    - i) The multi-colored coat he wore was a mark of distinction.
      - (1) Joseph was given the birthright, which was spiritual as well as material.
      - (2) Joseph was distinct because of his nobility; the multi-colored coat was a mark of



- nobility.
- c) As Christians, we are nobility in the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - i) 1 Peter 2:9
    - ii) The world resents our nobility in the Lord Jesus and wants to squeeze us into its mold.
      - (1) Romans 12:2
      - (2) Joseph's brothers hated him, and Joseph would not conform.
      - (3) The world wants us to conform.
        - (a) There is something about nature that makes us want to conform.
    - iii) As children of God, we are different.
      - (1) What we believe starts at a different source, it follows a different course and it ends at a different conclusion.
      - (2) We are twice-born people in a world of once-born people.
        - (a) We will be going against the tide most of the time.
  - d) If we want to have the presence of God, then we must exhibit our distinction and our difference.
- 3) EXPLORE YOUR GOD-GIVEN DREAMS (Genesis 37:5-8)
- a) Joseph was only a teen, but God put a dream in his heart.
    - i) In Genesis 37:9-11, Joseph dreamed another dream.
    - ii) We should let God put a dream into our hearts.
  - b) God spoke to Joseph through a dream, but He may speak to us another way.
    - i) God has a plan for our lives.
  - c) Joseph had a vision, but God did not give him the roadmap.
  - d) Romans 12:1-2
    - i) This passage provides us with a formula for formulating our God-given dream.
    - ii) Presentation plus transformation equals realization.
      - (1) Presentation
        - (a) Present yourself to Him.
        - (b) Most people don't truly present themselves to God.
          - (i) Many people are afraid that God will send them as missionaries to a remote land if they truly present themselves to Him.
      - (2) Transformation
        - (a) When we present ourselves to God, then we are transformed.
        - (b) Romans 12:2
        - (c) The word "transform" is the word from which we get our English word "metamorphosis."
          - (i) Metamorphosis is a change of form.
            - 1. It literally means that which is on the inside comes to the surface.
          - (ii) Matthew 17:2
            - 1. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Bible says that Jesus was "transfigured," which is the same word "metamorphose."
            - 2. Jesus went through a metamorphosis; His inner nature, which is glory,



came to the surface.

- (d) The inner nature of a child of God is Jesus; Christ lives within us.
  - (i) When we present ourselves to God a living sacrifice, there will be a metamorphosis and that which is on the inside will come to the surface.

(3) Realization

- (a) We will then know the good, perfect, acceptable will of God.
  - (i) Romans 12:2
- (b) We need to get our hearts right with God, present ourselves to Him, let the glory of Jesus come out of us, have the mind of Christ, and we will find out that God will be guiding us.
  - (i) We don't tell God to show us what He wants us to do and then we consider if we want to do it.
- e) We need to make sure that it is God who is speaking to us.
  - i) Dreams in this context are not carnal ambitions.
  - ii) Jeremiah 29:8
  - iii) God wants us to dream dreams; not daydreams but God-given dreams.
    - (1) Joel 2:28
      - (a) Let God be real in you.
  - iv) To know whether a dream is God-given, we need to think about it and pray over it.
    - (1) Luke 2:19
    - (2) Proverbs 4:18
      - (a) Soak your dream in prayer, and God will guide you.
      - (b) Ask the Lord to keep speaking to you.
- f) When we get a dream in our hearts, we can expect the devil to try to keep us from fulfilling it.
  - i) There will be people who will say that it can't be done.
    - (1) If it's a God-given dream, it can be done.

4) ENDURE YOUR GOD-GIVEN DIFFICULTIES (Genesis 37:8-27)

- a) When there is a God-given dream, there will be some God-given difficulties.
  - i) Joseph was scorned by his brothers.
  - ii) There was a conspiracy against Joseph.
  - iii) He was thrown into a pit and sold as a slave.
  - iv) He was falsely accused and languished in prison.
  - v) God was never out of control.
    - (1) Genesis 50:20
    - (2) Romans 8:28
- b) God will allow us to have difficulties in life.
  - i) God does not cause these difficulties.
  - ii) But wherever man rules, God overrules.
- c) Through all the difficulties, God was not finished with Joseph.
  - i) When we have difficulties and our dreams are shattered, it does not mean that God is finished with us.



- ii) No matter what Satan does and no matter what happens, God is still in control and over it all.
- 5) ENLIST YOUR GOD-GIVEN DYNAMIC (Genesis 39:2, 21)
- a) We have the dream, we have difficulties, but there is also a dynamic.
    - i) The dynamic is that God is with us.
  - b) Acts 7:9
  - c) There is no place where God is not.
    - i) Satan does not rule in Hell.
    - ii) Philippians 2:9-11
    - iii) God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.
  - d) The difference in Joseph's life was not God's actual presence.
    - i) When the Bible says that God was with him, it means that God was for him.
    - ii) God was engineering things for Joseph, on his behalf.
      - (1) God was with Joseph in times of persecution and in times of responsibility.
      - (2) God was with him in times of temptation and in times of slander and suffering.
      - (3) God was with Joseph when he died.
  - e) We should all desire that there be something about us that cannot be explained apart from the fact that God is with us.
- 6) CONCLUSION
- a) If we want the presence of God in our lives, then we need Jesus.
  - b) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today and ask Him to come into your life.
  - c) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
    - i) Romans 3:23
    - ii) Romans 10:9-10
    - iii) Romans 10:13
    - iv) Acts 16:31
    - v) John 3:16



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Turn, if you will, with me please to the book of Genesis chapter 37. Again, I want to talk to you about “Practicing the Presence of God.”

Now, what is the greatest tragedy of all? I suppose the greatest tragedy of all would be to come to your deathbed, being ready to die, and to discover you’ve never lived. Jesus said in John 10:10, “I’ve come that you might have life, and have it abundantly.” There are many people who are grinding it out, who are enduring, who are existing, but they are not living. One man described it this way, “Youth; a struggle. Maturity; a blunder. And old age; a regret.” Yet, there’s some people who seem to be born with so little and yet they accomplish so much. And there’re other people who seem to be born with so much and yet they accomplish so little. What is the difference? I submit to you that the difference, the secret, is the presence of God.

Now, we’re going to study the life of a young man named Joseph. And I’m going to show you later on, there’s a refrain about Joseph that comes in the story of Joseph and it says this, “And God was with him, and God was with him, and God was with him.” Here was a man who learned how to practice the presence of God. It’s an interesting thing.

The book of Genesis is a wonderful book, but let me give you an astounding fact. 25% of the book of Genesis is about Joseph. That’s an amazing thing, because in the book of Genesis it also tells about the creation of the universe and in five words, five words, it says in Genesis 1:16, “And He made the stars also.” PSST! That’s it; five words; for the whole universe. And in 25% of this one book about one man whose name was Joseph. I believe the most Christ-like character in the Old Testament was Joseph, and we have so much to learn about him. And the story we’re going to read pretty soon takes up when Joseph was a teen, seventeen years of age, just about ready, if he were to live in today’s society, to graduate from high school. And sometimes we think that these were mighty men, great men, never had any problems, and somehow they were born full grown and mature and all of that.

Let me tell you about Joseph. Joseph came from a dysfunctional family. His father, Jacob, was a con artist by nature. He was, if you study the life of Jacob, you’ll understand before God got hold of Jacob and turned him inside out, upside down, Jacob was a con artist. He had an uncle Laban who was slicker than Jake. And, this was cheat cheating cheat. Now, I’m not going to get into all that story, but let me tell you that on top of all of that, his mother died when he was in his mid-teens. Can you imagine the trauma of having your mother? He had a gracious, beautiful mother whose name was Rachel, but she died. And when he was growing up, friend, he lived in a nest, a swarm of wicked, ungodly brothers. Now, that’s the kind of a background that this boy had. He’s a seventeen year old kid. And that’s the start that he gets. And then we’re going to find out in the story that he gets into all kinds of difficulty and trouble, and it sort of set the stage, if you’re not familiar with the story of Joseph, I’m going to give you just a brief thumbnail sketch of this boy named Joseph.

First of all, he was his father’s favorite son. I believe he was his father’s favorite son because he



was born of Rachel, who was his father's favorite wife. Now, Jacob had several wives, but his true love, his real love was Rachel. And, Joseph was born of Rachel. And Jacob loved Joseph so much that he gave him a coat, a coat of many colors, and we'll talk about that coat later on. But he receives a coat of many colors and he receives some dreams. God speaks to him and God gives him a vision. And God says to Joseph, this seventeen year old boy, "One day, all of the world's resources are going to be at your disposal and all of the world's rulers are going to bow down to your feet." Now, he's just a seventeen year old kid and God gives him this dream. And he tells it to his brothers. His brothers envy him because of his coat of many colors, his distinctiveness. They are jealous of him because of the father's love for him. They resent him because of his dreams and his visions which he told them. Well, upon a time, when they were out in the field, his brothers took him, stripped off his beautiful coat, really wanted to kill him. They put him in a pit to die, a pit where there was no water, to languish there.

And then, when a caravan going to Egypt passed by, they said, "Well, hey, we'll do something better than let him die in the pit. We'll sell him." And so they sold him for the price of a slave. Here's this teen boy. He's done nothing wrong. Now he has been abused by his brothers, sold as a slave. I can see him as he's bound to the caravan there, the whip whistles through the air, and off he goes all the way to Egypt.

When he gets down to Egypt, he's put on the slave block down in Egypt, and the captain of the guard, Potiphar, buys him. Who was Potiphar? Well, he was the one who protected the Pharaoh. And, he saw this goodly, handsome young man, full of virility and strength and Potiphar bought him and made him a household slave. But Joseph was of such character and industry and ingenuity and fidelity that he begins to rise up in the ranks, and before long he is running Potiphar's household for him.

But then, Potiphar's wife begins to lust after Joseph and begins to try to entice him to an adulterous affair which Joseph refused. And hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. So she said that Joseph tried to assault her and to rape her. And she tells her husband what this boy did. And her husband takes Joseph now by the nap of his neck and casts him into prison. He's languishing there in prison, not for doing something wrong, but for doing something right, for keeping himself pure.

And there he is down in the prison and he begins to rise to the top again. He's beginning to be in control of the prison. And he helps a man who gets out of prison. The man says, "Joseph, I know you're innocent. I'll speak a word for you when I get out of prison." But he forgets Joseph, and Joseph is there rotting in prison, languishing in prison.

He stays there for a while until Pharaoh has a dream. He needs somebody to interpret the dream. Joseph is taken out of prison because Joseph has the wisdom of God about him. Joseph interprets the dreams for Pharaoh. There's going to be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Pharaoh says, "Joseph, you're so wise, you're so smart. I'm going to put you in charge of all of this." And Joseph is gathering grain. And after a while, Joseph becomes the savior of that known world in the physical, material sense. And Pharaoh exalts Joseph. He is the prime minister of Egypt. Now this is the boy that was sold as a slave and he just keeps rising and rising and rising. Now he is the



prime minister of Egypt. And there's a famine in the land. Down in the land of Canaan, those wicked brothers who had sold him into slavery, have to go to Egypt for food. They don't know who Joseph is now. I mean, Joseph now is dressing like an Egyptian. He's grown up. He's changed. But they come and they have to appear before Joseph and ask Joseph for grain.

And the story gets so interesting there. And I can't tell you all of it right now because time would fail me, but, finally, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and forgives his brothers, brings his father there, old Jake, all the way from Canaan to Egypt. It is a glorious story. It's one the greatest stories ever written. It's not fiction; it is fact, it is truth, and it is full of Bible truth. But there is a theme, well, let's just look at it now. Turn to chapter 39, if you will here, for just a moment, and look, if you will, in verses 2 and 3, and, and notice here. Genesis 39 verse 2, "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." Do you see that? Look in Genesis chapter 39 verse 21, "But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Look, if you will, in chapter 39 verse 23, "The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him," that is, with Joseph, "and that which he did, the Lord was with him and made him to prosper." I love that. "The Lord was with him, the Lord was with him, the Lord was with him." No matter what happened, here was a man who was practicing the presence of God.

Now, would you like to do that? Would you like to prosper? I mean, have real prosperity. That's not necessarily wealth. Prosperity is the progressive realization of the will of God for your life. Would you like to prosper? Let me give you four principles, can I do that, that's going to come right out of God's Word. Go back to chapter 37 if you will here.

Principle number one; express your God-given difference. When God saved you, God made you different. And Joseph expressed his God-given difference. Read the first four verses of Genesis chapter 37, "And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." Now, that doesn't mean he was a tattletale; it means he was a truth teller. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

Now, put it down big, plain, and straight; Joseph was distinct and Joseph was different. And the multi-colored coat that he wore was a mark of distinction that he wore. Now, I believe, and we'll get into this later, was because Joseph was given the birthright, which was spiritual as well as material. That is, he was distinct because of his nobility. The multi-colored, long-sleeved coat was a mark of nobility.

Now, what does that have to say to Adrian today? What does that have to say to you today? Folks, I want to tell you that we are nobility in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know who's preaching to you today? A royal blueblood. I'm a king and a prince. You say, "You're full of yourself." I can't help it. I'm a king and a prince. If you don't want to call me Pastor, just call me Prince Adrian. Listen, folks, I am telling you that God has made us a kingdom of priests. We are somebody. We are a chosen



generation. In First Peter 2 verse 9, the Bible calls us, "A peculiar people." We are different. And the world resents our nobility in the Lord Jesus Christ and the world always wants to squeeze us into its mold. As Paul said in Romans chapter 12 verse 2, "Be not conformed to this world." Joseph was different. His brothers hated him. He would not conform.

I can hear these wicked brothers say, "Hey, Joseph, take a drink of this. Hey, Joseph, take a puff of this. Let's get old Joe a date with you know who." You know, they're constantly trying to get Joseph to conform, but he will not do it. He would not conform.

You know, this world wants to make us conform. I'll guarantee you. There's something about nature that makes us want to conform. We speak of a flock of sheep, a pack of wolves, a swarm of birds, a covey of quail, a pride of lions, and a gaggle of geese, a bevy of women, a gang of boys, we might say, and a giggle of girls. We all want to get in there and somehow conform, and the chief religion in America is the cult of conformity. And the chief sin is to be different.

Now, it's very strange that sometimes, however, somebody will break out from the group and he'll be different. There'll be an old boy, and rather than putting his hat on this way, he'll put the bill back this way, and for a while all the kids look at him, then the first thing you know, they're all putting the bill back this way. And that's the way they wear the hat. That thing's supposed to keep the sun out of your your eyes not off your neck. But, they're all wearing the hats that way. And the first thing you know, somebody will wear a pair of baggy pants that most young, respectable young men wouldn't be caught dead in, but he'll wear these pants hanging down, real baggy, and so forth. Next thing you know, all these kids are wearing these baggy pants. They don't want to be different. They want to conform. Somebody will put a safety pin through his nose; good night! Good night! And you see these kids with a safety pin through their nose. Everybody's got to conform. You've got to be like the crowd.

I was reading where some scientists were trying to figure out the schooling. They were trying to understand why fish swim in schools. Do you know what they did? They took a fish and by surgery that did a lobotomy on that fish, removed his brain but he could still swim. They took away the schooling instinct, evidently, was in this fish. And so he no longer followed the school; he just swam off by himself. Now let me tell you what happened. All the rest followed him. True. Here is a fish without brains, without brains and the rest are following him. For further reference, go to any junior high school.

Here was Joseph, Joseph refuses to conform. He is different. And I want to tell you, friend, a child of God is different. What we believe starts at a different source, it follows a different course, it ends at a different conclusion. And we're twice-born people in a world of once-born people, and you're going to be going against the tide most of the time. And you ought to stand out like a diamond in a gold mine. Now, we are special; we're distinct. You'd like to have the presence of God? Well, let me just say, exhibit your distinction, your difference.

Number two; explore your God-given dreams, explore your God-given dreams. Look in Genesis 37 verses 5 through 8, "And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren; and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, 'Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed; For,



behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.' And his brethren said unto him, 'Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?' And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words." And then in verse 9 on through 11 he dreamed another dream. But here was a man who had a God-given dream. He's just a teen, but God is putting a dream into his heart.

May I tell you that youth is a wonderful time not to conform; but to dream. Let God put a dream in your heart. I was about Joseph's age, a little younger when God called me into the ministry. I was in high school, and my pastor told me that God had a plan for everybody's life. And I wanted to know God's plan for my life. And I said to the Lord, "Lord, I don't know what You want me to do, but whatever it is, I want You to show me Your will, and whatever it is, I want to do it."

Now, God spoke to Joseph through a dream. He may speak to you some other way. But the point is this; that God has a plan for your life. Would you like to know what God's plan for your life is? Really, would you? Now, remember, Joseph just had a vision. He had a hint, but that's all. God didn't give him a road map. I think Joseph would have been perturbed had God told him about the pit and the prison and the accusations and all of this. But he had a dream. He had something that he aspired to. Romans 12 verses 1 and 2, for those of us who live this side of Calvary, is such a wonderful, wonderful formula for formulating our God-given dream. And, I've preached this verse to you so many times, but it's such a key verse. Romans 12 verses 1 and 2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world," now, notice the order, "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. That you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." You want to know the will of God? There it is; there's the formula. Presentation, plus transformation equals realization.

Presentation; just present yourself to Him. Have you done that? I mean, have you really done that? Have you presented yourself to Him? "Here I am, God." Most people have never done that. Most people say, "You know, if I did that, no telling where I'd end up. I'd be a missionary over in Bongo Bongo somewhere." Then you don't really want to present yourself to God. Listen, present yourself to Him. Sign the contract and hand it to Him and tell Him to fill it in. Don't be afraid of that, because when you present yourself to Him, then you're transformed. "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed." And the word transform is the word we get our English word metamorphosis from. You will have a divine metamorphosis. What is a metamorphosis? Meta means change, morphose means form. It's a change of form. It literally means when that which is on the inside comes to the surface. For example, the worm goes into the cocoon and comes out a moth or a butterfly. It has gone through a metamorphosis. The inner nature of that caterpillar is a beautiful butterfly.

Jesus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Bible says in Matthew 17:2, "He was transfigured." It's the same word, metamorphose. Jesus went through a metamorphosis. What was His inner nature? Glory; it just came to the surface. That's it, he was metamorphosed. He had a change of nature. What is the inner nature of a child of God? If you're born again, what? It's God. It is glory. It is Jesus. Your



inner nature is Jesus. Christ lives in you. When you present yourself to Him a living sacrifice there will be a metamorphosis and that which is on the inside will come to the surface. Rather than letting the world squeeze it out, it begins to come out. Presentation equals transformation equals realization. And you will know, "What is that good, perfect, acceptable will of God."

Hey, folks, listen to me. You don't find the will of God; the will of God finds you. You get your heart right with God. You present yourself to Him. You let the glory of Jesus come out of you. You have the mind of Christ, and you just get in the stream and you'll find out that God will be guiding you. God'll be guiding you. God didn't give Joseph a road map, but God gave to Joseph a dream. Now, don't say, "God, You show me what You want me to do and I'll consider if I want to do it." No, sir.

Now, make sure it's God that's speaking now. When I'm talking about dreams here, I'm not talking about carnal ambition. I'm not telling you that God has promised to fulfill your fantasies. I'm talking about a God-given dream. I found this verse; Jeremiah 29 verse 8. And the Bible says, "Neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed." Boy, that's a good one. Did you write it down? No, you didn't. Write it down. Jeremiah 29 verse 8, "Hearken not to your dreams which ye have dreamed." Why? Because God's got a better dream for you. Jeremiah 29 verse 11, "'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,' saith the Lord, 'thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.'"

God has a dream for you. And God wants us to dream dreams, not daydreams, but God-given dreams. The book of Joel says in Joel chapter 2 verse 28, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." What's he saying? He's saying, "Let God be real in you." How can I tell whether my dream is a God-given dream? Think about it. Pray over it. When Mary had a vision about the coming Savior, the Bible says in Luke 2 verse 19 that Mary, "Pondered all these things in her heart."

One of my great verses that I love is Proverbs 4 verse 18. It says, "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shines more and more into a perfect day." What does that mean? Sometimes you don't know what the will of God is for your life, even the will of God for today, but, "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shines more and more unto a perfect day." At first it's dark. Then it's gray dawn. No colors; you can only see shadows. And then the sun is coming up and you can see the colors but there're long shadows. And after a while it's high noon. "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shines more and more unto a perfect day."

When I was a kid, I said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" And then, after a while I got a little germ in my heart. "Lord, I think You want me to preach." And then it was, "Lord, do You want me to preach?" Then after a while, it was, "Lord, if You don't want me to preach, You better let me know." And then, finally, "Lord, I know this is what You want." You see, check your dream out. Soak it in prayer. God will guide you. You say, "Lord, if this is You speaking, keep on speaking," but explore your dreams. That's what Joseph did.

By the way, there were plenty of wet blankets in Joseph's time. They hated him because of his nobility. They despised him. And, and when you get a dream in your heart, I can promise you the



devil will see to it, there'll be a bunch of people on the Cold Water Committee and the Wet Blanket Committee to keep you from doing it.

I was a teen, sleeping in the back bedroom or taking a nap. My dad was out on the patio with a man named Bert. He was the sheriff of that county and I respected him so much. Bert said to my dad, "What's Adrian going to do when he gets out of high school?" My dad says, "He thinks he wants to be a preacher." Bert said, "That boy will never be a preacher. That boy will never make it." He didn't know I heard that, but I was sitting there listening. There're plenty of people who say that it can't be done, but I'm telling you if God gives you a dream it can be done. Let it be a God-given dream.

Number three; endure your God-given difficulties. Now, when there's a God-given dream, there will be some God-given difficulties. And in Genesis chapter 37, if you were to read from verse 8 on through 27, you would find just a few of the difficulties. Here's this man: he's scorned by his brothers, there's a conspiracy against him, he's thrown into a pit, he's sold as a slave, he's falsely accused, he languishes in prison. Well, was God out of control? Not for a second was God not in control, not a nanosecond. When it was all over, and you can just put in your margin Genesis chapter 50 verse 20. Joseph is confronting his brethren and he says, "As for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Now, they meant it for evil; God meant it for good. What's the corresponding verse to that? You know it. Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

God is going to allow you to have difficulties in life. God does not cause these things. God did not cause Potiphar's wife to accuse Joseph of rape. God did not cause these things to happen, but wherever man rules, God overrules. And God was not finished with Joseph.

Are you having difficulty? Did you have a dream and your dream is now shattered? Your dream is shattered. That doesn't mean that God is out of business with you. I mean, if you're in an impossible situation, I want to tell you that God is over it all, and no matter what Satan does, no matter what happens, there's a God who's in control of this world and friend, you better get a lock-tight grip on that, okay?

Now, I had a lot to say on that, but I'm going to move on to the last point. Here's the fourth thing if you would practice the presence of God; enlist your God-given dynamic. You've got the dream. You've got the difficulties. But there is a dynamic. And what is the dynamic? Go back again to Genesis chapter 39 again, "And God was with him, And God was with him, And God was with him." And do you know in the Book of Acts, when a great preacher was preaching a sermon on the Old Testament, do you know what he said about Joseph? Do you know what he picked out about Joseph? Put it in your margin, Acts chapter 7 verse 9, and it says this, "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph." Now the patriarchs were his other brothers. They called them patriarchs; "sold Joseph into Egypt." But notice what he said, "But God was with him." I love that, "But God was with him."

A little boy stopped me once. He said, "Preacher, I've got a question to ask you." I said, "What is that?" He said, "Is God in hell?" Pretty good theological question. "Is God in hell?" I said, "Son, there's nowhere where God is not." Satan doesn't rule in hell. Philippians 2 verses 9-11, God, "Has given Jesus a



name which is above every name, that, of things in Heaven and things in earth and things under the earth shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father." There is no place where God is not.

One philosopher said that, "God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." Now you chew on that. "God is a circle whose center is everywhere." There's nowhere where God is not. God is here. God is here. God is here, for there's nowhere where God is not. You see, the difference is not His actual presence. When the Bible says that, "God was with him," it means that God was for him, God was on his behalf, God was engineering things for Joseph. God was with him in times of persecution. God was with him in times of responsibility. And, by the way, all of these things are little sermons here, but I'm running on through. God was with him in time of temptation, we'll see it later. God was with him in times of slander and suffering. God was with him. God was with him when he died. Do you know what I want? I want God with me. I want there to be something about Adrian that you cannot explain apart from the fact that God is with me. I don't want God to take His hand off of my life. I don't want God to take His hand off of our lives. We'll have sorrows. We'll have sickness.

You know that Joyce and I lost a little boy. A little boy died on Mother's Day, one of those crib deaths, on Mother's Day. I'd just preached on the glories of a Christian home. We left that Sunday afternoon to go from Fort Pierce to West Palm Beach, about sixty miles, to be with family. They called somebody else in to pastor the little church. Our pastorium was as close to the church as I am to you, just a little white frame house. And the church members had come by. We'd not been in that church but just several weeks. And as Joyce and I backed out our automobile, they didn't have air conditioning in that church, the little white church building. I can see the yellow light as it was streaming out of the open windows, and the congregation was singing. You know what they were singing? "No, never alone. No, never alone. He hath promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. I've seen the lightning flashing, I've heard the thunder roll, I've felt sin's breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. But I heard the voice of Jesus, telling me still to fight on, for He's promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone." I would not take anything for the conscious presence of God. And this little phrase that speaks about Joseph's life, "And God was with him. God was with him." In prison, God's with him; in the pit, God is with him; in slander, God is with him; in business, God is with him; in pain, God is with him; in prosperity, God is with him. He's dying, God is with him. And I want to tell you that God is in Christ, and if you want God with you, you need Jesus.

Now, let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And if you're not saved today, God brought you here to be saved. And I want you to pray a prayer like this, "Dear God. I am a sinner and I am lost and I need to be saved and I want to be saved. And Jesus, You're the Son of God. You paid for my sin on the cross. You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. I trust You to save me. And, Lord Jesus, I'll make it public. I'll not be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen.



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