

Not Again!

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[0:00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! As always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, please go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. We are excited to get into the Word of God. Most of all, let the Word get into us and transform these hearts. And I'm so grateful that you've tuned in to let God do that molding work in your life.

Now, back in 2018, we felt the Lord lead my family from a church we loved in Tennessee back home here to Greensburg to be a part of FCC.

See, I had done a couple internships here at this church in 2005 through 07. And Bethany, believe it or not, was born into this church and her family went here for probably the first five or six years of her life.

And I'll tell you, the hardest part about getting her to come home was saying goodbye to our house in Tennessee. Bethany has the amazing gift of hospitality and she takes such pride in taking care of our home.

[1:13] See, the cost of homes in East Tennessee was less than here. And we were able to purchase a four-bedroom, three-bath brick home in a great neighborhood.

And when we did move back, we rented for a season in Greensburg. But we knew that we ultimately wanted to be out in the country, which is how we both grew up. So we began that search and we quickly learned that it was pretty expensive to get what we wanted.

And being a one-income family, we didn't want to stretch ourselves into a financial burden. Well, one day my brother comes up to us and offers for us to buy his home on the 44 acres that my parents own.

And while we were excited about it, we knew we had to change a lot of things, even add on to the house to fit our family, which was a big job. And if we did all of that work, we could actually stay in budget.

So we found a contractor that we had known and thought we could trust. And to make a long story short, the whole process was a nightmare. We were done pretty dirty.

[2:18] Our naivety in this situation showed as we learned some powerful life lessons the hard way. And once we moved in the summer of 2020 into the house, what should have been essentially a brand new home, it was a constant headache over things breaking, not working right, looking bad, and especially the plumbing backing up constantly.

It was stressful. And I'll just tell you, as a man, I just felt like I had let my family down allowing this to happen. The phrase, not again, seemed like a part of our daily lives.

So we just started chipping away at fixing things, including my dad and I digging two crawl spaces by hand. God bless that man for helping me.

And then in the fall of 2023, we learned that a pipe had burst under our kitchen flooring where we couldn't see it and essentially permeated through most of the original house, which was on a slab. And much of our home had to be gutted again. So insurance came in and immediately the remediation crew was at our house and we were moving out.

[3:26] And with tears streaming down my wife's face, who loves her home, she cries out, not again. Well, hey, welcome back here to week five of our series over the life of Old Testament Joseph.

We're calling this living the dream. And I'm sorry I started off with a depressing story today. But sometimes the dream can feel like a nightmare in the moment. And maybe you've put your head in your hands before and said, not again.

I am trying so hard to do the right things. I'm seeking your heart, Lord. I'm crying out to you in prayer. And yet it just seems like one thing after another.

And when I finally have my feet under me and things are starting to go well, something else knocks them out from under me. Not again. Well, as we pick back up at the end of Genesis chapter 39, and we put our focus today on chapter 40, Joseph has to be feeling the same way.

Not again. Blessed with a great childhood, being the youngest and actually the favorite of the 11 kids to his father. Cocky Joseph strutted around in that technicolor dream coat, spewing dreams of him ruling over his brothers.

[4 : 46] And listen, they hated him for it. Their father's favoritism, his attitude toward them, led them to do the unthinkable. They stripped him of his coat, roughed him up, threw him in a cistern, and then drug him out and sold him into slavery.

And yet, Scripture tells us over and over, the Lord was with him. And as Joseph's heart was surrendered to God's plans, he rose through the ranks, quickly became Potiphar's right-hand man, put in charge of all of his household, because his master could see the Lord's with him.

He blesses everything this guy does. The only problem was that Potiphar's wife liked what she saw too. And she came on to Joseph. And instead of giving in to the flesh, which would be so easy for any man to do, Joseph runs from her, letting her know that he will not betray his master, but most importantly, his God.

She lies. She claims he came after her, and he's thrown into a prison for those who've offended Pharaoh and his officials. Just when he thought that things were looking up, everything comes crashing down.

And you can almost hear him say, not again. Let me ask you this. Have you ever felt that way in your life? I bet you have. We've all been there.

[6 : 11] And I want you to see today that sometimes when the dream feels like a nightmare, you may just be exactly where you need to be. Now, if you've got your Bibles, first book, Genesis, go to chapter 39, Genesis 39.

And let's go ahead and start here in the second part of verse 20. It says, But while Joseph was there in prison, the Lord was with him.

He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. The warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.

The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. Now, anybody feeling a little deja vu here?

Because this is exactly what happened at Potiphar's house. The Lord was with Joseph. He made the right and godly decisions. Everything he touched was blessed.

[7 : 15] And now here he is in prison. The warden shows favor to Joseph right away, decides to let him run everything. Suddenly that place is running better than ever. So go ahead, if you want to go to the YouVersion Bible app, under events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana.

And let's go ahead and look at the outline that way. But here's the first thing I want to show you today. When the dream feels more like a nightmare, keep doing the right thing.

You can replace that word right with the godly thing, the righteous thing, the biblical thing. You know how every family has certain sayings that the parents try to instill in their kids?

For us, one of those sayings is, always do the right thing, always. And listen, we are far from perfect. That's why we have to keep repeating it. But imagine if Joseph acted how we're tempted to behave and says, not again, God.

Why are you cursing me? That's the last time that I'm going to do good for others when they're just going to turn around and do me in. So I'm just going to sit in my cell and sulk. I'm going to be bitter towards everyone.

[8 : 27] I'm going to look out for good old number one. I'm going to punch anyone in the throat who crosses me. Then you better believe that the words are going to fly because I give up. I quit.

And maybe we've never said that out loud, that little temper tantrum. But that was our attitude, maybe, when life didn't go the way we expected. And listen, we can learn here from Joseph.

And although we're not given a lot of detail about his attitude in this moment, it's pretty obvious from Potiphar's story and the result of his prison stay that Joseph came in with his heart right before the Lord, knowing his story wasn't over.

Now, was he dejected? I'm sure. Otherwise, he wouldn't be human. And listen, you can be disappointed. You can be sad. You can not understand in the moment why something's happening. But you can't quit. You can't throw your dependence on the Lord out the window. You can't play the victim card. And you can't stop believing that he's got you.

[9 : 29] See, in Romans 8.37, we learn that we are more than conquerors, not victims. We are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, as I picture in my mind the kind of guy that a prison warden would immediately be drawn to and even turn over most of his responsibility to, here's what I picture, because the scriptures don't tell us these details.

So I'm just kind of dreaming with you a little bit here. I picture Joseph coming in, showing full respect to the warden, submitting to his leadership that God had placed over him, because that's what godly people do when you're not being asked to violate God's word.

Respect. I visualize someone who not only treats the other inmates well, but also looks out for them, helping in any way they can. I see someone who chooses to do the right thing, no matter where they are.

There's no twisting the truth or deceit or lies. They walk the talk. And when they fail, they repent, they're honest about it, and they grow through it.

[10 : 35] See, Joseph Stoll, a well-known preacher, put it uniquely when he said, our love for Christ is revealed in the trenches, not in the pew.

Now, the word integrity that Tyler talked a lot about last week comes to my mind, that I'm the same person on Friday night as I am on Sunday morning, that my faith is, let me say it again, my faith is just as important on Wednesday at work when the co-worker is driving me nuts or the boss is coming after me as it is at the church pitch-in.

And that's what separates Joseph. When life handed him lemons, he didn't just make lemonade. He made one of those lemon shake-ups that some of us are getting ready to enjoy at the fair. And when the dream feels like a nightmare, we keep doing the godly and the right thing because as we seek his heart, God can continue to come into our story and lead us right where we need to be. And that leads us to the second point today that I want you to see. When the dream feels like a nightmare, trust the process, knowing his plans are perfect.

Now, if you're a sports fan, and I am a big diehard sports person, okay? I follow about every sport. So if you're a sports fan, you've heard this a hundred times.

[11 : 54] When your favorite teams, GM or owners, know that things aren't going well, they'll say very confidently to us fans, trust the process.

The Colts have been telling us this since Andrew Luck retired, and yet our quarterback situation continues to be bleak, although I hope I'm proven wrong. But here's the thing about our Heavenly Father.

He is set apart from your team's leadership, okay? I'm talking about your favorite team. He's not like your favorite team's GM, okay? He is perfect and holy, majestic, righteous, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, sovereign.

And his word teaches us in Romans 8, 28 that we know in all things, not some, not most, in all things, God works for the good of those who love him and who've been called according to his purpose.

So as we pick back up in our story and we start to walk through Genesis chapter 40, we can see that God is teaching Joseph to trust the process. Now this is twice now that his life could have felt like it was falling to pieces.

[13 : 00] A slave and then a prisoner with no parole. And both times the Lord is showing Joseph, hey, I got you. Watch how I can bless you in places that seem hopeless. And both times he rises to the top only by God's grace.

Both times he's put in charge of the whole operation, the whole shebang. And both times God is grabbing him by the cheeks as the perfect Heavenly Father. He's saying, trust me.

Trust that my will for your life is perfect. I'm the one pulling the strings. No matter what the enemy does. And I wonder how many of us need to hear that today.

Because I sure do. Even when things seem bad, God's not done. And what he's doing is he's preparing you. Let me explain it the best way that I know how.

That would be my own journey. So in 2026, I will celebrate two decades or 20 years of full-time ministry, mostly as a lead pastor.

[14:01] All glory to God, because I've tried to quit on him a few times. And yet God has been faithful. And while I don't even try to compare myself to pastors like one of our elders, Jerry Holdman and his wife, Jenny, who are in the 10% of pastors who retire from vocational ministry after serving their whole adult life, I can say that I've had to trust the process, though, these last two decades, hoping that Bethany and I can follow Jerry and Jenny's example.

See, my first full-time ministry after I left my FCC internship in 07 was a small country church about 35, 40 minutes from here in Greensburg.

And while we saw the Lord do some amazing things in the middle of nowhere, things people said could not be done because location, location, location, I can tell you there was also in the midst of all this excitement of God doing incredible things in people's lives, there was a lot of unhealth in the leadership.

I was also really young and I made my fair share of mistakes too and I didn't always help the situation. And I remember just walking through some things I never dreamed I'd go through. Things people would say and do I never thought a Christian would. I even vividly remember one time being cussed at by a leader on the phone and then after the call, just falling on my face alone in my office, crying, asking God to help me.

[15:24] And while I had some very wise people around me saying, hey, don't let these precious years go by, stay in at an unhealthy place like this, I felt the Lord telling me that I was right where I needed to be in that moment.

until February or March of 2015. Some more stuff had happened that pushed me to pray harder and I felt very strongly that the Lord all of a sudden told me He was releasing me from that ministry after eight years.

Now, within four months, God had opened doors wide and we drove 330 miles south and east to Morristown, Tennessee. And when we got there, it was like I had just finished a boxing match and now I could feel every blow, every shot I had taken over the last eight years.

And because Bethany and I never view a ministry as a stepping stone as we just want to be fully present wherever God puts us, we were ready to commit the rest of our time in Tennessee.

It was, that was what we were prepared to do. And yet what we couldn't see in that moment was that this was simply a healing stop for us. Those dear people knew how to love and make a pastor and his family feel welcomed.

[16:38] And for three years, I processed those early years of ministry. I processed even the parts that I played that weren't healthy. And I healed in a lot of big ways.

I saw great examples of what healthy leadership and church relationships look like. And then when we least expected it, I get a message about coming home to transition into the lead pastor role here at FCC.

And while Satan has tried to thwart all the great things that the Lord is doing in this body of believers, we have been blessed with a godly leadership and church family that are committed to putting Jesus first by helping one another belong to, believe in, and become like Jesus.

And I'll tell you, I'm having a blast. I'm having fun preaching and helping lead this family, seeing lives transformed. I get to sit down all the time and have amazing conversations with people.

But I'm also very aware that if you would have plucked me out of my first ministry in 2010, when everyone was saying how well everything was going, if you would have plucked me out and brought me here for exactly what I'm doing in 2025, I know that I wouldn't have been ready.

[17:50] I needed to go through the ups and the downs. I had to learn. I had to grow. I had to be molded. And all those things, mostly the rough days, they have shaped me and prepared me for now, although I'm very aware that I still have a lot of growing to do.

So I had to trust the process knowing that God's plans are perfect. And this is what we see happening with Joseph. All these things had to happen so that he could grow and mature and be ready to save his brothers and preserve the line that the Messiah Jesus would someday enter through.

That cocky 17-year-old wasn't ready to lead Egypt through a famine. That young man in Potiphar's house wasn't prepared to approach his brothers who had done him wrong. He had to grow.

And you know what? As much as I don't enjoy the times of preparation, man, I need it. And so do you. In fact, R.T. Kendall said this.

He said, God had an extraordinary plan for Joseph, one which called for extraordinary preparation. When God puts us through an extraordinary trial, nothing should be more encouraging for God does not mock us.

[19 : 03] He treats us with dignity and prepares us according to the task ahead. And while it doesn't tell us exactly how long Joseph was in prison, we know that he was 17 years old when he became a slave and he was 30 when he rose to power in Egypt.

So there's 13 years between Potiphar's house and Potiphar's prison. Now, if I was guessing, I would say at least five to ten of those years were in prison.

Not wasted, but preparing his heart, his leadership, his organization, his people skills so that he could be ready for the mission ahead.

Now, after being in prison for a little while, let's go ahead and pick up here in Genesis 40, verse 1 and read just a few verses. It says, sometime later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt.

Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard in the same prison where Joseph was confined.

[20 : 18] The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph and he attended them. Uh-oh! God's up to something! And here comes the most powerful man in the world's cupbearer and baker.

They had offended Pharaoh in a really big way. And they're thrown in the same prison where Joseph had been for a while. They're even put under his care. Hashtag God thing.

And then after they had been there a little while, they both have a disturbing, confusing dream on the same night. And Joseph, instead of sulking over himself, he cares about others and he saw how dejected they both were.

He shows them compassion. And then in Genesis 40, verse 8, it says this, We both had dreams, they answered, but there is no one to interpret them.

Then Joseph said to them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams. And Joseph, now listen to this very carefully, only through the power of God working in him, he goes on to interpret those dreams.

[21 : 24] And the reason we know it was legit from the Lord is that number one, it's not just answers that itching ears want to hear. That's how you often know a false prophet. They just tell you what you want to hear.

That's usually some kind of Ponzi scheme. Okay? And then number two, everything he said came true. He basically says, Okay, Baker, you're going to be executed by Pharaoh.

But good news for you, cupbearer, your life will be spared and you'll be restored to your position.

And oh, Pharaoh's birthday. And then, so this is how it goes down. On Pharaoh's birthday, he gives a big feast to celebrate and he did exactly what Joseph had interpreted.

Bye-bye to the baker, welcome home to the cupbearer. And yet, Joseph only asked for one thing from the cupbearer, not much to ask. In Genesis 40, starting in verse 14, But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness.

Mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon. All Joseph wanted was a chance at freedom.

[22 : 34] And yet, chapter 40 leaves us saying those words again, not again. Genesis 40, 23 says this, The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph.

He forgot him. And I can just picture Joseph kind of having his little bag packed, ready to go. And day after day passes and two years later, there he still sits.

Guys, that's three times now. From daddy's golden boy to slave, from slave to prisoner, from head prisoner with hope to those hopes being dashed. And yet, when it feels like God is distant, when it feels like God is not listening, when it seems like my circumstances are never going to change, make sure you tune in to next week because in all of this, God has been working.

He's been molding, shaping, preparing, growing, changing, the very things we need to be ready for when his great calling on our lives happens.

You know, I started off today talking about our home situation. And I left you with a depressing reality. We're moving into a pole barn apartment that's way too small for our family with my wife's

head in her hands saying, not again.

[23 : 54] Well, that burst pipe in those nine months turned out to be a blessing because we got the chance both by insurance money and some of our own to fix a lot of stuff making the house that we originally kind of wanted to have.

Now there will always be some things we will have to live with but we learn through that crazy season that God is always working in those trying times bringing about his perfect plans. God is always faithful. Do you hear me? God is always faithful. So here's your challenge. When the dream starts to feel like a nightmare, keep doing the right and godly thing.

No matter your circumstances while always trusting the process that his plans are for your good and for his glory. And listen, if we do, you're going to stand in awe someday when you see how God has just weaved everything together to prepare you for the mission that he had for you.

Because those not agains may just mold you more and more into the image of Christ. Let's pray together. Father, thank you so much for just these words of hope.

[25 : 13] We've all been through those not again moments. We've all had times where we just looked up to the heavens and said, God, I don't understand. I don't get it. I don't understand why this is happening.

but I love the reality that you are moving in all of it, that you have those who love you, those who belong to you. You have us in the palm of your hands and you are working all things out for good for those who love you and have been called according to your purpose.

So thank you for the promises that you give. Thank you for the hope that you give. And Lord, we just give you permission. As much as we don't like those not again moments, we give you permission to do whatever you need to do in our hearts and our lives to mold us and make us so we are prepared for the mission that you have ahead.

Thank you, Jesus. You are so good. You are holy. You are righteous. You are majestic. And we worship and adore you. We pray all these things in your precious and your holy name.

In Jesus' name we pray. God's people said amen and amen. Hey, real quick, I want to give you an invitation just like if you were here on a Sunday morning at church, which by the way, you are invited to come to First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana.

[26 : 34] Please do. We would love to have you. But here's an invitation for you. Maybe you have faith questions. Maybe you have church questions. Maybe you have questions about what it means to really follow Jesus. I would love to come alongside you just like others have done for me and just help you with all that.

But mainly just show you what the Word of God teaches. So give us a call. Our number here at FCC Greensburg. Once again, my name is Ray. Our number is 812-663-8488.

That's 812-663-8488. Or you can email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com. Hey, God bless you. Thank you for tuning in today. And I hope you have a fantastic week.