

**“We will be Pharaoh’s slaves.”** When we moved to Egypt, we had such high hopes. Our brother was in power—he was functionally the most powerful man in the whole land. Pharaoh himself submitted to Joseph’s wishes and planning in almost everything. **Our family** was in power. Egypt was ours. Everything we had ever wanted and dreamed of was at our fingertips.

But we quickly learned that the very thing that had brought us to Egypt—the **storehouses** of grain—made us **slaves** to Egypt. All the grain in the country belonged to Pharaoh. Joseph had stored it all up during seven years of abundance. And when the famine hit, things got bad quickly. Soon everyone’s personal supplies of food were exhausted. And every single family in Egypt and in the surrounding areas was hungry. And Joseph, on behalf of Pharaoh, had **all** the grain. He had taken the grain from the people during those abundant years and now he was going to **sell** back to them what they had previously given him. So the people came to Joseph and bought grain from him at **exorbitant** prices—he was the only one selling grain, he could charge whatever price he wanted. So the people paid—paid dearly to put food on their family’s plates. Soon every coin in the whole region was Pharaoh’s. **All the money.** Everyone had run out of money, having given it all to Joseph to buy food.

But the famine raged on—it did not stop. So the people came to Joseph and begged for food, begged for grain to eat, saying, **“Are you just going to watch us die?! We have no more money!”** Joseph had the opportunity to be generous with the people, to have compassion on them. He had the chance to feed them because he had food and they didn’t. He had the chance to share. He had the chance to embody a godly generosity. But instead Joseph responded, **“Give us your animals. I will take them as payment since your money is gone.”** So the people of all the land began bringing their animals—their horses, cows, sheep, goats, and donkeys—to Joseph. Soon **all the animals** in the whole land belonged to Pharaoh.

But the famine raged on—it did not stop. The next year the people came back and they had again run out of food. They said, **“We have no money and no animals left, it all belongs to you! All we have left is our land and our bodies! Why should you just watch us die?! Purchase our bodies and our land in exchange for food! We will be Pharaoh’s slaves! Just give us food so we will not die!”** And again, Joseph had the opportunity to have compassion on these people. They had already given him **all their money** and **all their animals.** Surely that should have been enough for him. But Joseph did **not** have compassion. He did **not** share the food for free. Instead Joseph took **all the land** from the people. Every field was taken and given to Pharaoh. He also took their bodies—**all their bodies.** He relocated the people to where he wanted, moving most of them into the cities to work on Pharaoh’s building projects. But to some he gave seed and told them to work Pharaoh’s land. Twenty percent of everything they grew would be given to Pharaoh as taxes. The people said, **“You have saved our lives! We will be Pharaoh’s slaves!”** Overcome with the fear of death, the people willingly gave all their **money**, all their **animals**, all their **land**, and all their **bodies** to Egypt. They willingly became slaves of Pharaoh, promising to give him twenty percent of everything they made in taxes every year. The people thought they would die without Egypt, without Pharaoh, so they willingly gave everything to Egypt, they willingly gave themselves as **slaves** to Egypt. Anything to avoid death and discomfort.

We, the sons of Jacob, were part of this too. By moving to Egypt we had functionally said, **“We will be Pharaoh’s slaves!”** Our father had initially been so eager to get to Egypt to see his favorite son, Joseph, and to be taken care of by him during the famine. But as our father reached the end of his life, he started to see the **reality** of what he had gotten us into. Our family was now **trapped** in Egypt. **Everything** we had belonged to Pharaoh and Egypt—all our **money**, all our **animals**, all our **land**, all our **bodies**—and in the process our very **souls.** It didn’t matter that our brother Joseph was managing it. In fact, Joseph was the one who had devised the very system that now enslaved us. As our dad saw this and realized his fatal mistake, he called Joseph to him and demanded, **“Do not bury me in Egypt! When I die take me out of Egypt and bury me with my fathers!”** Joseph promised he would. But Joseph had to ask Pharaoh for **permission** to leave Egypt and go bury our father. And Pharaoh sent an armed escort of hundreds of chariots with us to make sure we **all** returned to Egypt. We loved to think we were **free.** But we were **slaves.** Even Joseph was a slave—but he was blind and couldn’t see that truth. We couldn’t leave unless Pharaoh allowed us to. We had all sold our bodies and souls to Egypt to get some food. We were no better than our uncle **Esau** who had sold his birthright to our dad for a bowl of soup.

After our father died, we were terrified. We wondered what Joseph would do to us. He had been so cruel and abusive to us before our father had moved to Egypt. We were afraid that the abusiveness would return now that our dad was dead. So we lied and said to Joseph, **“Our father’s dying wish was that you would forgive us for what we did to you when you were younger!”** Then we **bowed down** before Joseph in our fear and said, **“We are your slaves!”** Then he said to us, **“Do not be afraid! I am in God’s place! I will provide for you!”** Our great grandfather Abraham had been called out of slavery in Babylon and Assyria to trust in the Creator to provide for him and protect him. And now three generations later, our family was entrenched in Egypt, slaves once again, no longer trusting the Creator and instead trusting in Civilization to provide. Our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all dead. We had left the land the Creator had called us into. And we were trusting in Egypt, in Pharaoh, in Joseph to take care of us. We had said, **“We will be Pharaoh’s slaves.”** We had chosen this slavery for ourselves. We had signed up for it. We had even created it. We had wandered from the Creator and now we were slaves.

**“We will be Pharaoh’s slaves.”** We still **choose** to be slaves today. We still **create** our own slaveries. The people of Israel were slaves to Egypt, trusting in Egypt to provide for them and protect them. We are slaves to America, trusting in America to provide for us and protect us. We are also slaves to our addictions. We choose to be slaves because we are afraid of going hungry, afraid of pain, afraid of dying, afraid of living by faith in the Creator. We think trusting in Civilization is the only way. We think selling our bodies to employers and to governments is the only way to survive. We think giving our bodies over to our favorite self-medications is the only way to get by and get through. We fall down at the feet of those in power, we fall down at the feet of our self-medications and say, **“We will be your slaves!”** And it makes us absolutely **miserable.**

But the Creator wants something so much better for us. He wants us to be **free.** Free of our fears, anxieties, and worries that drive us to the feet of those in power, to the feet of our addictions and cause us to say, **“We will be your slaves!”** The Lord invites us to fall down before his feet and say to him in confident faith, **“We will be your slaves.”** For when we look to the Creator to provide and protect us, we are **free.** When we surrender ourselves to him as slaves, he sets us free. When we beg him to take care of us, he **freely** gives us all we need. He doesn’t take advantage of our weakness. He doesn’t take advantage of our fear. He gives and loves **freely.** He lifts us up and watches over us. So **stop** selling your body and soul to governments, employers, and lovers who promise to take care of you and make you feel good. Stop offering yourself as a slave to your self-medications and addictions. They will **fail** you. Offer yourself **only** to the Creator, come to Jesus in faith and say, **“I will be your slave.”** He will take care of you, he will love you, he will set you free. **Amen.**