



# Predictors of Calling: The Example of Joseph

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## INTRODUCTION

Hui et al. (2015) posited that supernatural events in a person's life could predict the person's calling. Thus, it is critical to study the phenomena or events in the lives of those called. The Bible provides numerous examples of divine calls in the Old and New Testaments. God called Noah so that He could use him to preserve lives in light of impending judgment upon the wickedness on the earth in his days (Genesis 6:5–22). Abraham's call from the land of Ur of the Chaldeans was the beginning of the Hebrew people (Genesis 12:1–3). Jacob's encounter with the angel informed him of his change of name to Israel, which meant that he was God's prince (Genesis 32:24–28). God called Moses by drawing his attention to the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–10), and many others in the Old Testament received their calls differently. In the case of Jeremiah, the Lord spoke to him directly, declaring that He had chosen him before he was even formed in his mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:4).

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There are also numerous examples of divine calls on individuals in the New Testament, such as those of the first disciples Jesus called, who He later commissioned as His apostles. The call of John the Baptist, whose conception was announced to his father by an angel, was significant as the forerunner of the awaited Messiah (Luke 1:5–17). Saul of Tarsus, later renamed Paul, received his calling in the supernatural encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–19; Acts 22:6–21; Acts 22). There are several others, each called uniquely. All the above callings had details of the mandate their respective calls were to fulfill. In drawing an individual's attention to the calling in their life, God can communicate to them in various ways. He can choose to use one or more extraordinary or supernatural events to get the message to the selected person. Three questions guided this study: (a) What were the predictors of the divine call in Joseph's life? (b) What phenomena in Joseph's experiences pointed to the divine call on his life? (c) How were the characteristics of a divine call evident in Joseph's life?

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The subject of the divine call is critical in the life of any person who is engaged in Christian ministry. This study helps draw attention to this crucial discussion and provokes deep reflection for all of those involved in ministry. Munroe (2009) recounts how many take on leadership roles through extraordinary encounters, not out of ambition, but also notes the deficit of good leadership and its associated challenges. For instance, the integrity of character is one of the values reportedly lacking in many leaders (Munroe, 2009), hence the critical significance of the leader's personality in fulfilling their calling. In this study, examining the predictors of the divine call includes a critical review of Joseph's character. We note that Joseph related everything in his life to God, to whom he was accountable and whom he sought to please. Yukl (2013) argues that the issue of character is critical in the life of a leader, and Horner (2004) affirms that leadership behavior determines the effectiveness of an organization in its performance. Thus, there is a link between the predictors of the divine call and the called person's characteristics.

## THE PREDICTORS OF A DIVINE CALL

Some of the predictors of a divine call that are evident in scripture include God speaking directly (Genesis 12:1), words of prophecy (Acts 13:1–14:28), dreams, and other supernatural experiences (Acts 9:1–19). In the case of Esau and Jacob, before they were born, God spoke to their mother Rebecca while still in their mother’s womb that “the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23), thus a predictor that Jacob had a divine call. Later, Jacob’s son, Joseph, had dreams that showed that he would be a leader (Genesis 37:5–11). Owing to the divine call, the person with such a call will also have specific outstanding and defining characteristics, as described below.

Pitt (2012) gives four characteristics of a person who has a divine call—“altruism, authority, autonomy, and abstract expertise” (p. 7). This chapter attempts to identify how the predictors of the call on Joseph’s life align with Pitt’s four characteristics. Thus, this chapter examines Joseph’s character and the predictors of his calling in light of the Biblical account narrated in Genesis 37:1–50:26. Joseph’s father noted his dreams in his early years as having some divine implication. His father asked him, “What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?” (Genesis 37:10 NKJV). The dream was the key predictor of Joseph’s call because, as later seen when his brothers went to Egypt during the famine, they bowed down to him: “And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth” (Genesis 43:26). Thus, his dream as a young lad, which had exasperated his brothers, was a predictor of his calling. In the end, when he was Prime Minister of Egypt, he had this to say to his brothers after the passing of Jacob, their father: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:20).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An examination of Pitt’s (2012) four characteristics of the divine call: altruism, authority, autonomy, and abstract expertise considers their relevance to Joseph’s experience. Altruism is defined as “unselfish concern for others manifested in constructive service” (Reed et al., 2011, p. 425) and has to do with integrity and ethical standards. The behavior exhibited by

Joseph while in charge of Potiphar's house is what Yukl (2013) describes as altruism—where one displays ethical leadership and cares for the interests and benefit of others rather than looking out for personal interests. We continue to identify the other characteristics identified in Joseph's life.

After being sold into slavery, it is noticeable that Joseph displayed authority in his statements and actions. Authority is the “capacity for action, power-to and power-over, which are linked to felicitous performative action within epistemic interpretative horizons” (Haugaard, 2017, p. 104). Authority is an aspect of Joseph's character that could have drawn Potiphar's attention to him in a way similar to the description of how Jesus spoke with authority (Luke 4:36). Joseph's encounter with Potiphar's wife and his position on the power his master had given him is in line with specifications of “limits of discretion” (Yukl, 2013, p. 124), where he declined Potiphar's wife's seductive advances.

Regarding autonomy, Luu (2015) defines it as “the opportunity to decide for oneself what and how to do the work” (p. 233). Autonomy is observed in Joseph's lived experience both while in Potiphar's house and prison. Finally, we take note of Joseph's abstract expertise. The two words—‘abstract’ and ‘expertise’—can be examined individually. The Merriam-Webster dictionary states that expertise is “the skill of an expert” or “expert opinion” (Expertise, 2021), while what is abstract is something “difficult to understand” (Abstract, 2021). Together, these words indicate that Joseph displayed skills of an expert that were ordinarily difficult to understand, clearly displayed in his interpretation of dreams. Below is a further description of these characteristics.

### *Altruism*

The evidence of altruism is in Genesis 37:2. Joseph was concerned about the deficit in his brothers' ethical conduct and integrity (Altruism, 2021), thus bringing this to the father's attention. In the ordinances that Moses gave to the Children of Israel, while in the wilderness on their exodus from Egypt, he warned them “... not to follow a crowd to do evil ...” (Exodus 23:2), a consciousness that Joseph seemed to have at an early age, even before the law of Moses was given. Joseph's encounter could be considered a ‘pre-reflective experience,’ where Laverty (2008) argues about not taking for granted something that warrants further examination. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) highlight altruism as a critical aspect of ethical leadership, as confirmed by other experts (Hage, 2013;

Williamson, 2016; Winston, 2003; Yukt, 2013). The interpretive analysis of Genesis 37:2 brings out Joseph's passion for ethical conduct and character integrity, which gave him authority when he was in Potiphar's house in Egypt.

Later, when his brothers came to Egypt, Joseph wanted to ensure that his brothers had developed a sense of ethical responsibility by testing them in various ways before he finally revealed himself to them. He wanted to know that they had changed in their conduct and outlook. Joseph also needed to act with confidence when Pharaoh wanted faithful people to care for his animals. Pharaoh said, "And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsman over my livestock" (Genesis 47:6b). Joseph had been found trustworthy by Pharaoh, and he helped his brothers address their deficiencies by putting them through various tests, causing them to reflect on their past errors. Joseph was also a servant leader, with the quality of altruism identified by Buford (2011) and Williamson (2016).

Anyone called of God will be tested in various ways (James 1:2–4), but the Apostle Paul assures us of God's ability to deliver us from temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). God allowed the testing of Joseph's integrity, where he remained faithful. Solomon's wisdom posited that the transformation of silver into jewelry happens after removing all impurities (Proverbs 25:4). In Joseph's life, he removed iniquity from his life and set himself apart to please God. The person with a call on his or her life must be proactive in keeping their life free from presumptuous sin (Psalm 19:13). Another man who had an anointing on him early in his life was David, the son of Jesse, but who later on slipped in his integrity when he committed adultery with his servant's wife and then, in a cover-up, conspired to have him murdered (2 Samuel 11:1–26, 12:15–25). Joseph's integrity remained intact; thus, his altruism remained a great example.

### *Authority*

Having been sold into slavery in Egypt, Joseph's slave master, Potiphar, recognized a sense of authority in his life, thus deciding to increase his responsibilities (Genesis 39:1–6), distinguishing or differentiating him from all his peers. Majerus (2010) explains the complexity of experiences, including the differentiation of self (DoS), that a person might go through in their journey of knowing God. Joseph's life story demonstrates an example of a DoS experience with evidence of progressive alignment

to God's purpose. Joseph went through encounters that would deepen his relationship with God, have an authentic experience with Him, and a sense of authority that prepared him for the responsibility of serving as Egypt's prime minister. Majerus' explanation of the DoS concept can shed light on Joseph's experiences where, as a young man, he was so fascinated by his dreams. How Joseph narrated his dreams alienated him from his brothers, worsened by his reporting their misconduct to their father, which led to their conspiracy to get rid of him.

Hofstede (1994) recognizes how absolute authority is with God, which He delegates to individuals to accomplish assigned tasks, but that such individuals must recognize the limits of their jurisdiction. Joseph sought to operate within the scope of the authority given to him by Potiphar and his ultimate accountability to God. Maciariello (2003) posits that the "realities of leadership require that a servant-leader be of exemplary character" (p. 400), which requires the appropriate exercise of authority—a test that Joseph passed in the way he managed Potiphar's house and business. Winston (2002) underscores how the leader's proper use of authority is critical for those who have a special calling, who must have the discipline and "the ability to get the big picture" (p. 174), something of which Joseph was keenly aware.

### *Autonomy*

Martin and Paul Hill (2012) define autonomy as the "perceptions of power/control over one's actions" (p. S80). Autonomy is related to self-leadership, where individuals can independently decide to do what they do and how they do it (Luu, 2015). Concerning self-leadership, autonomy guides a person in controlling their thoughts and actions at the individual level of processing alternative courses of action (D'Intino et al., 2007). His peers could have influenced him in Potiphar's house, where Joseph worked, but he remained faithful to his master and God, and the Lord was with him (Genesis 39:1–6). Potiphar gave Joseph full autonomy to manage all the affairs of his house.

Hodson et al. (1993) examined the impact of autonomy on worker solidarity and concluded that "worker autonomy and team organization of work do not undermine worker solidarity" (p. 412). In light of Joseph's experience, his teamwork with the rest of Potiphar's employees did not compromise his loyalty to his master because he acted with autonomy. Thus, he did not just work in solidarity with fellow workers

to compromise his core values but remained faithful in his commitment to God. By giving him autonomy, Potiphar recognized Joseph's capabilities and used the strategy of "uncertainty avoidance" (Wennekers et al., 2007, p. 141), giving Joseph the liberty to act independently.

### *Abstract Expertise*

Joseph was indeed an enigma because nobody could understand the source of his ability to interpret dreams except through an association with divine power. Joseph's skill could also be described as "esoteric expertise" (Lemon & Sahota, 2004, p. 492), where Lemon and Sahota explained that this kind of skill was neither commonplace nor readily available. Joseph interpreted the dreams of two fellow prisoners (Genesis 40:8). Pharaoh recognized Joseph's unique gift and said to him, "... I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it" (Genesis 41:15). Joseph recognized that the abstract expertise was not of himself but God's gift imparted on him and in line with God's calling on his life (Genesis 41:16). Concerning Pharaoh's analysis of Joseph's abstract expertise, seeing the inability of his advisers to interpret his dreams, perhaps he considered the opportunities he had already lost in not having a man like Joseph. Riddell (2017)'s viewpoint might reflect what could have gone through Pharaoh's mind. Riddell stated:

Having the opportunity to reflect on what decisions led to the unsuccessful outcome and what better decisions might have been made provides learning which has the potential to improve leadership skills and create expertise which can be accessed in the future. (p. 542)

To Pharaoh, Joseph was the person to provide the expertise that Egypt needed to deal with the challenges that lay ahead. As Pharaoh put it, "... inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people ...." (Genesis 41:39–40). The execution of a complex assignment requires appropriate expertise. Joseph was the man for the job. Moreover, the advice and information that he provided pleased Pharaoh and as noted by Chilvers (2008), "information provided should be appropriate, meaningful, and understandable from the perspective of those participating" (p. 436). Undoubtedly, Joseph's expertise was beyond the norm in Egypt.

However, Yukl (2013) cautions that a leader with “exceptional expertise” (p. 319) could quickly get conceited and refuse to accept any other people’s ideas. The need to avoid the danger of conceit could be why God had to take Joseph through a testing period to be adequately prepared for the mission ahead of him. Thus, God had fully equipped him for the task in line with the divine timing of Joseph’s exaltation in Egypt. There is no record to show that he failed in his responsibilities.

## METHODOLOGY

This study examined Joseph’s lived experiences, as given in the referenced Biblical text of Genesis 37:1–50:21, using the hermeneutical-phenomenological approach described by Laverty (2008). According to Laverty, the hermeneutical-phenomenological method is beneficial in understanding meanings in the context of a person’s lived experience. Semantic analysis (Osborne, 2006) was critical in establishing the meanings and contexts of the different parts of the selected text, beginning with texture analysis (Robbins, 1996). The identification and analysis of the text sections—defined as the opening texture, followed by the middle, then finally the closing texture—extracted the meanings that illustrated the story of Joseph’s life. Intertexture analysis (Robbins, 1996) also contrasts related texts explaining or describing the implications identified in the critical text under study. The study of the phenomena in Joseph’s life helped shed light on the predictors of his calling and the characteristics of his call. The phenomena studied were the events in his life—how he went through the various life stages—until he became prime minister of Egypt and the eventual reunion with his family.

This study carried out an exegetical analysis (Osborne, 2006; Robbins, 1996; Vanhoozer, 2009), examining the Biblical text of Genesis 37:1–50:26. Interpretive exegesis helped identify and bring out the ethical lessons in lived experiences (McDermott, 2016). At the same time, exegetical analysis (Osborne, 2006) and extraction of meanings from the text (Vanhoozer, 2009) helped highlight the message in the text while giving due consideration to its cultural context (Robbins, 1996). Three questions were answered through this methodology and examining the phenomena: (a) What were the predictors of the divine call in Joseph’s life? (b) What phenomena in Joseph’s experiences pointed to the divine call on his life? (c) How were the characteristics of a divine call evident in Joseph’s life?



### *Socio-Rhetorical Criticism*

In socio-rhetorical criticism, Robbins (1996) considers a text as “a thick tapestry [to be examined] from different angles” (p. 18), where multiple patterns emerge, creating meanings signified by that text—meanings that have ideological, cultural, and social dimensions. The use of Robbins’ inner-texture analysis focused on four kinds of textures: (1) repetitive-progressive; (2) opening-middle-closing; (3) narrational; and (4) argumentative (p. 46). Thus, this approach explored the discourse in the text to reveal the patterns that give meaning to the story of Joseph’s life.

#### *Repetitive-Progressive Texture*

According to Robbins (1996), there are “patterns of repetition and progression in Biblical text” (p. 46) that emerge to create a context. In the pericope (Genesis 38 is excluded in this analysis as it relates explicitly to Judah), the word “dream” appears 31 times, while the phrase “his brothers” is repeated 33 times. In Chapter 37 alone, there is a repetition of the word ‘dream’ five times, bringing upfront the significance of the dreams. In comparison, ‘his brothers’ appears 14 times in the chapter, repeated progressively up to the point of their conspiracy in Genesis 37:18–28. Joseph’s brothers were concerned about his dreams, and progressively, there was a build-up until they decided to get rid of the “dreamer” (Genesis 37: 19) to kill his dreams! In line with Vanhoozer (2009), the meanings of the events in Joseph’s life can be extracted from the text from the outset and onwards.

#### *Opening-Middle-Closing Texture*

Robbins (1996) argues the classification of sub-units in the text as opening, middle, and closing textures, each having specific messages. Genesis 37:2 gives the opening in the examination of Joseph’s lived experience, which ends with Genesis 50:26 when he died, of which Robbins posits that “the opening and closure ... exhibit the span of a rhetorical unit” (p. 50), where both the opening and closure are discernible. Robbins further stated that “a discernible beginning and ending are part of the overall arrangement of units” (p. 50). In this case, Genesis 37,

which introduces Joseph and the narration of his brothers' conspiracy to get rid of him, is the opening texture.

In the opening, Genesis 37:2 narrates that Joseph was "... tending the flocks with his brothers ...," which progressed into "he brought their father a bad report about them," leading to their hatred toward him. The father showed exceptional love for Joseph and made him a unique coat, which infuriated his brothers. The progressive texture reveals in Genesis 37:5 that "Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more," with the progression leading to another dream that further upset his brothers (Genesis 37:9–11). Finally, they conspired to sell him off to Ishmaelite merchants. According to McDermott's (2016) concept of tropology, the conspiracy of Joseph's brothers against him and the plot to kill him could be linked to the plan of salvation because the Messiah suffered rejection by his people and was betrayed by one close to him (Luke 22:47–71).

The middle texture, Genesis 39:1–40:23, opens with the sale of Joseph to Potiphar in Egypt. Genesis 39:2 states that "the Lord was with Joseph" with the repetitive-progressive texture that brings out "the Lord" in subsequent verses. According to Osborne (2006), the meaning of a piece of communication is in the text. Furthermore, in this case, there is evidence of the Lord's favor on Joseph's life. In Genesis 39:3, "his master saw that the LORD was with him," and the phrase "the Lord" is used seven times in this chapter, progressively showing how Joseph feared God and did everything in reverence of Him. However, God's favor on Joseph attracts the devil's scheme to test him through Potiphar's wife, who said "Come to bed with me!" (Genesis 39:12). The argumentative texture shows Joseph's response: "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). When he fled from her advances, it led to the false accusation that caused his imprisonment. Even in prison, the argumentative texture shows that "... while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him ..." (Genesis 39:20–21), so that the prison warder gave him significant leadership responsibilities. After that, in Genesis Chapter 40, the word "dream" comes up again, seven times, with the progressive texture culminating in Joseph's interpretation of the dreams of two fellow prisoners.

The closing texture starts with the Pharaoh having a dream. In Genesis Chapter 41, the word "dream" appears 15 times. This repetition progresses toward Joseph's interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams, finally ushering him into the honor of becoming Egypt's prime minister. The

argumentative texture significantly punctuates the progressive-repetitive texture of the Pharaoh's dreams. Here, the Pharaoh says to Joseph, "... I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it," where Joseph's response was, "I cannot do it ... but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires" (Genesis 41:15–16).

### *Narrational Texture*

Nicholas (2019) states that narrational texture "provides insight into the narrational voice" (p. 61), which sheds light on how Joseph narrates his dreams to his father and his brothers. However, before the narrative of Joseph's dreams, the beginning of the pericope has a narrative texture where Joseph noticed some unacceptable behavior that his brothers engaged in and "he brought their father a bad report about them" (Genesis 37:2). Afterward, Joseph narrated his dream, saying, "Listen to this dream I had" (Genesis 37:6) and then another "Listen ... I had another dream" (Genesis 37:9). Robbins' (1996) narrational texture argues a call to a person's attention in every use of the personal pronoun 'I.' In this case, the dreams drew attention toward Joseph and portrayed some cultural dimension—as an indicator of some future occurrence—that his narrative evoked in his hearers.

Robbins (1996) also points out the significance of a narrative sequence, which in this case includes the progression of the narration of two dreams in Joseph's case. Those dreams give the supernatural predictor of Joseph's calling, which is in line with Robbins' ideological texture, which has "some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power" (Robbins, 1996, p. 36). No wonder, in the argumentative texture that follows, the father said "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" (Genesis 37:10). Robbins' intertexture analysis that compares a text with another or other texts "to interpret aspects internal to the text under consideration" (p. 96) shows that Joseph's father understood the divine import of Joseph's dream. Thus, when Joseph reported his dream to him, showing how the whole family would bow down to him, his father too was startled and rebuked him but seriously pondered this and gave it serious consideration (Genesis 37:10–11). Joseph's dream was significant because his father, too, early on, had encountered God when He spoke to him in a dream at Bethel (Genesis 28:10–22).

### *Argumentative Texture*

According to Robbins (1996), the identification of argumentative texture is evident in the use of "... rhetorical resources of analysis in the context of repetitive-progressive, opening-middle-closing texture" (p. 58–59). When Joseph narrated his first dream to his brothers, the argumentative texture "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" (Genesis 37:8) reveals a "narrative context" (Robbins, 1996, p. 59) that progresses to the end of the chapter showing their plot to rid of him. The narrative reveals the plot.

Robbins (1996) notes that argumentative texture "shifts from one field of reasoning to another" (p. 77), which was evident in Joseph's brothers' discourse. When Joseph's brothers were feeding the flock in Shechem, Jacob sent Joseph to check on them. Seeing him afar, Joseph's brothers conspired to get rid of him, finally resorting to selling him to Ishmaelites traders. They said, "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him" (Genesis 37:20). A "contrary mode of action" (Robbins, 1996, p. 84), typical of argumentation texture, shows how one of the brothers proposed, "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him" (Genesis 37:22). Later, another mooted the idea of selling him off to Ishmaelite merchants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Vanhoozer (2009), the author's intended meaning is in the text. Thus, the data obtained from the above analysis helped shed light on the call on Joseph's life. Examining the phenomena in Joseph's life provided valuable insights into God's calling on his life, even from an early age. It is evident that there was something special about Joseph, but God had the bigger picture in mind, allowing him to go through betrayal for a purpose that neither he nor his brothers could imagine. It was evident to Joseph's brothers that he was the father's favorite because of the unique coat that his father gave him, which infuriated them (Genesis 37:3–4). Joseph's dreams predicted his significant future leadership role (Genesis 37:5–9) as shared with his brothers and father. The evidence in Joseph's dreams corroborates Hui et al.'s (2015) argument of predicting one's calling by examining supernatural events in that person's life.

### *What Were the Predictors of the Divine Call in Joseph's Life?*

Joseph's dreams, as narrated in Genesis 37:5–11, were the key predictors of his calling. His father clearly understood what they meant. His brothers interpreted this as an ambition, for they asked, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" (Genesis 37:8). It was not Joseph's ambition but a divine revelation. Joseph's unique coat, given to him by his father, was also symbolic of special favor on him. However, the dreams were the key predictors of the call, and the favor with Pharaoh came from Joseph's interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams.

### *What Phenomena in Joseph's Experiences Pointed to the Divine Call on His Life?*

The conspiracy by Joseph's brothers to sell him off to Ishmaelite traders rather than kill him was a critical phenomenon because God did not want him dead but taken to Egypt. Later, in Egypt, Joseph provided a haven for his family in the famine that was to come. Joseph's favor with Potiphar, putting him in charge of all his business, was an indicator of the divine call, as was his favor in prison, where the prison warden gave him charge over the entire prison. Finally, the gift of interpretation of dreams that became evident when he interpreted the dreams of fellow prisoners pointed to a divine call. The spiritual gift of interpretation of dreams brought him before the Pharaoh, leading to his elevation as Egypt's prime minister. Just like Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:1, everything has its timing; God is the one who has appointed the time for every activity that He has determined for those that He has called.

### *How Were the Characteristics of a Divine Call Evident in Joseph's Life?*

Pitt's (2012) four characteristics of the divine call: altruism, authority, autonomy, and abstract expertise are significantly relevant to Joseph's experience. The characteristic of altruism was evident in Joseph's life, as observed in the narrative of his life story. He was concerned about the deficit in his brothers' ethical conduct, thus bringing this to the father's attention (Genesis 37:2). It is clear that after being sold into slavery, Potiphar, his master, was exceptionally pleased with his diligence, giving him increasing responsibilities and putting him in charge of everything in his house and business (Genesis 39:1–6).

*Altruism*

Joseph's passion for ethical conduct and character integrity made him stand out in Potiphar's house in Egypt. His encounter with Potiphar's wife brings out this aspect when he chooses the fear of God over momentary personal pleasure (Genesis 39:6–12). Joseph faced temptation, but he resisted it (Genesis 39:7–15). His fear of God was more potent than the temptation, for he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Joseph's stance contrasts with David's experience, as recorded in 2 Samuel 11:2–27, who lusted after another man's wife, committed adultery with her, had the husband killed and then married her. Thus, Joseph passed the test of sexual morality, which appears to be a critical issue for any man who has a divine call. In contrast, Samson, who too had a divine call, failed to manage his sexual desires and the love of women overrode his fear of God, leading him to a harlot called Delilah, who caused his demise (Judges 16:1–21).

*Authority*

Joseph's character depicted the authority that drew Potiphar's attention to him in a way similar to the description of how Jesus spoke with authority (Luke 4:36). The record states that "his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did" (Genesis 39:3). There is evidence that Joseph had significant authority and was a trustworthy servant wholly trusted by his master. His integrity was manifest in his conduct, giving him the power in his actions. Joseph's encounter with Potiphar's wife and his use of the delegated authority from his master was in line with the specifications of "limits of discretion" (Yukl, 2013, p. 124), where he declined Potiphar's wife's seductive advances. It was a proper exercise of authority.

*Autonomy*

As a young man, aged 17, while in the company of his brothers feeding their father's flock, Joseph noticed some unacceptable behavior by his brothers. He decided not to join them nor be quiet about it but reported this to their father (Genesis 37:2). He was autonomous, not conformed to what others were doing (Romans 12:2). His life experience in Potiphar's house and prison shows a degree of autonomy. When he worked in Potiphar's house, his peers could have influenced him, but he remained faithful to his master and to God, and the Lord was with him (Genesis 39:1–6). Thus, Potiphar gave him full autonomy to manage all the affairs

of his house. We note that “Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph’s care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate” (Genesis 39:6), indicating the autonomy with which Joseph operated. It is noteworthy that while in prison, “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” (Genesis 39:23), a sign of autonomy with which he operated in prison.

### *Abstract Expertise*

In Joseph’s life, there was evidence of abstract expertise displayed in the skills that were ordinarily difficult to understand, how he managed Potiphar’s business, his management of the prison business—where both his bosses were delighted with his performance. This expertise was also clearly displayed in his interpretation of dreams. In Genesis 41:1–13, God caused the Pharaoh to have dreams that troubled him, yet none of his philosophers could give him meaning to these dreams, which opened the door for Joseph’s presentation to the Pharaoh. There was a significant display of Joseph’s abstract expertise before the Pharaoh. Joseph was taken out of prison and presented before the Pharaoh. His gift set him apart from the wise men of Egypt, leading to his elevation in that kingdom to the position of prime minister (Genesis 41:14–47). Joseph attributed to God the ability to interpret the Pharaoh’s dreams and did not want to take personal credit for this spiritual gift (Genesis 41:16), a trap that many ministers fall into when they project themselves as if the power is their own. The predictors of calling, which were the two dreams that Joseph had in his youth, have an exciting symbolism concerning Pharaoh’s two dreams which Joseph interpreted as having the same meaning. Pharaoh’s dreams contrasted with Joseph’s own two dreams that had the same meaning, both of which predicted his eventual elevation to a prominent position of authority.

### *Implications of the Divine Call in Business and Leadership*

An extrapolation filters out four critical lessons from the call on Joseph’s life discussion. These lessons will apply to a Christian with a divine call in business or other areas of leadership. They are (a) life of purpose; (b) controlled temperament; (c) inspired, innovative leadership; and (d) how to navigate the dilemmas faced by leaders.

First, a Christian leader must acknowledge that he or she is sanctified (Hebrews 10:10) and therefore must live a life of purpose to please the master, according to 1 Corinthians 6:11 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. The life of purpose highlights the finished work of Christ and the responsibility of the believer—a new vessel about which Jesus stated that new wine was not for old wineskins but deserved new wineskins (Mark 2:22). Second, the virtue of self-control is critical in the life of a leader. This virtue is part of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23. A Christian leader must, therefore, have a Holy Spirit-controlled temperament, as was evident in Joseph’s life. Third, the Christian leader must depend on divine inspiration and keep God central in his or her life. One innovative leader in the Bible was Bezalel, about whom God told Moses that He had given him unique abilities to do the work he was called to do (Exodus 31:1–6). Thus, inspired innovation is a divine imperative. Fourth, Christian leaders face many challenges, including the pressure to conform to the world’s values and standards. The Apostle Paul unequivocally warned believers concerning this, advising us to allow God to transform us by renewing our minds so we “may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). Below is a brief review of each of the above lessons.

### *A Life of Purpose*

Joseph lived a life of purpose and, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, with the call of God evident in his life from an early stage, which his father noted. Warren (2011), in his discussion of the ‘purpose-driven life,’ states how a purposeful life starts with God. As the Apostle Paul puts it in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, a divine call by God is unique and must worthy treating with reverence. In line with putting wine into suitable containers, Jesus stated that new wine needed new wineskins (Mark 2:22; Matthew 9:17). Just as Joseph refused to follow in the ways of his brothers, the Christian leader must make a deliberate decision to live a life of purpose, directed by the Holy Spirit and not follow the crowd to do evil (Exodus 23:2). The Christian leader has to present himself or herself as a new vessel to receive the new wine or anointing to enable them to fulfill the purpose of their calling. As an effective leader, like Joseph, the Christian leader must have the “stamina and tolerate stress well” (Lussier & Achua, 2015, p. 36), and commit to hard work that pursues their life purpose. Winston (1999) states that a leader’s vision and mission are critical. Moreover, the leader’s vision comes from having a life of purpose and knowing what



to do and what not to do. Vision and mission will set each leader apart (Lussier & Achua, 2015; Winston, 1999; Yukl, 2013).

### *Controlled Temperament*

Winston (2002) argues that “blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5) refers to “controlled discipline” (Winston, 2002, p. 41). Winston states that meekness is great power brought under control, just like how the horse—despite its incredible power and strength—is controlled by the rider. God has put immense power into His people. However, the Christian leader must allow the Holy Spirit to lead so that the fruit of the Spirit, as enumerated in Galatians 5:22–23, can be evident, of which self-control is critical. Haggai (1986) posits that self-control is a way of life. He stated, “the concept of self-control does not mean that the Christian abstains from certain habits ... it means all that all aspects of his life are brought under the mastery of the Holy Spirit” (Haggai, 1986, p. 73). According to Haggai, it is a life of discipline—a key lesson from Joseph’s life.

The Christian leader must have evidence of a controlled temperament in his or her life. Lussier and Achua (2015) posit that leaders without self-control are unstable and can misuse their power and that “stable leaders are emotionally in control of themselves, stable and positive” (p. 37). Without discipline, it is not possible to have a controlled temperament. Sometimes, God may take one through a time of testing and preparation—as in Joseph’s case before he got to the place where he forgave his brothers when he realized God’s purpose in his life experience (Genesis 50:20). The testing that a leader goes through helps in developing a controlled temperament, producing patience or perseverance in one’s life, according to James 1:3.

### *Inspired, Innovative Leadership*

Yukl (2013) refers to “innovative thinking” (p. 414) as a critical leadership behavior in effective organizational leadership. An innovative leader, like Bezalel (Exodus 31:1–6), has to have inspiration (Davila et al., 2006; Lussier & Achua, 2015; Yukl, 2013). Davila et al. (2006) posit that inspiration is critical in innovative leadership. An innovative leader will be a person full of wisdom drawing from insights that lead to breakthroughs. King Solomon, a man of great wisdom, stated, “If the axe is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success” (Ecclesiastes 10:10). There is evidence of great wisdom

and innovativeness in Joseph's life, from when he was in Potiphar's house, where after noticing his unique abilities, high level of responsibility and trustworthiness, his master entrusted everything to him. The fear of God is where wisdom begins (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10), and the Christian leader must be deliberate in cultivating a close relationship with God. Thus, the Holy Spirit will inspire wisdom in the innovation process.

Businesses and organizations need innovative leaders like Joseph, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to bring transformation to the marketplace. Joseph's thinking was always 'outside the box,' which Lussier and Achua (2015) note as a quality critical for innovative leadership which "is a culture that encourages innovation" (p. 444). Joseph's inspiration came from his relationship with God, where his testimony was evident to all in the reports about him both in Potiphar's house and later in prison, as well as his interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams. Pharaoh quickly noticed Joseph's unique gift and abilities and promoted him to a high position of responsibility. There is a great dearth of innovative, inspired leaders like Joseph in the marketplace, organizations, or wherever we serve.

#### *Dilemmas Faced by Leaders*

Haggai (1986) notes a global leadership crisis marked by moral degeneration affecting all aspects of society. Christian leaders are in the midst of this dilemma, the church included. Woolliams (2013) posits that all leaders face dilemmas during their leadership journey. Joseph faced various dilemmas, including his brothers' unethical conduct, to which he refused to conform. Potiphar's wife's sexual advances toward Joseph highlight a shared experience of many Christian leaders, where some, unfortunately, fail the test, as seen from media reports worldwide. Thus, Joseph's experience teaches us helpful lessons because he overcame temptation, just as scriptures teach us (1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 5:16; James 1:12; James 4:7). Edmunds et al. (2008) observe that leadership literature had identified four areas of dilemmas faced by leaders, being: (a) control and change; (b) ethics; c) the fundamental imperative of professional versus personal engagement; and, (d) the leader's principal function.

Edmunds et al.'s (2008) four common leadership dilemmas show us the leader's desire to control and change the internal and external environment. In Joseph's life, Genesis 37:2 brings out the evidence of altruism where he was uncomfortable with his brothers' conduct that was external to what their father knew at home, which irked him. His

spirituality dictated his value system. He brought information about the brother's delinquency to his father's attention, causing him much trouble with his brothers (Genesis 37:2–20). Christian leaders will always face such contradictions among their colleagues, whether believers or not. Thus, in line with Laverty's (2008) observation, whatever is taken for granted will often warrant further examination. Christian leaders operate in the era of perilous times, as predicted by the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1–5, marked by a degeneration of ethical values or deviation from Biblical standards. Concerning ethical issues versus expectations, spirituality in the workplace demands that one live by Biblical values despite popular culture (Lussier & Achua, 2015). Thus, businesses and organizations need leaders who will take a stand on ethical issues and values.

Yukl (2013) also refers to limits of discretion. Despite Joseph's abstract expertise and unique gifts, he had no conflict between personal and professional stances. In applying discretion, different paradigms of leadership (Lussier & Achua, 2015; Yukl, 2013) have to be appropriately applied. Unfortunately, some leaders do not seem to apply discretion (Haggai, 1986; Yukl, 2013). Potiphar gave Joseph full authority over all of his household based on the evidence of his fear of God and professional conduct. Christian leaders have the challenge of being consistent in personal and professional conduct, where Haggai (1986) argued for excellence in everything a leader does. Joseph's actions showed his integrity and no dichotomy between his personal and professional conduct. He had the proper exercise of authority; thus, in his encounter with Potiphar's wife, he did not abuse the delegated authority by compromising his values, a big challenge even among Christian leaders. Considering Joseph's abstract expertise—the issue of a leader's principal function of balancing between leading and managing is significant—it is evident that he provided the required leadership for managing grain purchases and storage in different cities, as recorded in Genesis 41:47–49. Lussier and Achua (2015) noted the overlap between leadership and management, and Joseph's success must have come out of the successful application of different paradigms of leadership, where he had to both manage and lead the emergency management assigned to him by the Pharaoh—helpful cues for Christian leaders.

## IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study used the life of Joseph in looking at the predictors of divine calling, where the two dreams in his youth were the key predictors of his calling. However, this is not exhaustive, as one would need to study others with a sacred calling to explore other predictors of calling and whether the characteristics attributed to Joseph—which augmented his calling—are valid in the case of the others. Thus, further research into the different predictors of calling and other characteristics of the divine call in the lives of the various people called into ministry would enrich the subject of divine calls. Perhaps such a study could make a comparison between Biblical characters as well as others in church history, both contemporary and historical.

## CONCLUSION

While different people may have exceptional predictors of the divine call on their lives, each person will have unique experiences and encounters that define their calling. There will be some convergence between the scriptural confirmation and divine interventions to confirm the authenticity of a person's call. Pitt's (2012) four characteristics of the divine call, referred to in this chapter as the augmenters of a divine call—altruism, authority, autonomy, and abstract expertise—are significant. However, they are not exclusive, though instructively relevant to Joseph's experience. At 17 years of age, Joseph's two dreams were the indicators of his calling, which though evident at an early age, actualized at age 30. His deliberate action to keep his life pure—how he fled from sexual sin when he faced temptation—contrasts with the account of David's conspiracy to commit adultery, later degenerating into murder in the attempt to cover his tracks. The phenomenological analysis of Joseph's life experiences strongly shows the divine call on his life. Joseph's story is an excellent example of a person called from an early age, taken through more than a decade of training, testing, and equipping before he finally became the leader that God had revealed to him that he would be. Joseph was pivotal in fulfilling what God said to Abraham regarding how his descendants would live as strangers in a foreign land. It was also through Joseph that his family, which later became the nation of Israel, was saved from perishing in the global famine. God raised Joseph to save not only his family from dying but also the world from hunger. Many people dream of

what God wants them to do but do not submit to the preparation process. It is necessary and critical for the leader's readiness to allow for God's testing and perfect timing for the commencement of the assignment. A Christian leader must have a life of purpose, a controlled temperament, be inspired and innovative, and wisely navigate the dilemmas leaders face. Thus, we learn great lessons from Joseph's experiences for appropriate application in business and organizational leadership.

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