

"My brethren, count it all joy
when you fall into various trials,
knowing that the testing of your
faith produces patience."

James 1:2-3 NKJV



Joseph: A Faith For All Seasons

Now you tell me, how is an impressionable teenager likely to react when he is betrayed by his own brethren, a victim of envy and jealousy, and sold into slavery to be carried into a distant land where no cry of help will be heard? And that's not the half of it. Forsaken, forgotten, a victim of false accusation and ingratitude, he is finally left in an Egyptian prison to rot. And he didn't deserve any of it! In fact, much of his misfortune occurred when he was doing exactly what God would have him to do. Can you imagine the opportunities here to doubt God and forsake His way? Why, it's enough to cause a man to identify with the words of a once popular song: "Causing me to doubt all about God and his mercy; if he really does exist, why did he desert me? In my hour of need, I truly am indeed, alone again, naturally."

Oh, but what a beautiful story the life of Joseph is. No whining, no defeatism, no bent on revenge, no forsaking God. And though we can only imagine what he suffered and how he hurt at the hand of others, we can only conclude from how he handled his life that he was the victor. The people of God are drawn to the story of Joseph because of his indomitable spirit, unquenchable hope, and his life-sustaining faith. Such an attitude makes any life not only worth living but an ultimate victory. Permit me to identify certain key ingredients in Joseph's life and thinking that made his life so powerfully victorious and successful.

Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.
Jacksonville, FL 32220

Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Classes / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

www.mariettacoc.com

1. He never lost his faith in God. Perhaps this does not sound like a particularly novel observation — but have you noticed how doubt and criticism of God and even a failure to depend upon God are conspicuously missing from the text? This becomes even more significant when you remember that it is not characteristic of the Bible to ignore the weaknesses of God’s stalwarts — people like Abraham, David, and the like. A faith for all seasons was truly Joseph’s most valuable asset. He relied upon God when all was well; he depended upon God when everything looked bleak. An example of Joseph’s close relationship with God and his continued reliance upon Him is seen when, confined within prison walls, he tells the baker and the butler, who are saddened in having no one to interpret their dreams, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, I pray you” (Genesis 40.8; see also 41.15-16).

2. Joseph lived with a constant awareness of God’s powerful presence. “Jehovah was with Joseph” — that’s what the Bible states on several occasions (Genesis 39.2, 21). However, the key to Joseph’s life was that *he knew it was so*. And this awareness becomes critical when you note that these statements were made just as Joseph entered new periods of trial and suffering. The Bible tells us that God knows what is going on in our lives and He is ready and able to strengthen His people. However, without our faith in this promise we can receive little comfort or strength. Loneliness is one of the more powerful forces that can make suffering so debilitating. From Joseph’s life we learn the difference in being alone in an Egyptian prison and being in prison while still in the presence of God. In times of temptation, Joseph’s faith in the constant presence of God gave him the kind of strength that we all need. He found himself alone with Potiphar’s wife, a woman who had literally thrown herself at him, pleading for his sexual participation. If he succumbed to lust, who would know? Yet he responded to the woman, “How can I do this thing and sin against God?”

3. Joseph lived with an overriding conviction that God was working His divine purpose. Joseph did not view his suffering as God’s personal vendetta against him. Our inclination when things are not going our way is to wonder, “why me?” Joseph, though, is found saying, “Ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50.20). If we are not careful, whatever personal suffering we must endure in this life gets twisted out of perspective in our minds in relation to God’s great scheme of things. God is working His eternal purpose and we have His promise that ultimately all things will work together for the good of those who trust Him. Though some television preachers are peddling the idea that God becomes one’s personal caterer, we must realize that our personal comfort and financial success has low priority in God’s greater scheme of redemption. The carnal mind will shudder at the thought. But our commitment to God and His spiritual purposes, like Joseph’s must be made well in advance of our trials — and then when trials come we can be asking, “How can I best serve?” Instead of “why me?”

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