

Life Lessons from Joseph

By Beth Moller

As college graduation grew ever nearer, I started worrying and wondering about the future. For the past three years my life had revolved around studying, track practice, violin lessons, teaching assistant jobs, and various other college things. But very quickly, that period of my life would be ending and I would be embarking on a new stage of life. During times of change, I have found it to be incredibly easy to let fear and doubts take hold and overpower faith and trust in God. However, our trust in God is not blind trust. We have so many reasons to be confident in our faith and confident that God will see us through every different stage or trial of life.

Throughout the Bible, God provides examples of men and women who were tested by having to patiently wait for fulfillment of promises, deliverance from difficulties, and direction regarding the next step in life. They were required to trust God through good times and bad. In hindsight, we can see there is evidence of God's faithfulness to His people despite periods of apparent silence. In our own lives, we can be assured that God is there for us as well, even when it seems like nothing is happening to change our circumstances. He is faithfully preparing us for His plans for our future.

One of my favorite people in the book of Genesis is Joseph. Through his life, we can see that he was not perfect but that he used difficult situations to learn what God wanted to teach him and that he faithfully waited for God's deliverance. Joseph waited patiently on the Lord's timing and guidance and worked for the Lord wherever he was placed. My mom likes to remind me to be faithful where I am placed in whatever season of life I am in. Joseph is a perfect example of that advice being played out. We can imagine some of the things Joseph felt going from his father's favorite son to the slave of an Egyptian. Yet in Genesis 39 we see that Joseph was faithful in the new role he was thrust into.

Genesis 39:2-4 says, "*The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned*" (NIV). The passage makes a point of noting that God blessed the household of Potiphar because of Joseph. I also find it interesting how it notes in verse 2 that Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph. If we are living for God, even during times when we feel like our work is mundane or beneath us, we can be an incredible witness for God. In a land filled with false gods, Potiphar recognized the true God's hand of guidance with Joseph.

Despite his success, I wonder if Joseph thought the rest of his life was going to be spent serving as a slave. However, as we know from Genesis, Joseph's status declined even more. Due to Potiphar's wife, Joseph traded his life of some standing for the life of an imprisoned slave. Once again, in this new situation Joseph trusted God and was faithful in the little things to the point where the guard had complete confidence in him. Scripture is very clear where Joseph's success came from as well. Verse 21b of Genesis 39 says, "*The LORD was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.*"

If I put myself in Joseph's place, I am pretty sure I would be very discouraged by now. Getting pulled away from your family to being a slave and then a prisoner seems like ample reasons to be discouraged and lose sight of God having a plan for your life. But Joseph shows us that if we keep being faithful, keep moving ahead, and keep trusting in God, His plan for our lives will be revealed.

I struggle with patience at times and human nature says we want to be satisfied now. However, Joseph's life shows us that God requires us to wait for His blessings to be revealed, often, if not always, so He can adequately prepare us for what He has for us. After Joseph seemingly had a way out of prison through the cupbearer, he was forgotten by the cupbearer for two years, so we know he was in prison for over two years. Yet in God's perfect timing He raised Joseph up to be second-in-command in Egypt, gave him a wife and children, and allowed Joseph to be the one to provide for his family as well as the people of Egypt and surrounding nations.

Since hindsight is 20/20, I wonder what Joseph thought reflecting on his life. Having his life recorded for us to read in Genesis should encourage us to keep being faithful where we are placed and strive to trust God even when fear may be our default. Through the life of Joseph, we can have assurance that God is faithful to us and gives us blessings more abundant than we can imagine. Joseph's life is also a good illustration of how God prepares us for specific roles at specific times in our lives.

If you are in a season of waiting, a time of trial, or are feeling stuck in a certain place in life, I encourage you to look to the example that Joseph left for us and marvel at God's provision and goodness. He is always there for us even when we cannot see the purpose for what He is taking us through. When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers he told them, *"But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God"* (Genesis 45:7-8a). I sometimes marvel at how God has worked in my life, and I look forward to being able to look back later in my life and recognize God's hand at work even more as Joseph did when he looked back on his life. He continually gave credit to God and reminded his brothers that what they meant for evil, God used for good.