

Keeping Our Focus When Our World Seems Blurred

- *Genesis 50:20*

➤ **Today, I would like to speak to you for a little bit about the subject of perseverance through adversities & trials that we encounter.**

- I want to start out by asking you a question. “Do you believe in the One, True God?” If so, what’s your evidence?
 - In each of our lives, we prove our faith by the choices we make, the life we live, the confidence that we possess ... all those are proving facets of our faith.
- We as a body of believers will encounter “bumps” along the journey of our lives, no question about it. But in the midst of that pain, where is your focus?
 - Many of you have walked through sickness this past year & even this year. We become tired & discouraged, but you don’t give up b/c your focus is on God, not your sickness. Deep down you understand that God isn’t finished with you yet. There is still a greater plan.
 - Death is one of the major obstacles that we will face in our families & it is a devastating time where many questions cloud our minds. But our focus can’t be just about the present, but about eternity. We choose to carry on b/c God is not finished with us yet.
- One of my great concerns & I believe one of the great challenges of the church of today is the encouraging of the saints to carry on through disappointment, trials, and even falling to personal sin in their lives.
- But how can Christians carry on? What gives us the strength to pick up the pieces & move forward? It’s not about who we are, but it’s about Who lives within us. It’s also about living the right life & having a growing relationship with the Lord. It’s about keeping our eyes on God instead of our circumstances.

➤ **There are a lot of tremendous people throughout the Bible whom God used greatly even in the midst of difficulties & what would seem to be setbacks in their life.**

- Job
- Daniel
- Hebrew boys
- Paul

➤ **One of those examples in scripture is the life of Joseph.**

- Joseph encountered some difficult struggles in his life, yet he didn’t lay down or quit on God b/c he kept his eyes on the Lord.
- And I want you to know this morning that God still uses people who walk faithfully with Him even in the midst of hardship.
- The genuineness of our faith, devotion and love for God isn’t revealed when things are going well for us. Rather, it comes out during times of hardship and trial.

I. Joseph Had A Spiritual Heritage

- His grandfather Abraham, a devout man, heard the voice of the Lord and received several promises from Him.
- God spoke to Joseph’s father Jacob through dreams and in person. He also gave Jacob a new name—Israel—and vowed that all peoples would be blessed through his numerous descendants (Gen. 28:14, 32:28).
 - Part of the reason Joseph is where he is b/c of the Godly heritage of his family.

II. Joseph walked in step with God throughout a number of trials. He was . . .

- a. **Hated by his brothers.** Jacob favored Joseph, and as a result, his siblings despised him (Gen. 37:3-4). When Joseph shared about the dream in which his entire family bowed down to him, they detested him even more.
 - i. You ever been looked down upon, talked about or even hated b/c of trying to do the right thing?
 - ii. Those are moments when our mind tells us it's not worth it, but our heart knows God isn't finished with us yet.
 - 1. John 15:18-19 – "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."
 - iii. This could have been a time where young Joseph sought the love of his family more than the will of God. Instead he remained true to the Lord. He kept his eyes on God.
- b. **Plotted against.** When Joseph came to Shechem where his brothers were tending the flocks, the men saw a chance to kill him.
 - i. Reuben, the oldest, persuaded them to merely throw him into a pit—his plan was to rescue Joseph later.
 - ii. Judah suggested that they sell Joseph to a caravan of travelers (Midianites) on their way to Egypt.
- c. **Sold as a slave to the king's bodyguard.**
 - i. We are talking about a young man, probably 17-18 years old. His life up until this point in many ways was extremely unfair.
 - ii. Now his own brothers have done away with him, sold him into slavery, yet Joseph never became bitter or vengeful.
 - iii. Potiphar soon began to notice that the young man was a skillful manager and eventually placed his entire household under Joseph's care (Gen. 39:3-6).
- d. **Falsely accused by his master's wife.**
 - i. Finally perhaps he was getting the attention he deserved. Maybe he would finally get the position he deserved. Maybe now life would begin to treat him the way he deserved to be treated. Ever felt like that?
 - ii. Unfortunately though, he got the wrong kind of attention from none other than his boss's wife. She approached Joseph & tried to persuade him to lay with her.
 - iii. When Joseph resisted her offer, Potiphar's wife accused him of trying to rape her (Gen. 39:7-9). As a result, her husband sent Joseph to jail.
- e. **Imprisoned.**
 - i. Just as things began to go right in his life, the bottom falls out again. But Joseph kept his eyes on God.
 - ii. Now lets stop right here. Joseph must have wondered why are all these bad things happening to me?
 - 1. Because I obeyed & honored my father, I end up in a pit.
 - 2. In the face of honoring my master, I end up in prison, and as far as we know from the text, he hadn't done anything wrong.
 - 3. Joseph is doing what is right. His circumstances seem completely unfair. But God by the evil deed of others which God does not condone, has Joseph exactly where He wants him. The Lord is perfectly in control.
 - iii. Even in prison, God continued to work in Joseph's life & in just a short time he had won the confidence & favor of the chief jailor & Joseph was put in charge of all the prisoners. (Gen. 39:21-23).

1. Now this may not seem like a big deal to you. This is not really what we would call an answer to prayer, right? I mean if we get put in prison for something we didn't do, I want out, I'm not concerned about being over a bunch of criminals. But that's the way we think when our focus is on our circumstances & not on God.
 2. These circumstances tell me that Joseph was a tremendous man who was well trusted by all he came into contact with.
 - a. Genesis 39:23 – "The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper."
 - b. If we are not careful we can lose our witness in the midst of personal sickness or suffering b/c our focus is on the situation ... not on God.
 - iv. God was continuing to do a great work in Joseph's life as long as he kept trusting in Him.
- f. Forgotten by the cupbearer.**
- i. While Joseph was in jail, he interpreted the dreams of the royal cupbearer and the baker (Gen. 40:8-16). He asked the cupbearer to remind Pharaoh that Joseph had been unfairly imprisoned. Unfortunately, the man forgot about him (Gen. 40:23).
 - ii. But even though the cupbearer had forgotten Joseph, God had not forgotten him. He would spend 2 more years in this prison, but God was preparing him for what was to come.
 - iii. Let me ask you. With all these things going on in Joseph's life, if this had been you, at what point would you have given up on God?
 - iv. We have to fix our eyes on Jesus tonight.
 1. Hebrews 12:2 – "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;"
- g. Brought before Pharaoh.**
- i. When he was asked to interpret the ruler's dreams, Joseph acknowledged the one true God and admitted his own inability to understand dreams without the Lord's help (Gen. 41:16).
 - ii. After Joseph interpreted the dreams and recommended storing the harvest for the seven bountiful years, Pharaoh placed him in charge of the program and made him second in command over all of Egypt.
 1. Gen. 41:39-40 – "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou."
 2. This is HUGE! He is now 2nd in command over all of Egypt! Had he not gone through the trials of his life, he would not be where he is at this moment.
 3. Even through adversities & disappointments, God has a plan for our lives.
 4. Philippians 1:6 – "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"
- h. Reunited with his brothers.**
- i. At age 30, Joseph finally saw the fulfillment of the dream he first had as a 17-year-old: all his brothers bowed down to him (Gen. 50:18). In spite of how they treated him, he didn't seek revenge or retribution. Joseph recognized the hand of the Lord in his being brought to Egypt (Gen. 45:4-5).
 - ii. Because Joseph kept his faith & his eyes on God, he not only saved his family's lives, but he also saved millions in Egypt through this time of famine.

iii. Interestingly enough, there is a great similarity between Joseph & our Savior.

1. Between the life of Joseph and Jesus, Joseph was dearly loved by his father, yet he was hated by his brothers, stripped of his clothing, sold for the price of a slave, taken to Egypt to tempt him, falsely accused, bound in chains, and condemned with criminals.
 2. After though he suffered, he was highly exalted. He wept for his brothers, forgave those who had wronged him and ultimately saved them from certain death. Moreover, what men did to hurt him, God turned it around for good.
- The challenges of life can leave believers feeling discouraged, anxious, and fearful. Our distress can seem purposeless, and we wonder why the Lord isn't answering our prayers. But God is not finished with you yet.
 - Finally, look at Joseph's response to his brothers in Genesis 50:20.
 - o Genesis 50:20 – “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”