

Lessons from the Life of Joseph
Transforming Your Circumstances
Genesis 39:1-23

- I. We've been talking about Joseph and the lessons we can learn from his story.
 - a. Specifically, what can Joseph's story teach us about trusting God?
 - i. We know that when God raises up a dream, he raises up a dream giver.
 - ii. And we know that because all dreams are opposed, we should be ready for opposition – trouble and adversity - when it comes.
 - b. But how should we act in the middle of difficult times?
 - i. Trouble rarely comes and goes.
 - ii. It has a habit of sticking around for awhile.
 - iii. What should we do when the walls start shaking and the sky starts flashing?
 - iv. How can we “keep the faith” when all around us seems dark?
- II. Joseph's days were growing dark.
 - a. He ends up in Potiphar's house only to be pursued by Potiphar's wife.
 - i. He's given great responsibility in Potiphar's house {maybe this is what the dream was all about}
 - ii. But because he refuses Potiphar's wife's advances, he loses his job, gets stripped of his responsibilities, and gets thrown into prison.
 - b. And in prison, once things start looking up again, there are other setbacks.
 - i. What is God doing?
 - ii. I thought you promised me the dream?
- III. The dream can get overwhelmed by circumstances... if we let it.
 - a. Joseph could have easily become despondent because of his circumstances.
 - i. He went from a position of great authority to prison almost instantly.
 - ii. It would have been easy to believe that God had abandoned him or that Joseph somehow had misread God's dream.
 - b. But hold on a second.
 - i. Verse 2: “the Lord was with Joseph,” in Potiphar's house when all was going well.
 - ii. Verse 20-21: “But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him.”
 - c. Whether things were going great or whether things were hitting rock bottom – the Lord was with Joseph.
 - i. He's with you and me too.
 - ii. God's presence, God's attention, and even God's blessing aren't dependent upon our outward circumstances.
 - iii. They are dependent on the inward circumstances of our heart.
 - d. If you are struggling today, to make sense of the ups and downs of your life – here's one thing you can bank on.
 - i. God hasn't abandoned you. Not by a long shot.
 - ii. Whatever your situation, God is right there.
- IV. But still, it's hard not to get overwhelmed. But when we give in to the struggle.
 - a. We forget the dream.
 - i. We forget that God has a plan and a purpose.
 - ii. And that the very thing we see as a burden and a trial is the very thing that God wants to use to fulfill his dream.
 - iii. Joseph never forgot the dream God had given him.
 1. He was always keenly aware of God's presence in good times and bad.

2. He tell Potiphar's wife in verse 9: "How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"
 3. In other words, God's right here and he's watching and he wants the best for me – and what I do still matters to the dream.
- b. We doubt the dream-giver.
- i. Sometimes our questions give us away.
 1. God why is this happening?
 2. God what could you possibly be thinking?
 3. God how can you turn these circumstances around and make this better?
 - ii. Our questions really show our lack of trust.
 1. They highlight the fact that we don't really trust that God's plan is for our benefit.
 2. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to prosper you"
 3. But our doubts show that we don't believe those words.
 - iii. We sound like Job.
 1. Who says, "This doesn't make sense." Who says, "God isn't watching out for me."
 2. God's response to Job?
 - a. Job 38:4 – "Where we you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know. Who stretched a measuring line across it?"
 - b. In other words, "I am God and you are not. I have the complete picture here and you do not."

V. So, if we want to transform our circumstances instead of our struggles transforming us; what should we do?

a. Remain faithful.

- i. Even though outward circumstances changed dramatically, Joseph continued to trust God.
 1. He saw God's hand at work in every situation he found himself in.
 2. There was never any question that God was busy, working for Joseph's good.
- ii. That was a decision of Joseph's will – he decided to trust God.
 1. We have that same decision to make.
 2. Will we trust God or will we trust ourselves?
 3. Do we believe that God is working for our good or do we believe that we have better plans?
- iii. Remaining faithful puts us just where God wants us.
 1. Ready to receive his goodness in all circumstances.
 2. Ready to weather the storms.

b. Be ready to serve.

- i. Even when he was at the bottom, Joseph found opportunities to be a servant to others.
 1. As a slave, he became a valued and trusted servant in Potiphar's house.
 2. As a prisoner, he became a source of peace and comfort to his fellow prisoners.
- ii. Even when we are at the bottom, we must be ready to live as a servant.
 1. There is always someone who needs a kind word, a helping hand, the strength to stand.
 2. Being ready to serve means reaching out beyond ourselves.

- c. Hold tightly to the dream.
 - i. Never, never, never, let go of the dream God gives you.
 - 1. If you're convinced its from God follow it through to the end.
 - 2. And even when it seems like the dream gets sidetracked and even de-railed; hold tight.
 - ii. God is at work, even in your difficult times to craft the dream into reality.
 - 1. God never wastes a hurt.
 - 2. God never wastes an opportunity.
- VI. The result?
- a. Strong sense of call.
 - i. If you can hold on to the dream God has given you ...
 - 1. You will have a strong sense of God's direction in your life.
 - 2. Even the difficulty of your present circumstances won't be enough to distract you from God's plan.
 - ii. Joseph knew God's dream so well that even prison, rape charges and losing his job weren't enough to get him off track.
 - iii. If you have that same sense of dream (of call); you will know that you know that you know God has a plan.
 - b. Forces your vision outward.
 - i. Serving others forces your vision outward, away from yourself and toward the needs of others.
 - ii. Joseph served Potiphar as the steward of his house. He served the other prisoners in the jail.
 - 1. He didn't allow himself to become pre-occupied with his own situation.
 - 2. He was pre-occupied with meeting the needs of the prisoners around him.
 - iii. It's hard to wallow in your own troubles when you're serving others in worse places than you are.
 - 1. If gives you a little bit of perspective.
 - iv. If your in the middle of a big struggle.
 - 1. Start serving somewhere.
 - 2. And you will see that it changes your outlook almost right away.
 - c. Bear fruit.
 - i. Others will experience God's grace through you.
 - 1. They will want what you have.
 - 2. They see you calmly navigating the storms of your life and they will see that something is missing in theirs.
 - ii. You will inspire others to great service and greater works on God's behalf.
 - 1. That's the power of Mother Theresa.
 - 2. That's the power of any true servant.
- VII. It's up to us to transform our circumstances; to turn struggle into faithfulness, service, and (ultimately) victory.
- a. Keeping the dream alive in difficult times and situations is as simple (and as difficult) as faithfulness and service.
 - b. It's a decision of our wills – yours and mine.
 - c. It's a choice between our plan or God's
 - d. And when we make a decision for God – by the power of the holy spirit – our circumstances are transformed.
 - e. And the dreamer – and the dream-giver – are that much closer to living the dream.