

Life Lesson 18
Joseph in Egypt
Text: Genesis 39 - 40

Introduction

Poor Joseph! In one day his whole world was turned upside-down. One day he was the favorite son of a wealthy man. He had everything he wanted and everyone had to do just what he said. The next day he had nothing. He was a lowly slave with an uncertain future.

Although everything in Joseph's life had changed, God hadn't changed. He was still taking care of Joseph even in a strange land.

The Story

A man named Potiphar bought Joseph. Potiphar was an important man. He was an officer of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and the captain of the guard.

Being a slave wasn't much fun. You had to work hard without any pay or reward at all, but Joseph served Potiphar well. Do you remember how he obeyed his father so cheerfully when Jacob sent him out to check on his brothers? That same willingness to serve made an impression on Potiphar. It was soon apparent that Joseph wasn't an ordinary slave. God was taking care of him and blessing him. Everything Joseph did prospered. Potiphar realized this and gave him more and more responsibility. Eventually Joseph was the overseer, and had control over all Potiphar's lands and possessions.

It wasn't long, though, until Joseph's world was again turned upside-down. Potiphar's wife kept tempting him to do bad things. He avoided her whenever he could and even ran away from her when she tried to trap him into doing something wicked. This made her mad, and she told her husband lies about him. Potiphar believed his wife and had Joseph thrown in prison.

Can you imagine how Joseph must have felt? Every time his life was looking up,

something bad happened to him. It must have been hard for him to see what good God had for him in these situations, but God did have a purpose.

Being a slave was pretty bad, but being a slave and a prisoner was just horrible! In those days prisons were especially terrible places. That same willingness to serve that we saw with his father and with Potiphar made a difference in the prisoner. He thought of others instead of himself, and soon he was the prison keeper's main assistant. God was watching over him and blessing him even in prison.

He was thinking about the troubles of others when he noticed that two of the prisoners seemed sad and troubled.

"What's the matter?" he asked them. "You look so sad today."

"Both of us have had strange dreams and we can't figure out what they mean."

"Tell me about it," Joseph said. "Maybe God will tell me what they mean."

They gladly told him their unusual dreams. The man who was once the butler to Pharaoh dreamed that he saw a vine that quickly budded and put on clusters of grapes. He picked the grapes from the vine's three branches and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and gave it to him.

"I can tell you what that means," Joseph told him. "In three days you will be restored to your place and will be working for Pharaoh again. When you have your old job back, please remember me and mention me to Pharaoh. I don't belong here, and I haven't done anything wrong. Maybe you can talk Pharaoh into getting me released from here."

The butler was happy to hear his dream had such a cheerful meaning. The baker told his dream next.

"I dreamed I had three baskets on my head. there was bread and pastries in the top basket for Pharaoh. The birds came and ate them."

"I'm sorry," Joseph said. "Your dream is not good at all. In three days Pharaoh will have you hung and the buzzards will eat you."

In three days the dreams came true. Pharaoh gave the butler his old job back, but had the baker killed.

You would think that the butler would be grateful to have his old job back and would tell Pharaoh about Joseph, but that's not what happened. He forgot all about him.

The butler forgot him, his family thought he was dead, and Potiphar thought he was a sneak. It looked like Joseph would live a wasted life in prison. No matter how it looked, though, God was working out his plan for Joseph's life. God hadn't forgotten him, and would never forsake him.

The Life Lesson

Are there ever times when it seems everything in the world goes wrong for you? God is working out his plan for your life, too. So don't get discouraged! I hope you remember Joseph, and act wisely as he did. If you trust God and serve others, even the worst situations can be a blessing.

Review Questions

Who bought Joseph for a slave?

Potiphar

What job did Joseph have as a slave?

He became the main assistant, in charge of Potiphar's business.

Who told lies about Joseph and caused him to be thrown in prison?

Potiphar's wife

What did Joseph do in prison?

He became a helper in charge of the prison.

Who had disturbing dreams in prison?

Pharaoh's butler and his baker?

What was the butler's dream?

He dreamed that he squeezed three bunches of grapes into Pharaoh's cup.

What did the dream mean?

That in three days he would be pardoned and get his job back.

What did the baker dream?

That he had three baskets full of bread and pastries and the birds came and ate out of it.

What did the baker's dream mean?

That in three days Pharaoh would have him hanged and the birds would eat him.

Did the dreams come true?

Yes

Did the butler remember Joseph and ask Pharaoh to pardon him?

No, he forgot about Joseph

Did God forget about Joseph?

No, He had a plan for Joseph and everything was going according to schedule.