

A Half-Hour with Joseph

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
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PM Worship

Introduction:

If we were given the chance to spend a half-hour with any Bible personality, I imagine most of us would pick Jesus. However, second to Him we all have our various favorites. I have no doubt some would choose Joseph. If we were able to spend a half-hour with him, what would he tell us?

Discussion:

- I. You are able to choose how you react to your circumstances.
 - A. How many times do we justify our actions based on our circumstances? How many times do we act as though we just couldn't help ourselves because of the way we were treated? Joseph demonstrates that no matter how we are treated, we can behave properly. It is our choice.
 - B. According to **Genesis 37:4**, his older brothers hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. Eventually their hate led them to sell him as a slave in **Genesis 37:28**. He ended up in Potiphar's house in Egypt (**39:1**). Despite his family's treatment of him and despite his slavery, Joseph was faithful. But then Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. When he refused, obeying God (**39:8-9**), he ended up being framed and put in prison (**39:20**).
 - C. Frankly, I am amazed by Joseph. I can see taking one stand to serve the Lord no matter how you were treated. However, when that choice made the whole situation worse, I am afraid I would be tempted to stop banking on serving the Lord and just trying to get ahead on my own. But Joseph didn't. Even after serving the Lord had landed him in slavery and then further in prison, he kept on serving the Lord. Here is the great lesson—we choose how we react to our circumstances. No matter our circumstances, we can serve the Lord, but we must choose to.
- II. Flee immorality.
 - A. Most of us are familiar with the narrative of **Genesis 39:7-18**. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph. She tried day after day and Joseph repeatedly rebuffed her advances. His statement was, "How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" However, one day she found him in the house alone. She grabbed his outer garment and commanded him to lie with her. Joseph did not ponder it, he fled. Such was his haste that he even left his garment in her hand.
 - B. **I Corinthians 6:18** commands us to flee immorality. In **II Timothy 2:22**, Paul exhorted Timothy to flee youthful lusts, but pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. Few people ever say, "Today, I think I want to commit immorality." The problem is too many do not flee it. Some because of ignorance walk down the path to immorality, others because they think they can go so far without crossing the line. Too many Christians allow themselves the lingering looks that spark desire, the mental dwelling on those to whom they have no right, the flirting with people who are not their spouses, the fantasies of immorality. These lower our defenses and lead us into immorality. Instead of walking these paths, we must flee immorality, avoiding the lustful looks, the flirtatious relationships, the mental pictures. Instead, we must pursue righteousness.
 - C. We are going to look odd when we refuse to take part in the lust and lasciviousness of the world. We are going to look old-fashioned and prudish. People will make fun of us as being too straight-laced and a goodie-two-shoes. Who knows? They might even throw us in prison. But like Joseph we must flee immorality no matter what the consequences in our relationships.
- III. God keeps His promises.
 - A. In **Genesis 50:24-25**, Joseph told his brethren and their descendents that God would eventually lead them out of Egypt and made them swear to take his bones out when they left. **Hebrews 11:22** he did this through faith. Joseph's request was not wishful thinking. It was not "if you ever leave." It was "When you leave." How could Joseph be so sure? Joseph was aware of the promise God had made to his great-grandfather Abraham in **Genesis 15:13-16**.
 - B. Joseph believed God and His promises. He could have done as Jacob did and had his bones taken immediately to the cave at Machpelah. He didn't. He trusted God that the Israelites would be heading that way in time and they could bury his remains in the family tomb then. That is exactly what happened. In **Exodus 13:19**, Moses took the bones of Joseph with them when they left Egypt. In **Joshua 24:32** Joshua buried Joseph's as had been promised.

IV. Trust God and wait on Him.

- A. How many times do the psalmists exhort us to wait on the Lord? Consider **Psalm 37:7, 9, 34** as one example. This concept of waiting refers to God's children who in hard times. However, instead of getting angry with God and turning against Him, they continue to trust God waiting on the deliverance they know He will bring on His timetable.
- B. Joseph is a living illustration of this principle. Joseph was 17 when he had his dreams (**Genesis 37:2**). **Genesis 41:46** says he was 30 when he stood before Pharaoh. Joseph endured mistreatment from his family, slavery and imprisonment for 13 years before he became ruler.
- C. It was at least another 7 years before God brought about the vision that his family would bow to him (*cf.* **Genesis 41:53-54**). God took 20 years to fulfill His promise to Joseph. Yet, Joseph trusted God and waited on Him to perform His will on His timetable.
- D. We must learn to do the same. God blesses His faithful in His time, not ours. We must learn to wait on the Lord. I do not know what kind of hardships you are facing. I do not know how long you have been facing or how much longer you will have to face them. I do know, however, that in His time, God blesses all His faithful servants. While I cannot provide a certain timeframe of blessing within this life, I can say with absolute certainty that even if blessing never comes in this life, it will come to God's faithful in the next (**Romans 8:18**). Trust God and wait on Him.

V. Give God the glory.

- A. In **Genesis 41:15**, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." What a flattering statement. How easy it would have been for Joseph to simply accept the praise. But he did not. In **41:16**, Joseph replied, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." Joseph did not want the glory. He wanted it given to God.
- B. **Psalm 115:1** exemplifies this mindset saying, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory." According to **Matthew 6:1**, if we work righteousness to be seen by men, we are not working righteousness. Rather, we must work in such a way that people will glorify God because of our good deeds (**Matthew 5:16**).
- C. Our duty is to glorify God and not seek the glory for ourselves. As Paul did in **1 Corinthians 3:5**. He pointed out that he and Apollos were nothing but God's servants to whom God gave the opportunity to teach the Corinthians. God is the one who provided the growth and salvation. Joseph teaches us to give God the glory at all times.

VI. We are not God.

- A. In **Genesis 50:15-21**, Joseph's brothers became afraid the only reason he had never avenged himself on them was because he did not want to grieve their father. However, Jacob had died. The brothers feared that Joseph would finally take his vengeance.
- B. On the surface, we might be tempted to think the great lesson here is one of forgiveness or of kindness (certainly we can learn of these things from Joseph here). However, Joseph's statement in **vs. 19** drives home the real lesson. "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?"
- C. Joseph had forgiven his brothers and he did treat them with kindness, but those were merely by-products of the real issue. The real issue was that Joseph, for all his power as second in command in Egypt, recognized that God was God and he was not. It was not Joseph's place to seek vengeance. That is God's place. Paul iterates that point in **Romans 12:19-21**.
- D. How many times do we bear grudges and try to seek some way to punish and get vengeance on those who have sinned against us? That is not our place. If vengeance is going to come upon others for their sins, God is the one who must do it—not us. We must learn from Joseph that we are not God and we must leave the room for God to act as He sees fit.

Conclusion:

Joseph was a great servant of God. He set a high standard of godly living for us. Yet, remember that he was just a man like us. He was not superhuman. He was simply a man whose faith guided him and who, based on his faith, made the choices that glorified God. We can learn a lot from Joseph. May we learn that we are not God, but we must glorify God, trusting Him and waiting on Him to keep His promises as we flee immorality and pursue righteousness, choosing to serve God no matter our circumstances. This is what Joseph would teach us, if we had some time to sit and talk with him.