

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
January 8, 2012

Joseph Finds Favor

Genesis 41:37-45, 50-52

Key verse: “The second he named Ephraim, ‘For God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes’” (Genesis 41:52).

What a story is the story of Joseph! It is the story of a person who found God’s blessing and favor in the midst of some of the worst of circumstances: betrayed and sold into slavery by his own brothers, falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, unjustly imprisoned for a crime he didn’t commit. Yet, God blessed Joseph, raised him up, and made him second in command only to Pharaoh over Egypt.

But *why* did Joseph receive such blessing from God? Part of the answer, it would seem, is simply that God chose to bless Joseph in these ways. Yet, such favor and blessing from God as Joseph experienced also involves our human response. And Joseph is a wonderful example of *faithfulness* to God in the face of problems and trials.

Joseph chose to live faithfully, even though circumstances were against him. He let God use his life, in good and bad times, not knowing how things would ultimately turn out, but choosing to trust and obey God anyway. From our perspective, we can look back and see how God was weaving together the threads of Joseph’s life—the good and the bad—as part of God’s bigger story. Ultimately, God was able to use Joseph to bless Egypt, his own family, and—through his descendants—the whole world.

During the hard times, though, Joseph could not see how either his story or God’s story would turn out. Joseph could have quit. He could have denied God. But through Joseph’s faithfulness, God was able to use Joseph, bless his life, and make him a blessing to others.

In what ways was Joseph faithful to God in the face of problems and trials?

(1) *Joseph was faithful to God in the face of temptation.* When tempted sexually by Potiphar’s wife, Joseph responded to her by saying: “How could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9).

(2) *Joseph was faithful to God in his work and in his service.* Joseph demonstrated faithfulness as he managed Potiphar’s household, as he interpreted the dreams of his fellow inmates and of Pharaoh, and as he managed the affairs of

the nation of Egypt. Whether his job was big or little, Joseph demonstrated his faithfulness to God by the way he worked and by the way he served.

Being faithful to God in one's work and service, like Joseph, is a key to experiencing God's blessing. The New Testament writer gave us this instruction: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23). Jesus spoke to this principle when he said, "You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things" (Matthew 25:23). In Joseph's life, this is exactly what happened. Joseph was faithful in small things, and God put Joseph in charge of a nation.

(3) Joseph was faithful to God in good times and in bad times. Even though he could not see how God would ultimately work in his life, Joseph was faithful to God in the hard times. God used even the bad things in Joseph's life for a blessing.

The New Testament verse that describes how God worked in Joseph's life is Romans 8:28 – "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

In these times of economic turmoil and stress, we do well to remember the story of Joseph. God calls us to be faithful in the hard times—faithful in our work, in our behavior, in our service. We do so not knowing the outcome but trusting that we are a part of the big, big story that God is writing. If we trust Him and are faithful to Him, God will bless us and make us a blessing.

One day, we can look back on these hard times and difficult circumstances and say: "God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes."

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