

Bloom Where You Are...and Grow!

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Recently we were studying Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. As we were studying, I realized we didn't know much about Joseph's younger years until **Genesis 37**, when he was already seventeen years old. Betrayed and sold into slavery by his brothers and taken down to Egypt, he was thrust into servitude -- a stranger and a foreigner in a land with customs, religion, and laws that he was not familiar with. He faithfully served his master, Potiphar, who saw that the Lord was with Joseph. This had to be a most trying dilemma for Joseph, but he dug down and was rooted in God, blooming where he was!

When Potiphar's wife made passes at Joseph, he answered her, *"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (**Genesis 39:9b**). Again, we see that Joseph's mind and heart were doing what was right, pleasing God. On an opportune occasion, she came after him, grabbed his outer garment, and he fled, leaving behind his outer garment, which Potiphar's wife clung to (see **1 Corinthians 6:18**). She schemed against Joseph and lied to her husband with false accusations against him: a foreigner and a slave. Who would Potiphar listen to, his wife or a slave? Joseph's master had him thrown into prison or a dungeon (**Genesis 41:14**). Joseph found himself a man without a country, far away from his family. Where could He go but to the Lord?

Here was Joseph's character and integrity revealed — under the fire of temptation and trials. He could have shouted, "This is not fair!" Many of us might be tempted to cry out, "Why me, Lord?" "Lord, I was trying to please you?" "What did I do to deserve this?" In the prime of his youth, Joseph was either a slave or a prisoner in Egypt for thirteen years (**Genesis 37:2; 41:46**). But what did Joseph do? He trusted God and again dug down, deep-rooted in God, and served where he was. Spiritually Joseph bloomed and grew—even under most difficult circumstances. He focused on what he knew was the right thing to do and did what he could. Joseph is a great example of faithfully persevering even under most adverse conditions.

After Jesus' resurrection, He spent some time with His disciples. During this time, Jesus told Peter that another would dress him and take him places that he didn't wish to go when he was older. The Scriptures say, *"signifying by what death he would glorify God."* Peter saw John standing nearby and asked, *"But Lord, what about this man?"* Jesus said to him, *"If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me"* (**John 21:18-22**). We live in a competitive world, and often our nature is to look at others and ask, "What about him or her?" Jesus said we need to look at ourselves. Our job, our place, is to follow Him!

Later, Paul said it is not wise to compare ourselves with one another or measure ourselves by one another (**2 Corinthians 10:12**). Why? I am not THE Standard, nor can anyone else qualify to be THE Standard; there is One: Jesus Christ the Righteous! Follow Him! He is the One we must each strive to mold and shape our lives to be like *"conformed to the image of His Son..."* (**Romans 8:29**). *"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving"* (**Colossians 2:6-7**). It is when we are following Him, rooted in Christ, that we can grow in faith and apply ourselves in His service!

Again, in considering Joseph's life, we see a willing spirit. There are a plethora of examples in the Scriptures of God working through those with willing spirits. *"For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted*

according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:12). Paul wrote this to the Corinthians pertaining to the collection for the saints on the first day of the week, encouraging them to complete the good work that they had started. However, this principle is true in all our service to God. God can and will work through those of willing minds, who will use what they have for His service and His glory, which is what we were created for (**Revelation 4:11**). But we often get all bent out of shape, centering our minds on what we do not have, rather than focusing on and using what God has blessed us with, including the various circumstances that we may find ourselves in.

As Joseph did, we can live our lives to His glory, learning, following, applying the examples of the faithful, and especially the example our Lord has given for us to follow! *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32).* So, no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, with His help, let us dig down deep, firmly root ourselves in the Lord, growing and developing and blooming where we are!

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2).