

A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT
JULY 2007

“SPIRITUAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT”
“The Life of Joseph”



The Word of God is full of records of the lives of great men & women of God – their beginnings and their walk with God. We can learn so much and incorporate it into our own lives – growing and developing (a process) into mature vessels that will be used by God to accomplish His purposes. All that we read and study in Scripture is for us.

Growth and change come to all. Not all change brings growth (there can be negative changes in our lives.) But growth in God will bring change that is good and glorifies God. Looking at the life of Joseph we see much change. More importantly – there is steady and progressive growth and development of a relationship with God.

From early on the hand of the Lord was on Joseph. In Genesis 37:5-11 NIV it is recorded that Joseph had two dreams – and in both he was in an exalted position over his family. He had vision and saw things that others did not see. For that he was hated by his brothers and rebuked by his father.

Genesis 39:2 NIV states, “*The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered....*” so we know there was relationship between Joseph and the Lord. God so desires relationship with us. Out of that relationship will come all that we need and real life will flow in us and through us. Glory to God!

According to Scripture blessing, success, kindness, mercy, and favor came to Joseph and all were aware that the Lord was with him. God blesses Potiphar’s entire household because of Joseph (Genesis 39:2,3,5,21-23). Our relationship with the Lord affects those around us – and they will be blessed because of us.

Joseph learned the faithfulness of God in hard places. Sold and taken to Egypt (he had no say in the matter) and ending up in prison (for a very long time) by false accusation – Joseph grew in God and found God faithful. There are things we did not choose and don’t want. Joseph had no choice – we do! We must believe that where we are and what is happening has been allowed for our good. We grow and develop most in the hard places – and will always find God is faithful. Our part is to remain faithful to Him and give ourselves to Him – trusting Him, leaning on Him, learning of Him, and continuing to love Him (Genesis 39:1-6, 20-23 NIV)

Joseph learned steadfastness with God (steadfast defined: firm, fixed, settled or established). In Genesis 39:9 NIV we see a great part of who he was. “*How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?*” His mind was made up – he did not choose in the midst of a situation – out of his relationship with the Lord choices and decisions had already been made! Yes, we can be prepared ahead of time for whatever comes by making decisions based on God’s Word and our love for Him. In a day where yes and no are subject to the moment, and a person’s word is no longer his or her bond, we can set limits and boundaries of godly behavior and not cross over.

Joseph learned perseverance (defined as the ability to continue in some effort, or course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition; to persist.) He just kept going and did not give up. The grace of God, the love of God, the power of God, is available to us. As we grow in God we realize there is no “escape route.” I believe Joseph surrendered his life (all of it) to God, committed his way to God, and walked on. Yes – it takes courage, determination, and God’s help – so graciously given as we call upon Him.

Joseph developed the ability to wait on God. Having interpreted the dream of Pharaoh's chief cupbearer, and telling him he would be released and restored – Joseph asked to be remembered to Pharaoh. The Word records *“The Chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph, he forgot him”*. (Genesis 40:23 NIV). In many situations we want to be “remembered and rescued.” God never forgets us – but sometimes it seems like He has. Joseph had to forsake human means and solutions. After explaining to the cupbearer that he was forcibly taken from his homeland and ending up in a dungeon for something he didn't do and did not deserve (Genesis 40:14,15 NIV), the cupbearer still forgot him!

Waiting on God is not a passive time, not a time of fear or doubt – but a recognition that God has our “appointed time” – truly our times are in His hands. Using our faith we must believe He is in complete control – His love for us is unchanging and constant and He is working in our lives – His will and His good pleasure! We must continue to be thankful and to declare His goodness. I believe Joseph spent much time confessing the goodness of God, His care for him, and the many things the Lord had already done for him in his time of confinement. Let us not forget to thank God for what He has already done in our lives – the many ways He has revealed Himself to us – kept and protected us and ours, healed us, helped us, encouraged and ministered to us – the list is endless.

All of us want our lives to be significant. Joseph's significance was not an important position in Pharaoh's Kingdom, nor his many responsibilities, nor in his ability to interpret dreams – but in his relationship with God. Not only progressively learning and knowing God, but knowing that God knew him! God knows us and our ways and cares for and about every part of us, and is the answer to every need in our lives – inside and out. **You** are important to the Lord!

Joseph's focus and dependence was on God – not on others, or himself. Even to the interpreting of Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:16) and the realization before his brothers that it was God who sent him to Egypt (Genesis 45:8) Joseph acknowledged God. He could see (not only in interpreting dreams) but in his own life – the hand, the leading, the giftings of God Himself. May we look beyond ourselves and fix our eyes on Jesus, and find in our total dependence on Him all the life He has promised.

Out of the growth and development of a strong relationship with God came revelation. In Genesis 41:25-36 Joseph shares with Pharaoh the exact meaning of his dreams – accurately and timely. For us – one of the offices of the Holy Spirit is to show us things to come. As we develop relationship, I believe giftings and a “knowing” beyond where we are now will come.

Joseph learned and developed perspective – defined as “the relationship or proportion of the parts of a whole, regarded from a particular standpoint or point in time.” Joseph had much time – to think about all that had happened to him, to remember what God did in each situation, to know that where he was at any given time was not where he would always be. Valuable lesson! Before the famine, two sons were born to Joseph. One he named Manasseh *“It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household*. His second son was named Ephraim, *“It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering”* (Genesis 41:51,52 NIV). Even in speaking to his brothers Joseph could declare God's wisdom, greatness, and His plan. In Genesis 45:5,7,8, NIV, Joseph speaks to his brothers and says, *“And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here but God.”* He realized that everything that happened to him was by the hand and heart of God.

Joseph saw his own need to forgive – for the past and the present (Genesis 45 and 50). In his long confinement there was time to examine and face the betrayal, the pain, and hurt, and the bewilderment at what happened to him. Through his relationship with the Lord he was able to go beyond all that – and sought to forgive those who had hurt him. Forgiveness to him (and to us) was an act of his will – a decision he made out of his love for God, well beyond feelings and emotions. If we love God we will keep His commandments (1 John 5:3 NIV). God is love and He has commanded us to love. Before Jesus went back to heaven it is recorded that He breathed on the disciples and said, *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”* (John 20:22, 23 NIV) So there is power within us to forgive, to release people and to seek their blessing (Matthew 5:23,24, 44 and 6:14,15). Christ has forgiven us and we must forgive others. As with Joseph, we will be greatly blessed and increased. Joseph returned good for evil (Genesis 50:16-21 NIV) even blessing and providing for those who had hurt him – that is TOTAL forgiveness!

Joseph saw redemption in it all! Genesis 50:20 NIV states, *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”* This is a physical picture of a spiritual reality in our lives – when we walk in relationship with the Lord, remain faithful, daily submitting ourselves to Him and His Will, keep His Commandments and Love Him – our lives will impact others and many will know salvation because of us! Hallelujah!!



May His Life – Giving Presence be Yours today –

Toni Quinn
“For His Glory” Women’s Ministry