

Church in the Wild Devotional
Pastor Michael Carey
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Today's reading in our SAGA series hardly makes for a suitable Mother's Day message, so let me begin with my own heart-felt expression of appreciation to the moms and grandmothers reading this devotional! Not only have you provided attentive care to your children, you have been a primary disciple-making influence on their faith development. What Paul praised regarding Timothy's "moms," I celebrate about you:

I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your grandmother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.
2 Timothy 1:5

Parents can't determine the beliefs their children choose, we simply share the treasure that was shared with us. We also aspire to provide everyone's children with a knowledge of Jesus. Many of you share faith with other people's children. So Happy Mothers' Day to you "spiritual moms!"

Now let's glean a bit more insight from Joseph's ongoing saga. Last Sunday's message ended with Joseph suffering in prison. Though he responded to enslavement in a foreign land by working hard and gaining amazing competence, Potiphar's favor evaporated with his wife's false accusations. Nonetheless, "the Lord was with Joseph; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden...[he] put Joseph in charge...the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did"(Genesis 39:21-23). As evil continued to render suffering in the near term, we are assured that the Lord was working for long-term good, not only for Joseph, but also for those who will be blessed by Joseph's growth.

Today we read how Joseph discovered his spiritual gift in prison: **Read Genesis 40:1-23.**

As I re-read this a familiar story, three details jumped off the page:

1. Though Joseph's God-given dream had not yet come true, he still believed that the Lord might reveal His plans in this mysterious way. Perhaps other dreams that had come true.
2. Joseph was confident in his ability to utilize this unique spiritual gift. After hearing fellow prisoners mention strange dreams, Joseph shared his faith and exercised his gift, saying: "Tell me your dreams." Despite his own suffering, Joseph ministered profoundly.
3. Yet once again, Joseph suffered disappointment. Though his interpretation of the chief cupbearer's dream and the baker's nightmare came true, the cup-bearer "did not remember Joseph, he forgot him." His faithfulness didn't end his ordeal.

Other aspects of this saga are unsettling. A false accuser gets away with her crime. Men suffer in prison because of lies and arbitrary power. Another man is executed in a horrible manner. Scripture doesn't flinch from reminding us that in the near term, the Lord doesn't always thwart evil and suffering.

Nonetheless the true God continues to prepare and position Joseph for a remarkable opportunity. It's not yet time for Pharaoh to need a dream interpretation, nor is Joseph yet ready to rule. Yet the saga insists that "in all things God works for the good;" not only for Joseph, but for others whom God will bless. Soon the secret working God's hand will be plain to see.

Questions to Discuss or Ponder:

- Can you look back on your life and recognize a negative experience that helped to prepare you or position you for an opportunity?
- Have you discerned your own special capacity to minister to others? (Dream interpretation is rare; the New Testament names other spiritual gifts in Ephesians 4:11, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 28)
- Can you envision ways that your spiritual giftedness can bless others?