

Church in the Wild Devotional
Pastor Michael Carey
April 29, 2018

Joseph's dream became a nightmare. His father's preferential treatment and his own boastfulness infuriated his brothers. Evil possessed them to respond with violence. His brothers threw Joseph into a pit and sold him to traveling merchants. Soon he was on the auction block.

Nonetheless, God had not abandoned Joseph. While not causing family dysfunction nor injustice, God was intimately engaged in this saga, preventing worse outcomes and using evil deeds for a loving purpose. The Lord had awakened the conscience of his oldest brother, who spared Joseph's life. God sent a caravan that happened to be headed to Egypt. And of all people who could have purchased him, Joseph landed in the home in the one of Pharaoh's highest officials.

God's providential care has just begun. Today we'll explore how God harnessed the evil of human trafficking to turn the spoiled child into a self-disciplined adult. **Read Genesis 39:1-7.**

Serving in Potiphar's house will not be the lowest point in Joseph's SAGA, but how humiliating it was! After receiving preferential treatment and wearing a robe that prevented manual labor, Joseph lost his rights, became an oppressed minority, and served a master—as a foreigner who couldn't speak the language and didn't know a soul! How many tears he must have wept!

Yet the Bible insists that "The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered." How could this be true? From Potiphar's reaction ("Joseph found favor in his eyes...he put him in charge of his household") we can surmise that slavery transformed the young man's character:

1. Stripped of his many-colored, long-sleeved robe, the spoiled brat embraced a work ethic;
2. Despite receiving unjust treatment, Joseph chose to be honest and fair;
3. Joseph learned all that he could about how to manage a wealthy man's household;
4. The Jewish captive wouldn't worship Egypt's idols; he faithfully worshipped the true God;
5. Despite opportunities to indulge himself, Joseph chose to maintain sexual purity.

Whenever I read about Joseph's character transformation in Egypt, I'm reminded of young people who benefitted from the disciplines imposed by military service. We might wish that every troubled young person could have such an experience. Yet the trials of basic training and military service don't automatically improve character. Young men and women in the military are also exposed to new temptations and additional forms of bad character. It's most accurate to affirm that military service can provide opportunities to embrace discipline and pursue lives that fulfill a larger purpose. But it's not always beneficial. It depends of what people do with it.

Serving in Potiphar's house didn't automatically bring prosperity and promotions. The Lord's "with-ness" was crucial, as were Joseph's daily decisions to make the best of his awful situation. So how did he know about God? Though his family was dysfunctional, they taught Joseph to trust in the true God. He faced suffering with values, courage, and hope, because Joseph knew the God 'who redeems [his] life from the pit' (Psalm 103:4).

God opposes all evil. So what does God do about it? Paul asked and answered this crucial question: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ...Trouble? Hardship? Persecution? Famine? Nakedness? Danger? Sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"...For nothing "in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39, selections).

Questions to Ponder or Discuss:

- What experience of hardship became of season of character formation for you?
- If you have face big challenges now, how is God providing for you?