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Ministry

EMERGENCY PREPARATION

“Behold, I have told you in advance.”

Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 24:25)

A BIBLE-BASED PERSPECTIVE ON

SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

PREPARING SPIRITUALLY
TO TRIUMPH OVER EMERGENCIES

A Study for Church Leaders

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Spiritual Survival

A STUDY ON FAITHFULNESS DURING TRIALS

GENESIS

37 Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. ²These are the records of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when seventeen years of age... brought back a bad report about [his brothers] to their father. ³Now [Jacob] loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. ⁴And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all of his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. ⁵Then Joseph had a dream and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶And he said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; ⁷for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.... ⁹Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and he said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰And he related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" ¹¹And his brothers were jealous of him...

¹²Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem. ¹³And [Jacob] said to Joseph, "...I will send you to them." ... ¹⁸When [his brothers] saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. ¹⁹And they said, "Here comes this dreamer! ²⁰Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!" ²¹But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life." ²²Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him" – that he might rescue him out of their hands... ²⁴and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it. ²⁵Then they sat down to eat a meal. And they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming... on their way... down to Egypt. ²⁶And Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites..." And his brothers listened to him. ²⁸...so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites... ³⁶...[who] sold him to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

ANALYSIS

Before his trials we learn from these verses that Joseph was:

1) **hated and alone**

notice how Joseph's own actions added to his brothers' disgust (Gen. 37:3-4, 8, [10], 11)

2) **not apparently successful**

notice his brothers even went out to shepherd the flocks without him (Gen. 37:12-13)

3) **lacking in tact (not able to deal well with others)**

if the first dream angered his brothers, why would he *ever* tell them about the second one? (Gen. 37: 5-11)

4) **not disrespectful...**

Joseph knew he was loved by his father, and no doubt returned that love (Gen. 37:3, 10)

5) **...just impetuous (acting without thinking)...**

which is true of most immature people (Gen. 37: 5-11)

6) **...which is a sign of being undisciplined**

Joseph was 17 years old and needed maturing... and spiritual growth.
Don't we, at times, act like a seventeen year old?

He who guards his mouth and tongue, guards his soul from trouble (Proverbs 21:23).

39 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar [Egyptian: belonging to the sun-god], an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. ²And the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. ³Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. ⁴So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant, and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. ⁵And it came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. ⁶So everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

⁷And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."⁸But he refused and said to his master's wife... ⁹"How could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" [Potiphar's wife tries again to seduce Joseph, who flees from her, but leaves his (cloak) behind. She then falsely uses Joseph's cloak as evidence that *he* tried to rape *her*.]... ¹⁹Now it came about when [Potiphar] heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him saying, "This is what your slave did to me," that his anger burned. ²⁰So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in jail. ²¹But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. ²²And the chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. ²³The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

ANALYSIS

From these two chapters in Genesis we know that Joseph experienced:

1) **loneliness**

People who go through an emergency often tell of feeling alone. God is preparing Joseph to be able to deal with people during times of crisis and distress, because Joseph has himself experienced loneliness, a result of his own stressful experiences (Gen. 37:12-13, 24-28).

2) **hunger and thirst**

The world known to Joseph will one day go through a famine, which is often caused by drought, a lack of water. God is preparing Joseph to be able to understand what that will mean, because Joseph has himself experienced hunger and thirst.

a) **with his brothers**

notice the pit was "without water"; Joseph is in a dry climate which would make him thirsty
notice his brothers "eat a meal"; there is no mention they fed Joseph (Gen. 37:24, 25)

b) **during his trip to Egypt**

would the Ishmaelites treat their new slave "gently" or would they be harsh? (Gen. 37:28)

c) **when he first arrived in Egypt**

would the Egyptians treat their new slave "nicely" or would they be brutal? (Gen. 37:36; 39:1)

d) **when he first arrived in jail**

do you think the Egyptian jailers would be "kind" to their new criminal inmate? (Gen. 39:20)

In spite of his treatment Joseph remained faithful to Almighty God because he:

1) **talked about God (witnessed) to Potiphar**

how else would Potiphar—"belonging to the sun-god," an idol worshipper—know about, and admit to, the One True God? (Gen. 39:3)

2) **talked about God (witnessed) to Potiphar's wife**

and refused to give in to her sexual advances (Gen. 39:7-12)

Joseph continued that faithfulness to the end of his ordeal because (in Chapter 41) he:

3) **will talk about God (witness) to Pharaoh** (Gen. 41:16, 25, 28, 32, 39)

40 Then it came about after these things the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. ²And Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. ³So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the same place where Joseph was imprisoned. ⁴And the captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time. ⁵Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night... [and they tell Joseph of their dream]. ⁸...Then Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell [the dreams] to me.” [Joseph hears each dream and, by God’s grace, correctly interprets them, telling the baker he will be executed and the cupbearer he will be restored to his position in Pharaoh’s household.] ... ¹²Then Joseph said to [the cupbearer]... ¹⁴“Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this [jail].” ... ²³Yet, the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

41 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had [two] dreams...⁸...And Pharaoh told [his court] of his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh. ⁹Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, “I would make mention today..., ¹²[of] a Hebrew youth [who] was with [me in jail who] interpreted... dream[s].” ¹⁴Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. ¹⁵And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” ¹⁶Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.” [Joseph then goes on to hear Pharaoh’s dreams.]... ²⁵Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do....” ³²Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined, and God will quickly bring it about....

²⁸It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh, “God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. ²⁹Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten... ³¹It will be severe. ³³Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt... ³⁵Gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food... under Pharaoh’s authority, and let them guard it. ³⁶And let the food become a reserve... for the seven years of famine which will occur... that the land of Egypt... may not perish during the famine....

³⁹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you. ⁴¹...See I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”... ⁴⁶Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt.

⁴⁹Thus Joseph stored up grain....

ANALYSIS

Through his trials—“walking through the darkness”—Joseph learned:

1) **the Egyptian language**

He could now easily communicate with the people who would have the extra food during the coming famine. He could then better help them store food and later give it out in an organized manner.

2) **the Egyptian culture (the way they did things)**

He had been with the captain of Pharaoh’s bodyguard, a man equal to the head of the secret service, and so knew how to deal with the “rich and powerful”; he had been in a jail, and so knew how to deal with those who were poor. Joseph was now able to work with *all* of Egypt to prepare.

3) **tact—how to deal with people**

4) **discipline—how to take orders, and how to give orders**

slaves, at least at first, take orders; Joseph eventually became the overseer, giving orders

5) **self-control**

Joseph was successful in Potiphar’s house and in the jail, something he wasn’t in his father’s house, but it didn’t go to his head, as shown by God’s continued blessing of all he did

6) **how to organize**

a skill Joseph will need to prepare for the coming famine, and to later give out food during the famine

7) **how to persevere and more deeply trust God**

The trials weren’t meant to harm Joseph—they were to mature him... and prepare him!

REFLECTION

45 [After Joseph's brothers come to Egypt twice and stand before him, not recognizing it is Joseph, to get grain because the famine was severe where they resided, Joseph finally reveals himself.]... ⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers... "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And do not now be grieved or angry with yourselves, because God sent me before you to preserve life [and] ⁷...to preserve for you a remnant in the earth to keep you alive by a great deliverance. ⁸Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God..."

For his faithfulness through the trials, Joseph is able to:

1) prepare for the coming famine better than any man alive!

- a) which saves his family
- b) which sees that God's promises to his family —
to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — will be fulfilled
- c) which safeguards the blood-line of the Messiah
- d) **which leads to our salvation**

Your own faithfulness through trials will also have influence on somebody.

Count on it!

APPLICATION

All of us go through dark times in life. When we're going through difficulties, hardships and trials, and we don't understand what's going on, we may wonder where God is, or why He doesn't change our circumstances. We may even doubt His love or His presence. These spiritual dark times come about when we see an apparent conflict between what God says He is (light) and what He appears to be doing (darkness). There is a way to respond, and a reason to respond in the right way, that is, being faithful to God. Both are illustrated in the life of Joseph.

1. God is with you in your hard times.
 - o God always knows where you are.
 - o We don't know how long or deep the dark times will be. Only God does.
 - o God is in control and has a purpose.
2. God is preparing you for His future plan.
 - o He is changing you on the inside.
3. The darkness will last as long as is necessary for God to accomplish His purpose.
 - o Joseph was in captivity and prison for 13 years. During that time, God was preparing him for his position with Pharaoh.
 - o No matter how long—or deep—the darkness may be, you must submit to God.
4. We learn more in darkness than we do in light.
 - o In darkness, we must learn to trust God, persevere, etc.
 - o Joseph was in captivity and prison for 13 years... *learning*.
5. God's purposes are higher than our purposes.
 - o We will never want better for ourselves than what God wants for us.
6. Even through the darkness, we are moving toward the light.
 - o God is trying to teach you in the darkness, so you are better prepared for His plan.
 - o We must keep walking—and trusting—even if we don't see it.
7. God wants us to share what we've learned in the darkness.
 - o Joseph was best able to prepare for the coming famine, and in doing so helped others survive

We never know what God is preparing us for. Our duty is to submit and be faithful. Obey and trust God, regardless of the darkness. And in those times when we do not, remember, it's *never* too late to return and obey God.