

## **THE LIFE GOD USES GENESIS 41**

The experiences of Joseph in Egypt brought to him great insights into the nature of God. Even though he was surrounded by the impressive idols that the Egyptians worshipped, he learned by experience that the unseen God worshipped by his father, Jacob, was the true God. Indeed, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was exercising control over this pagan nation of Egypt.

It came to him first when the two fellow prisoners had dreams and God gave him the interpretation of the dreams. The God of his fathers was at work in the life of the servants of the Pharaoh. And then there was the incident recorded in this chapter in which the God of his fathers is communicating with the Pharaoh of Egypt. It was something that the people of Israel never forgot – the God of Abraham and Joseph is the God over all nations.

The God of Abraham who is at work among the nations does some of His work through human beings. He needs someone that can be used in the land of Egypt during a time of national crises. God chose Joseph for this assignment. The God, who is with Joseph, engineers the circumstances that ultimately bring Joseph to the second highest position in the entire kingdom of Egypt. This remarkable chapter gives us some insight into the life that God will use. He has a preference for a particular kind of life.

When God looks for someone to use, character is the issue. The republican governor of Arkansas recently wrote a book entitled, Character is the Issue. In the brief book he sets forth the case for character in our day. Our day tends to put more emphasis upon personality and experience, but God puts the emphasis on character.

In the life of this remarkable human being that God places in the second place of power in the land of Egypt some basic character qualities are evident. They are qualities that will always be found in the life that is useful to God.

#### **I. HE USES THE HUMBLE LIFE.**

When the Pharaoh has his disturbing dreams and searches for an interpreter of his dreams, the search leads to Joseph. It has been two years since Joseph had interpreted the dreams for the chief baker and the chief cupbearer of the Pharaoh. The chief cupbearer has been close to the Pharaoh for those two years but has intentionally forgotten the promise that he made and the debt he owed to Joseph. But when the servants of the Pharaoh – his magicians and wise men – cannot interpret the dream, the chief cupbearer remembers Joseph. Remember that it's been two years since we heard from Joseph.

When the word of the Pharaoh calls him to an appearance in his court, Joseph is very careful in his preparation to go stand before the Pharaoh. The Egyptians were very careful about cleanness, dress and appearance. So Joseph prepares himself appropriately. He shaves his face because facial hair was not an appropriate appearance among the

Egyptians. He puts on clean apparel, which was probably provided by the Pharaoh. He makes his appearance before the Pharaoh.

The humility of Joseph becomes apparent at once. When the Pharaoh tells him about the seven fat cows and the seven lean cows, and the seven fat ears of grain and the seven lean ears of grain and how the lean ones ate up the fat ones, he has a word for the Pharaoh.

He makes it clear to the Pharaoh at once that he does not have an answer for Pharaoh. He says, "I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." "I cannot do it" actually translates just one Hebrew word. It was an abrupt statement that declares it is not I, but God. Humble people see themselves in proper relationship to God and their fellowman. They know that they are not God, but they may be instruments of God.

In the conversation that continued between Joseph and this mighty ruler to Egypt, at no point did Joseph make claims for himself or push himself on the Pharaoh. When he made inspired recommendations about the selection of someone to oversee the seven prosperous years so grain could be saved for the seven lean years, he never hinted that he thought he himself was qualified for the job. It was the Pharaoh who saw in Joseph the qualities that such a person would need. Humility is an absolute essential in the life that God will use.

This is a reminder to us of that admonition that the Apostle Paul gave in the New Testament, "Let this attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." What was the attitude in Christ that the Apostle holds up for our emulation? Humility! It was the manner in which Jesus "humbled himself" that you and I are to copy in our lives.

The humility came into the life of Joseph as a result of his close walk with God and his years of privation in the Egyptian prison. Along the way he had developed a proper understanding of whom he was in relationship to God and to his fellowman.

## **II. THE LIFE THAT GOD USES WILL HAVE FAITH.**

Actually there is no reference to the faith of Joseph in this passage, yet faith is obvious in the passage. That Joseph had in his heart a quiet confidence in the ability of His God is quite apparent.

We see his faith first when he makes his first response to the Pharaoh.

“I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.” He is confident that the God of his fathers and his God is able to give insight to this pagan ruler into his dreams. As he comes to address the Pharaoh he says to him, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one in the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do.” Then he repeats the same words to the Pharaoh again, “It is just as I said to the Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do.” Then as he urges action upon the Pharaoh he says, “The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God and God will do it soon.” Joseph has trust in his God. He bears a good witness to this pagan ruler to the wisdom and insight of his God. It was his faith in God that put him in a position to be used of God.

That he did not lose his faith when he moved to the place of power in the kingdom is obvious. Sometimes when a person receives an unexpected promotion, it produces pride in his heart, which destroys his confidence in God. Humility teaches a man he cannot trust in himself but faith teaches a man that he can trust in God.

When Joseph was moved into the place of power by the Pharaoh, the Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife. She was the daughter of an Egyptian priest of On. Her name was Asenath. God blessed the union of this couple and soon a son was born. That Joseph still has his faith in God is obvious when he names his first born son Manasseh. Manasseh means “it is because God has made me forget all my troubles and all of my father’s household.” He gratefully acknowledges the hand of God in everything that has happened to him. This is the language of faith.

His faith comes out also when the second son was born. He named him Ephraim because, “God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.” Literally the name means “double fruit.” God has been his helper and his strength. It is an expression of his faith that he did not give his two sons Egyptian names. Their mother was an Egyptian and everyone around them was Egyptian. But Joseph is a son of Abraham and in covenant with the most high God so his sons bear a Hebrew name. He bears witness to his identity with the God of his fathers, even in the pagan society of Egypt.

God is still looking for this kind of person. He wants someone who believes him. He wants someone who acknowledges Him wherever they may be. He wants someone who

has confidence in His ability to do His will in any situation. He looks for a person of faith.

### **III. GOD USES THE TRUSTWORTHY LIFE.**

He uses another quality that is obvious in the life of Joseph. It is trustworthiness. To quote a New Testament principle, “God had made him ruler over some little things and he had been faithful so God can now promote him.” In the providence of God he was entrusted with the care of the household of Potiphera and did it well. He was faithful to his responsibilities and to his master, even when his master did not believe he had been faithful. He treated the things of Potiphera as though they were his own things to care for. He protected the interest of his master at every point.

When he was imprisoned on the false charges, he soon became a trustee in the prison system. He moved up through the ranks to the point that he was second in command in the prison. God placed him in that responsibility and he proved to be trustworthy. The chief of the guard soon learned that you could give a responsibility to Joseph and he would do what he told him. This quality is an essential quality if you are to be used of God.

This incident is a beautiful testimony to the way that God promotes the life that is proven to be trustworthy. If you are faithful over the little things, then God can trust you with the big things. He had been faithful over Potiphera’s house and the prison, now he is entrusted with the whole country, the nation itself. He has entrusted to him the welfare of

all of Egypt and her surrounding neighbors. Trustworthiness is essential quality in the life that God will use.

We should see our present responsibilities as being a test. They were for Joseph and may well be for us. The scriptures indicate that the responsibilities we will be entrusted with in eternity are being determined now by how we handle earthly responsibilities. If we prove to be faithful now with earthly responsibilities, God will be able to entrust us with heavenly responsibilities. Whether it is in time or eternity God is always looking for lives that are marked by trustworthiness.

What are the qualities of a trustworthy life? A trustworthy life is one of integrity. It is one in which a person does what they say they will do. It is one in which a person will do what they are assigned to do. It is one in which a person will look out for the best interest of the one they serve. It is one in which a person has learned to put the interest of others above their own interest.

When you put these three qualities together, they really make up a whole. You will not have faith if there is no humility or trustworthiness. You will not be trustworthy if there is not faith and humility. You will not be humble if there is not faith and trustworthiness.

They all go together – they make up a whole!

Something of special interest to the New Testament Christian is that these qualities are included in the fruit of the Spirit. He produces in the life of those who walk in fellowship

with God humility, faith, and trustworthiness. God is at work in our lives bringing us to the place that we will be useful in His kingdom. The thing that he is at work in doing is not in teaching skills or adding knowledge, but rather developing character. Be aware that God is preparing you for greater usefulness by developing in your life character.

Each of us should pray for and dream about being a person that God can use. Its not enough to just live, we should want to live fruitfully and usefully in the kingdom of God.