

THE 50:20 PERSPECTIVE AND SUCCESS

GENESIS 50:20

NEED:

TO SEE THE BAD THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO US FROM GOD'S  
PERSPECTIVE.

PROPOSITION: HOW WE RESPOND TO THE BAD THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO US IN LIFE

WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE SUCCESSFUL.

OBJECTIVE:

TO PREPARE OUR YOUTH TO LIVE WITH THE 50:20 PERSPECTIVE IN  
OUR KIND OF WORLD.

INTRODUCTION:

In commenting on Genesis 50:20 Dr. David Seamonds, an outstanding Methodist pastor and counselor, writes, "All of us need a 50:20 perspective on life."

When Joseph makes this statement, he is looking back over a troubled life from a perspective of success. He says to his brothers, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Let's think about the life of this one man.

Success in life will not be determined by the things that happen to you, the lucky breaks going your way, as much as how you respond to the things that happen to you. The life of Joseph is a beautiful example of this.

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Joseph began life in a dysfunctional family. Dysfunctional is a word we have come up with in our generation to describe a phenomena that has always been present in families. Jacob, the father of Joseph, was less than an ideal father. He had made the mistake of marrying more than one wife. These wives had hand-maidens who also functioned as surrogate wives for Jacob. When Joseph was born into the family there had already been ten sons born to Jacob from this collection of wives. His mother was the favorite wife of Jacob. Since he was the son of his father's favorite wife, and was born rather late in Jacob's life, it was soon obvious that he was his father's favorite. One sign that he was his father's favorite was the beautiful long-sleeved coat that his father provided for him. This coat distinguished him from his ten brothers. It indicated special privileges for Joseph.

Joseph didn't help his relationship with his brothers any by his behavior. He kept his father informed about indiscretions that he saw his brothers doing. He shared with his brothers and his father what he perceived to be a vision that God had given him that he would ultimately have authority over the whole family. This gave birth in the heart of his brothers to deep animosity again Joseph. This was obviously a dysfunctional family.

Many people use their families as an excuse for deviant behavior or for life's failures. When questioned about their lives they are quick to point out the disadvantage they had in their family. However, it is well to remember that from the 50:20 perspective, it is not your family that determines whether or not you will be successful but it is how you respond to the family that life gives you.

The brothers of Joseph plotted way to express their animosity toward him. When they had an opportunity, they sold him to some traveling Midianites that were passing by. This betrayal on the part of his brothers sent him away from home as a young man into a foreign land as a slave. This would be enough to break the spirit of any young person. But Joseph demonstrated an ability to survive even this kind of deep disappointment. He responded to that disappointment with a 50:20 perspective.

When he arrive din Egypt he ended up working in the home of an influential Egyptian by the name of. potiphar. He took advantage of the opportunity and faithfully fulfilled his responsibilities as a slave. Over a period of time this resulted in his being promoted to being the trusted manager of the household of Potiphar. But this did not protect him from disappointments. While he was faithfully carrying out his responsibility as the trusted servant of his master, the wife of his master did him a great injustice. She was attracted to him physically and sought to entrap him in a compromising relationship. Joseph's sense of what was right and his fear of God kept him from betraying the trust of His master by being involved sexually with his wife. Because of a failed plot on the part of potiphar's wife and the lies that she told about him, Joseph found himself unjustly confined to a prison. It looks like nothing good can happen in the life of this young man!

But while he is imprisoned, he demonstrates a 50:20 perspective. Instead of responding to his situation with bitterness, he seeks to make the most of his imprisonment. He became known to his fellow prisoners as one who could be trusted and one who would be helpful. While in the prison, he became

helpful to two of the servants of the Pharaoh by interpreting their dreams.

The Pharaoh had put two of his officers, the chief butler and the chief baker, in prison. Both of them had a dreams during their imprisonment. When Joseph asked them about the sadness of countenance that he saw them manifesting, they shared their disturbing dreams with him. God enabled him to explain the meaning of the dreams to the two men.

The chief butler shared his dream with Joseph. In his dream he had seen a vine with three branches. The three branches budded, had blossoms, had clusters to appear with ripe fruit. Then he saw the Pharaoh's cup in his hand. He took the grapes from the three branches and pressed them into the cup of the Pharaoh. Joseph explained to him that he was going to be restored to his position of trust in the palace of the Pharaoh and would once again serve his master. After explaining what was going to happen, Joseph made a simple request, "But remember me when it is well with you. And please ~ kindness to me; make mention of me to the Pharaoh and get me out of this house." The butler promised to do this, but when he was restored to his position he forgot.

The chief baker of the Pharaoh shared his dream with Joseph, but Joseph had to tell him the bad news that he would lose his life in three days. The Pharaoh would have him executed.

Can you imagine what it must have meant to Joseph to stay in the prison and to know that the butler had completely forgotten his promise? Most of us have had or will have the experience of having someone that we trusted to

disappoint us. This was a part of Joseph's experience but he responded to this disappointment with a 50:20 perspective.

After languishing in prison for an extended period of time, the butler finally remembered. It happened because the Pharaoh had a dream that no one could explain. The Pharaoh's dream was one where there were seven healthy, fat cows feeding in a meadow and there were seven other cows that came up out of a river and they appeared to be almost starved to death. These starved cows ate up the seven healthy, fat, cows. In his second dream there were seven heads of grain on one stalk of wheat, and the heads were plump and good. But then there appeared seven scrawny, blighted heads. The seven blighted heads ate up the full grains of wheat. None of Pharaoh's magicians or wise men could explain the dream to him. It was then that the butler remembered Joseph and shared his memory with the Pharaoh.

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Joseph was brought before the butler and received an account of the two dreams of the Pharaoh. Because of the wisdom God had given him, he was able to explain to the Pharaoh the meanings of the dreams. He told him that seven prosperous good years agriculturally were to be experienced by the land of Egypt. But these seven good years would be followed by seven years of drought and leanness. It would be an act of wisdom for the Pharaoh to use the seven good years to prepare for the seven lean years.

The Pharaoh was so impressed with the ability of this young Hebrew prisoner to explain his dreams, that he put him in charge of a program to conserve the abundance from the seven good years for the seven lean years to come. Joseph became the trusted servant of the Pharaoh of Egypt. He put in place

a program that conserved the abundance of the seven years and then was put in charge of a program of distribution for the seven lean years. It resulted in Joseph becoming next to the Pharaoh himself in power and influence.

This is where the brothers found Joseph when they were forced to come to Egypt to buy grain by the drought that had fallen upon the land of Canaan. They had to deal with their brother even though at first he did not identify himself. He was in a position to help his brothers and his father when all the food gave out in the land of Canaan. This is where our text occurs. Jacob, the father of these sons, has died. The brothers are afraid that Joseph will turn upon them for vengeance because of the terrible thing they did to him in the days of his youth. They are haunted by their memory of mistreating their brother. It is then that Joseph explains to them his perspective on life. As he looks back he sees the evil things that happened to him and he sees the evil that others intended to do him, but he realizes that God has overturned the bad things that have happened in his life and made them turn out for good. This is the 50:20 perspective that we need. We can't control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond to what happens to us. Our success will be determined by how we respond to what happens to us rather than to what happens to us. If you respond with a 50:20 perspective, then nothing that happens to you can keep you from experiencing success in life.

From this biographical section of on the life of Joseph there are some simple lessons we need to learn about a 50:20 perspective.

1. A 50:20 perspective will save you from bitterness.

Bitterness is poison in the human spirit. There will be enough bad things to happen to us in life that bitterness will be a possibility for all of us. The only thing that can save you from bitterness is the choice that you can make to see life from God's perspective. Your confidence in God will keep you from becoming bitter toward other people who have done you wrong. You can know with assurance that God will work through what ever happens in your life for your good if you continue to love Him and have your confidence in him. You can be bitter over what you perceive to be failures of your parents, what one of your siblings did to you, what an employer did to you, the betrayal of a friend, or a thousand different things. Bitterness will keep you from success and joy in life. The 50:20 perspective will keep you from bitterness.

2. It will keep you from using the disappointments of life as an excuse for failure.

So many people go through life explaining their failures by what someone else did to them. Their parents, an employer, a friend, a mate, or someone else did them wrong. They allowed that injustice or wrong to become the focus of their lives and they missed out on God's best for their lives. The 50:20 perspective allowed Joseph to use things that were meant to be stumbling stones as stepping stones. It was out of what was meant to be a destructive thing in his life that his best opportunities came. It is all a matter of facing life with a 50:20 perspective.

3. The 50:20 perspective will fill your heart with thanksgiving and expectancy.

This is what we find in the heart of Joseph at a time when others might have expected to find bitterness and unforgiveness. Because of his 50:20 perspective, his confidence in God, he has been able to forgive, and to see the good, and he looks forward toward tomorrow with expectancy. What a blessing it is to have a grateful and expectant heart.

4. The 50:20 perspective will position you to bless others.

This is the story of Joseph. Wherever he found himself, because of his 50:20 perspective he was a blessing. He was a blessing in the house of Potiphar as a slave. He was a blessing in the prison of the Pharaoh as a prisoner. He was a blessing in the house of Pharaoh as a trusted servant. He was a blessing to his father and family at a time of critical need. Without this 50:20 perspective, none of this would have happened.

This is a lesson for all of us to learn. It is not what happens to us that makes the difference, but rather it is how we respond to what happens to us. Do we respond with a confidence and faith in God or do we respond with resentment and bitterness. The successful people of our world have a 50:20 perspective.