

Confidence in the Sovereignty of God

Lesson for Sunday, February 18, 2024

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Worry, anxiety, stress...sound familiar? These words could describe the state of most of our modern world. There have been many studies in recent years that show sky-rocketing rates in each of these areas.
- ⇒ How did we get to this point? With all the technological advances we have achieved, shouldn't we be less-stressed than ever? We don't have to grow our own food, travel by horseback, or keep a fire going all night just to stay warm inside our homes.
- ⇒ The more advanced we become it seems the more stressed we are. But have you ever thought about where our stress and worry are rooted?
- ⇒ If there was ever one person who had reasons to stress, it was Joseph. Interestingly, the Bible never portrays him as worried or anxious. What is there for us to learn in the life of Joseph?

BIBLE STUDY:

1. A Stressful Home Life (Genesis 37)
 - a. We are introduced to Joseph in Genesis 37.
 - i. He is almost the youngest of twelve sons, and was his father's favorite (vs. 3).
 - ii. At one point, Jacob had given Joseph a coat of many colors that seemed to set him apart from his other sons.
 - iii. This caused some serious tension in the home between Joseph and his siblings (vs. 4).
 - b. The hatred they had for Joseph led the older brothers to do something that is difficult to imagine.
 - i. At first, their plan was to kill Joseph (vs. 18-20).
 - ii. Thankfully, cooler heads prevailed and instead of killing Joseph, they threw him into a pit (vs. 23-24) and then sold him into slavery (vs. 27-28).
 - iii. Eventually, Joseph ended up a slave in Egypt (vs. 36 & 39:1).
 - c. To call this family dysfunctional seems like an understatement. Can you relate?
 - d. Amazingly, the Bible never records Joseph as bitter. Instead, we read in Genesis 39:2, "The Lord was with Joseph."
 - e. How could Joseph be blessed? How could he not be stressed, angry and bitter at the circumstances of his life? Don't miss this! It is the point of this lesson: *Joseph reacted to the circumstances of life just like anyone would if they were absolutely convinced in the sovereignty of God.*
2. A Stressful Work Environment (Genesis 39)
 - a. Joseph seemed to be adjusting to his new role as a slave pretty well. Read 39:3-6. Do you notice what is missing? He's a slave; but he isn't complaining. He isn't pouting. He is faithfully working and the presence of God in his life is obvious to his owner. What a testimony!
 - b. Like our lives, Joseph was about to learn that life isn't always smooth. The owner's wife set her eyes on Joseph and attempted to seduce him.
 - i. Joseph was in the ultimate lose-lose scenario.
 - ii. If he was caught with Potiphar's wife, he would be a dead man.
 - iii. If he refused the boss's wife, that would lead to certain trouble. What would you do?
 - c. Joseph did what a Christian ought to do: he refused the temptation. Read verses 10-12.
 - d. Here's the tough part: Joseph honored the Lord and maintained his testimony. Shouldn't he live happily ever after? Not quite! His refusal led to a prison sentence. Read vs. 17-20.

- e. Talk about a raw deal! Talk about a great reason to question God! Joseph seems to have an adequate case to complain before the Lord. But watch what happens: read vs. 21. Sound familiar?
 - f. Once again, we must ask: “How? How could Joseph not complain? How could he not be angry?”
 - g. *Because Joseph reacted to the circumstances of life just like anyone would if they were absolutely convinced in the sovereignty of God.*
3. A Stressful Circumstance (Genesis 40)
- a. We are beginning to see a pattern emerge in the life of Joseph. Read 39:22-23.
 - b. Quick question for us to consider: How would you react if you were wrongly sent to jail? How do you typically react when things don’t go your way?
 - c. After some time, Joseph interprets the dreams of two special prisoners who had been two of the most trusted men in Pharaoh’s kingdom.
 - d. We don’t have time for the details, but the Bible tells us that Joseph’s interpretations were right. All Joseph requested for his services is found in verse 14. What payment did he receive? Read verse 23. Nothing seems to go his way!
 - e. 41:1 tells us that two more years would pass and Joseph would remain in prison. Can you imagine the temptation to be bitter and to give up on God? But the Bible records no such thing.
 - f. Again, we must ask ourselves: How was Joseph able to maintain his faith in God will all that he had to endure? *Because Joseph reacted to the circumstances of life just like anyone would if they were absolutely convinced in the sovereignty of God.*
4. A Sovereign Deliverance (Genesis 41-50)
- a. In chapter 41, the King had a dream and was in desperate need of a proper interpretation. After two years, the chief butler remembered Joseph (41:9-13).
 - b. Pharaoh called up Joseph from the prison and Joseph was able to properly interpret his dream (vs. 25ff). Even in this exciting time, Joseph did not forget the Lord and was sure to give Him proper credit (vs. 16, 25).
 - c. Finally, things began to turn around for Joseph. Pharaoh placed Joseph in charge of the entire kingdom, and through his leadership, the world was saved from a terrible famine (vs. 39-41).
 - d. Even in the midst of all that was happening, Pharaoh took notice of what separated Joseph from the rest. Read 41:38.
 - e. If we had the time, we could read the rest of Genesis and see how Joseph handled his new power.
 - i. Amazingly, Joseph did not seek to take revenge on Potiphar’s wife for falsely accusing him of attempted rape.
 - ii. Joseph did not seek to forcefully remind the chief butler that he had conveniently forgotten all about Joseph when he returned to his post.
 - iii. Even when Joseph found himself face-to-face with his brothers, Joseph refused to get even.
 - f. What kept Joseph emotionally balanced through all of this? *Because Joseph continued to react to the circumstances of life just like anyone would if they were absolutely convinced in the sovereignty of God.*
5. A Sovereign Statement (Genesis 50)
- a. Joseph was seemingly convinced that God was in control – even when it seemed He was not. That belief kept Joseph in a blessed position. It kept him from being angry all the time and bitter at life’s circumstances and at people who had done him wrong.
 - b. Joseph summarized his philosophy to his reconciled brothers in 50:19-20.
 - c. Question: What can we take from Joseph’s trust in the sovereignty of God and apply in our lives, our homes, our work, and our circumstances of life?
 - d. If God is sovereign, we can trust Him with everything – even life’s difficulties.