

A Resilient Life: The Joseph Story

Week One: Resilient People Have Integrity

New Hope Thursdays

October 2, 2008

We all know that life isn't easy. Each new week brings new challenges which sometimes are so daunting we wonder if we will find our way through them. The faithful life is a *resilient* life. The Old Testament story of Joseph is a story of a resilient life. Joseph faced one daunting challenge after another yet his faith sustained him through them all. In his story we'll discover how *resiliency* can be part of our story.

Weekly Schedule:

Sept 25	Resilient People Know Hardships Will Come	Genesis 37
Oct 2	Resilient People Have Integrity	Genesis 39
Oct 9	Resilient People Know that God is Good	Genesis 40-41
Oct 16	Resilient People Persevere	Genesis 40-41
Oct 23	No Class – Fall Break	
Oct 30	Resilient People Can See the Big Picture	Genesis 42-45
Nov 6	Resilient People Can Forgive	Genesis 50:15-21
Nov 13	Living a Resilient Life	Genesis 50:22-26

Except for October 9, each lesson on Thursday night will be followed by a sermon on the same passage the following Sunday. The lesson on October 9 will be preached on the weekend of fall break, October 26.

I will provide copies each week of a study guide that will include the passages we're studying that evening. However, I encourage you to bring your own Bibles with you to read as we move through the story. We'll be using the NRSV translation.

Resilient People Have Integrity

Genesis 39

I. Integrity

At your table, come up with some synonyms for the word *integrity*.

Think of at least one example at your table of integrity in real life. Where have you seen integrity in "action" in the past week or so?

Integrity – adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty; uprightness

“Walk the talk”

A sound or perfect condition—*the integrity of a ship’s hull*

Related to the word *integer* – a whole number, complete

Wholeness vs. Incomplete

II. Joseph “Bounces Back”

Genesis 39:1-6

¹Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. ²The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³His master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. ⁴So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. ⁶So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate.

Comments:

- a. Joseph is sold a second time—Potiphar “purchases” him from the Ishmaelites who bought him from his brothers.
- b. God “appears” for the first time in Joseph’s story in v.2. Notice the use of the word “with.” God is more than a far-off observer. He is alongside, present. It is God’s presence that leads to Joseph’s success. Notice that God’s presence is more of a “behind the scenes” kind of presence. It’s not a dramatic appearance like a burning bush kind of experience. God’s presence is unobtrusive yet real.
- c. Interesting that even Potiphar realized the Lord was with Joseph in v.3. Then, God’s blessing on Joseph’s life spills over to Potiphar’s household (v.5). God’s goodness can’t be confined to an individual—it touches many.

d. Joseph has great responsibility in Potiphar's household. One did not get such a position without being trusted and respected. Joseph must have been an impressive young man. We have no sense here of how much time has elapsed since his brothers sold him. But he has come a long way from the bottom of the pit!

Question:

Last week we noted that *resilience* is the ability to recover (“bounce back”) from adversity. What was the key to Joseph's resilience?

II. A Desperate Housewife

Genesis 39:6b-18

Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking.⁷ And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.”⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, “Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand.⁹ He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”¹⁰ And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her.¹¹ One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house,¹² she caught hold of his garment, saying, “Lie with me!” But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.¹³ When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside,¹⁴ she called out to the members of her household and said to them, “See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice;¹⁵ and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside.”¹⁶ Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home,¹⁷ and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me;¹⁸ but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside.”

Comments:

- a. This part of the story is a good reminder that even though we try to live a life of integrity, our actions will not always be received in kind. Other people we encounter will have different values and expectations.
- b. Notice how Potiphar's wife puts the blame on Potiphar in vs.14 and 16. She "guilts" him into taking action so that she can get her revenge on Joseph.

Question:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor/theologian from the last century, once wrote the following about temptation:

In our members there is a slumbering inclination towards desire which is both sudden and fierce. With irresistible power, desire seizes mastery over the flesh. All at once a secret, smouldering fire is kindled. The flesh burns and is in flames. It makes no difference whether it is sexual desire, or ambition, or vanity, or desire for revenge, or love of fame and power, or greed for money or, finally, that strange desire for the beauty of the world, or nature. Joy in God is in course of being extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature. At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real; the only reality is the devil. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God... The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us...

With these words in mind, how was Joseph able to resist temptation? What are signs of his integrity?

III. Joseph's Life Takes a Turn—Again

Genesis 39:19-23

¹⁹When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. ²⁰And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison,

the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. ²¹But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. ²²The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. ²³The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

Comments:

- a. Joseph is back in a "pit" again. Adversity has returned to his life. But the Lord is "with" him (v.21). Once again God's presence leads to blessing for Joseph.
- b. The Hebrew word for "steadfast love" in v.21 is *hesed*. This word is the equivalent of the New Testament Greek word for love, *agape*. These two words are the key words in the Bible for God's love. It is a never-ending, unconditional love.
- c. Once again, Joseph discovers success in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Question:

What role did Joseph play in his success? What role did God play?

Something to Think About

Several times in this chapter, the "witness" of God is mentioned. The Lord was with Joseph yet God's presence didn't mean that Joseph was free from adversity. God was with him when he was in charge of Potiphar's household, and he was with him in prison. The faithful life is not free from adversity, but God's presence is steadfast and sure.