

A Resilient Life: The Joseph Story
Week One: Resilient People Persevere
New Hope Thursdays
October 16, 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

Study Guides for previous weeks' lessons are online at www.newhopenews.org.

Resilient People Persevere

Genesis 40

I. Persevere

At your table, come up with a definition for the word, *persevere*.

“Persevere means _____.”

Then think of examples of perseverance that you've recently seen in your own life or in the lives of others.

Why is perseverance admirable?

II. Some Definitions

Persevere – refuse to stop; be persistent; maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles, or discouragement; continue steadfastly

Synonyms: persist; continue

Perseverance – steady persistence in a course of action

Synonyms: doggedness; steadfastness; tenacity

III. More Dreams

Genesis 40:1-8

¹Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the king of Egypt. ²Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴The captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he waited on them; and they continued for some time in custody. ⁵One night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own meaning. ⁶When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. ⁷So he asked Pharaoh’s officers, who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” ⁸They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”

Comments:

- a. No reason is given for the imprisonment of the cupbearer and the baker. Given their jobs, it was probably food related.
- b. It was the cupbearer’s job to bring the Pharaoh his wine—tasting it first to make sure it was not poisoned.
- c. Joseph is charged to take care of the new prisoners. This is yet another reminder of his abilities and God’s favor.

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.

Genesis 39:22-23

- d. Ironic that Joseph's dreams were what led to his slavery, now the dreams of others are going to be the key to his release from slavery.
- e. Similar to what Joseph will later say to the Pharaoh (41:16), he gives credit to God for the interpretation of the dreams (v.8) but seems very confident of his ability to be the spokesperson for that interpretation.

Question:

As we have seen, dreams play a significant role in the Joseph story. Are dreams a part of your life? At your table, talk about any regular dreams you might have in your sleep. What is the difference between the way dreams were treated in Joseph's time and the way they are treated today?

IV. Joseph's Plea

Genesis 40:9-25

⁹So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me, ¹⁰and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms came out and the clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."¹²Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days; ¹³within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴But remember me when it is well with you; please do me the kindness to make mention of me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this place. ¹⁵For in fact I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

Comments:

- a. The phrase: "lift up your head" in v.13 is a metaphor for freedom from blame. A person without blame can hold his or her head high.
- b. Joseph's plea in vs.14-15 is the first time in the story where he is open about his needs. He clearly wants to get out of prison and knows he is there unjustly.
- c. God is with Joseph as we have seen, but here he needs human help to deliver him out of his poor circumstances. In this one paragraph we see the confident Joseph and the needful Joseph.
- d. *Kindness* in v.14 is once again from the Hebrew word, *hesed*. We saw this word in 39:21. (**"But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him**

steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.”) Joseph needs *hesed* from God and from other human beings.

Question:

What is it like to deal with an unjust circumstance? Joseph was in prison even though he was innocent. Think of a time when you were wrongly accused. What was that like?

V. The Baker’s Dream

Genesis 40:16-19

¹⁶When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, “I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, ¹⁷and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.” ¹⁸And Joseph answered, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; ¹⁹within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a pole; and the birds will eat the flesh from you.”

Comments:

1. No details are given here about why the cupbearer would be restored to his position while the baker was executed.
2. Joseph displays courage and confidence here in his delivery of the interpretation. He shows the same qualities in responding to Pharaoh’s dreams in chapter 41.

Question:

Could you have delivered this bad news? Why or why not?

VI. Joseph is Forgotten

Genesis 40:20-23

²⁰On the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, he made a feast for all his servants, and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹He restored the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand; ²²but the chief baker he hanged, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Comments:

1. Joseph's credibility increases as his interpretation of the dreams proves to be correct. Again, his gifts and abilities shine in this story.
2. The cupbearer forgets to "remember" him to the Pharaoh prolonging is unjust stay in prison.

Question:

Imagine the frustration of Joseph! Yet, he perseveres. How do you suppose he was able to endure two more years of imprisonment?

Something to Think About

Perseverance is a common theme in the Scriptures. Consider these words of the Apostle Paul:

. . . this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

Philippians 3:13-16

Perseverance is possible because of Christ—Christ at work within us and Christ who is our heavenly goal.