

LESSONS FROM JOSEPH

Int.

1. Aim: To discuss some valuable lessons we learn from the life of Joseph.
2. Rom. 15:4 - 1 Cor. 10:11 "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."
3. The story of Joseph is recorded in Gen. 37-50. It is one of the world's greatest stories.
 - a. There would be very little interest in his life if all was sunshine, happiness, and success.
 - b. But there is great respect and admiration for one whose life has been hard, and they have risen to overcome it.
 - c. The story of Joseph is a rags to riches story with all the human elements of life: hope, love, fear, sorrow, envy, hate, temptation, lust, vengeance, suffering sin and triumph.
4. A study of a man like Joseph helps us to better appreciate the principles of what life is all about, because we can see it expressed in his life.
5. The character of Joseph is a favorite not because we see ourselves in him, but in him we see what we would like to become. He is a good example for young people and for people of all ages.

Discussion

I. LIFE OF JOSEPH

A. Birth and Youth

1. Born to Jacob and Rachel in Padan-Aram
2. At age 17 he was the favorite son - given a coat of many colors - brothers jealous
3. Dreams - brothers sheaves bowed down to his - sun, moon and stars bowed to him

B. Sold into Slavery

1. Went to check on his brothers - plotted to kill him
2. Instead sold him to Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver
3. Then he was sold to Potiphar captain of Pharaoh's guard
4. Brothers tore his coat, covered with animal blood and took it back to Jacob leading him to believe Joseph had been killed by an animal. Jacob mourned for Joseph.

C. Joseph in Potiphar's house

1. Made him overseer of all his house and possessions
2. Potiphar's wife desired him
 - a. He refused - would be a sin "against God"
 - b. No one in the house she tried to get him to change his mind
 - c. He fled - she held to his garment - lied about him
 - d. Potiphar cast him into prison

D. Interpreter of dreams

1. In charge of prisoners
2. Interprets dreams of butler and baker

3. Two years later Pharaoh dreamed 2 dreams and Joseph interpreted them
 - a. Fat and skinny cows - Stalks of grain - healthy and unhealthy
 - b. 7 years of plenty - 7 years of famine

E. Ruler in Egypt

1. Age 30 Joseph was in charge of stockpiling food during years of plenty
2. When famine came all countries came to Egypt to buy grain

F. Reunion with his family

1. Jacob sent sons to Egypt to buy grain
2. Joseph recognized them but did not reveal himself to them
3. After second trip he finally told them that he was their brother.
4. Jacob and all his family came to Egypt to live in the land of Goshen.

II. THE FAITH OF JOSEPH - The outstanding trait of his life was faith

A. Joseph's name is listed in Heb. 11:22

B. "The Lord was with Joseph" -

1. Recorded in Gen. 39:2 "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian." and Gen. 39:21 "But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison."
2. Also mentioned in Acts 7:9 by Stephen "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,"
3. Joseph's knowledge that God was with him and that he would not desert him sustained him through all the tests and trials he experienced.

C. Examples of Faith in his life:

1. His faith in God enabled him to endure the envy, jealousy and hatred of his brothers.
 - a. He was the favorite child of his father, Jacob, who made him a coat of many colors and gave him many favors. This caused envy and jealousy on the part of his brothers.
 - b. His brothers despised him for the dreams that he had which revealed that they would one day bow down and worship him. Gen. 37:8,11
 - c. Can you imagine what it was like to have his own brothers conspire to kill him. Gen. 37:20,21-27
 - d. Instead of killing him they cast him into a pit and then he was sold.
 - e. His faith in God enabled him to endure all these difficult times in life.

2. His Faith enabled him to say NO!!!
 - a. Potiphar's wife made immoral advances and tempted Joseph to commit sin with her.
 - b. He would not yield to this temptation.
 - c. Gen. 39:9 "...how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

3. His faith in God enabled him to endure being falsely accused and thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit.
 - a. He did not deserve to be imprisoned

- b. Although treated unfairly and forced to spend precious years of his youth alone in prison, he remained faithful to God.
 - c. Gen. 39:21-23
 - 4. His faith enabled Joseph to interpret the dream of Pharaoh
 - a. He explains the dreams to Pharaoh
 - b. And he tells him: "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."
 - Gen. 41:16
 - c. Four times he gives God the credit for his power to interpret this dream.
 - d. He remained faithful to God in all this.
 - 5. It was his faith in God that enabled him to forgive his brothers of their mistreatment of him.
 - a. It has been 22 years since he had seen them
 - b. But when they come before him, bowing in search of food, he does not despise them.
 - c. But he sees in this action the unfolding will of God
 - d. Gen. 45:7-8
 - e. When he had the opportunity to avenge his brothers for all those years of slavery and prison, Joseph remained faithful.
- D. The key to the successful life of Joseph was his never-failing, ever-growing faith in God.
 - 1. His faith was an absolute trust and loyalty to the God who made him and revealed himself to Joseph.
 - 2. "The Lord was with Joseph" and Joseph was with the Lord.
 - 3. With every turn of his life he remained ever faithful to Him.

III. HIS CHARACTER

A. Faith was the foundation

1. A faith like that of Joseph's will build a good character
2. He believed in God, and he became what God wanted him to be.
3. His life went from one extreme to the other, but he was always the same Joseph.
4. His circumstances changed, but his character never changed.
5. He did not compromise his faith in God.

B. His faith shaped his character and his character is shown in the following qualities.

1. Obedience

- a. When his father Jacob asked him to go to Shechem to check on his brothers he answered by saying "Here am I."
- b. He was willing to go and check on the welfare of those who hated him.
- c. No indication of doubt or hesitation by Joseph about obeying his father.
- d. This characteristic was also seen in his obedience to God.

2. Purity

- a. Potiphar's wife enticed him by saying "Come lie with me" Gen. 39:7
- b. She was a woman of rank and beauty
- c. Joseph was a young man with all the natural desires and appetites of the flesh.
- d. If he agreed he might advance, but if he refused he would be despised.
- e. He could have rationalized that he was far away from home. And this was a common thing among slaves, and he would probably never see his father or his brothers again.

- f. Gen. 39:8-9 - He knew that he would be committing sin against Potiphar, Potiphar's wife, himself and against God.
- g. He maintained his purity because he refused to yield to the temptations. This is a demonstration of his Faith!

3. Attitude

- a. Joseph had a great attitude in response to his many circumstances of life.
- b. With all the trials and suffering there is not the slightest hint of anger, hatred, or bitterness in his character.
- c. When he became a slave in Potiphar's house he resolved to become the best and most useful servant in the household.
 - (1) The Lord was with him and he prospered Gen. 39:2
 - (2) The result was, Potiphar placed all that he had under Joseph's command, for He could see that "the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands." Gen. 39:3 And "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake." Gen. 39:5
 - (3) Not once did Joseph rebel against his master and fail to work hard.
- d. When he was imprisoned unfairly he responded with a good attitude:
 - (1) He may have felt disappointment, despondency and unfairness.
 - (2) But these did not control him.
 - (3) Rather, he made the best of his situation, for the Lord was with him. Gen. 39:21
 - (4) The keeper of the prison soon committed to him the care of all the prisoners.
 - (5) He went to work and whatever he did the Lord made to prosper. Gen. 39:23

4. Providence

- a. Through all his experiences Joseph believed that God had a place for his life and that He would provide for him.
- b. His great belief in the providence of God is revealed when he was reunited with his brothers.
- c. Gen. 45:4-5, 7
- d. After the death of their father, Jacob, the brothers feared Joseph would treat them bad. But he said: Gen. 50:19-20
- e. As Joseph looked back over his life, he learned that all the things that had happened to him God had designed not only for his good, but for the good of this people.
- f. Joseph knew the truthfulness of what Paul wrote many years later. Rom. 8:28

5. FORGIVENESS

- a. One of the great character traits of Joseph was his willingness to forgive his brothers.
- b. Their envy and hatred had caused him to be separated from his family for 22 years.
- c. Instead of retaliation, resentment, and revenge - he greeted them with understanding, love, and forgiveness.
- d. The brothers expected Joseph to kill them for what they had done.
- e. But Joseph was a righteous man and thoughts of reconciliation filled his heart, not retaliation.

6. HOPE

- a. Definition = Hope is the desire for something with the expectation of obtaining that which is desired.
- b. Even in his bad times of life Joseph lived with the hope that through God's plan things would eventually get better.
- c. As Joseph was dying he said to his brothers: Gen. 50:24-25
- d. In his dying breath he foretold the deliverance of God's people from Egypt and for his bones to be buried with his own people.
- e. He lived in Egypt, but he was not an Egyptian.
- f. He was an Israelite and he belonged to the people of God.
- g. He belonged to God and his bones would be buried with the people of God.
- h. Heb. 11:22 "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."
- i. Joseph looked "...for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:10

CONCLUSION

1. Joseph has been described as one of the faultless human heroes of scripture.
2. His life more nearly approaches perfection than any other in the O.T.
3. The story of his life is at the same time most tragic and touching on one hand and inspiring on the other.
4. His great Faith is a model for us to follow

5. His wonderful character is one for us to imitate:
- a. Obedience,
 - b. Purity,
 - c. Attitude,
 - d. Providence,
 - e. Forgiveness
 - f. Hope
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