

CHIEF MINISTRIES

April 2022

Greetings in the name of the Lord.

This month there are a couple of examples from the bible I want to look at to illustrate how the Lord takes our choices, good and bad, and continues to make and mold us into vessels of honor to be used for the kingdom.

The Joseph Journey

The story of Joseph, in the book of Genesis is full of intrigue and contains a plot that twists and turns its way to a beautiful ending. The Joseph Journey takes one from youthful zeal and dreams of greatness to despair, separation, disappointment, and betrayal. The Joseph Journey starts with a seventeen-year-old boy and ends with a man who sits as a ruler and prince over all the known world of his day. God used every trial and tribulation that the enemy put Joseph through as part of his preparation and positioning for him to rule and reign.

To begin with Joseph was not liked by his siblings because his father, Jacob, favored him. His brothers were jealous, so they took him away, threw him into a pit, then sold him. Returning home with his coat (that his father had made for him) covered in animal blood, made it to appear as though Joseph had been killed. That was just the start of his journey: Separated from his family, unable to return, hated by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery. He eventually became a steward to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials. It was there that as he served Potiphar and was approached by Potiphar's wife and was falsely accused.

In Genesis chapter 39 we see Joseph falsely accused and cast into prison. And all because Joseph was faithful to his master. He was helpless with no one to come to his aid. But God was there with Joseph.

"But Yahweh was with Joseph and demonstrated to him His faithful love by giving him great favor in the sight of the warden. The warden put all the prisoners under Joseph's care; he was placed in charge of all the prisoners and everything in the prison. The warden had no worries about the prison with Joseph in charge, because Yahweh's presence was with Joseph and caused everything Joseph did to prosper." (Genesis 39:21-23, TPT)

Can you imagine what it would be like to be thrown into prison back in Joseph's day? The conditions would most likely have been harsh, with little food and water, as well as continual physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual suffering for most of the prisoners. Yet God was with Joseph in his confinement. Heaven's favor and kindness were evident, for Joseph was given the responsibility over everything that happened in the prison. Here are some likely duties that Joseph would attend to:

- Food preparation (if one was fortunate enough to eat)
- Cleaning up
- Emptying and cleaning the latrines
- Tending the wounds of prisoners
- Caring for sick prisoners
- Dealing with infestations of rats, lice, other insects, and rodents
- Watching over vulnerable prisoners
- Maintaining order and peace
- Keeping corruption at bay
- Dealing with death
- Ministering to the brokenhearted and the lonely

What does this sound like? Maybe being a servant?? Joseph wasn't being served by others; he was serving others. And in return for his servanthood, he had favor, favor from the other prisoners, and those over him. It was seen by everyone around him that he was different, why do you think that was? It was God's favor on him. He didn't understand why he was there, but he knew God was with him and his desire was to do what he was asked, not because he expected something special, but because he wanted to please God. He walked in righteousness because he honored and respected God and God's ways. That was his character. He could have been angry and bitter, after all, he hadn't done anything for his brothers to do to him what they did, nor did he do anything to warrant him being thrown into prison. Yet his focus remained on what was pleasing to God.

Are you experiencing any of that in your life? One of the things I hear when listening to those in white, is the importance that is put on respect. Yes, respect is important, but are you in a place in your spiritual walk where the respect you have for God is so overwhelming that you will be a servant to those around you.? To actually serve others rather than because of your position (usually self-appointed) you expect to be served, because that is a sign of respect? Something to ponder. Joseph served!

God then taught Joseph the priority of *people before programs*. He had to learn what it meant to be his brother's keeper. A heart of compassion began to form while Joseph was in confinement. In the place of God's built-in destiny delay, Joseph embraced the depths of the Father's compassion for others. The lessons he learned of humility, wisdom, and love, became the basis of his promotion. No doubt, there were days that Joseph struggled with the plans of God for his life, just as we all do. But he remembered and persevered in his sonship regardless of his circumstances. God used the prison cell as the perfect crucible for His love to form in Joseph's heart. He was moldable and teachable to the God of his father (Jacob).

Also, Joseph learned the heart of a servant in prison. It was crucial in his preparation, for he would one day be entrusted with so much power and influence. God chose to allow him to face confinement in a prison to teach him this lesson. He had the opportunity to show tender compassion to the other prisoners who were placed in his charge. Now I have heard many times, "Hey, they're in white too, they're not 'in charge' over me!" Truly, when pride is that prevalent God is not in it! To have the compassion of God, means you are a servant to all, not just the Chaplain, or the Boss of the Day, or the Warden, or the outside ministry team, but to everyone around you. We'll speak of pride later on.

While in the dungeon, Joseph's anointing grew and grew. The iron of the shackles entered his soul and made him stronger. He was put in charge over all that was done in the prison house. Even in a prison, the most unlikely place, *Joseph shined like a star*. Even the prison warden recognized the extraordinary character of young Joseph. *He was prospering again*. Psalm 119:71 (TPT) says, "*The punishment You brought me through was the best thing that could have happened to me, for it taught me Your ways.*" Joseph is starting all over. This time it was at the bottom of an Egyptian dungeon. The prison was a school for Joseph, a place to build character, although unseen by others and forgotten. Remember he was nowhere around family, and his brothers were not going to fess up to their deeds, so all he had was the Lord.

Like Joseph, your life, with its setbacks and limitations, is being uniquely prepared for God's purposes. It seems impossible that your problems will be the source of your promotion but watch and see how God's presence is with you. Favor will increase and promotion will come as God deals thoroughly with your heart. The higher your calling, the greater your preparation. "*Don't be afraid... Even though you intended to hurt me, God intended it for good. It was His plan all along, to ensure the survival of many people.*" (Genesis 50:19-20, TPT)

Now let's look at Jeremiah. God's training for Jeremiah was different yet there were similarities.

One day, God had a message for a prophet named Jeremiah. He told him to go to a potter's house and watch the potter make clay pots. As Jeremiah watched the potter molding and fixing the clay, he noticed something: "*Whenever the pot the potter was working on turned out badly, as sometimes happens when you are working with clay, the potter would simply start over and use the same clay to make another pot*" (Jeremiah 18:4 *The Message*). After Jeremiah saw this object lesson, God gave him a message for Israel: "*Watch this potter. In the same way that this potter works his clay, I work on you*" (Jeremiah 18:6 *The Message*).

What was God saying here? I think He was saying: “You may have really made a mess of your life. Your “pot” is scarred from poor decisions that you made and things that you have done and were done to you. As a result, your life has not turned out as you intended.” But remember, you are the clay; you’re not the potter. God is the potter, and he doesn’t discard clay that’s been misshapen by circumstances. He doesn’t waste the pain that you’ve been through. God doesn’t throw out the personality and the essence of who he created you to be. Instead, he takes every part of you—the good, the bad, and the ugly. He puts it all in his gentle but strong hands. And then he starts over with shaping your life, applying pressure at just the right places to mold you and remake you into a beautiful, priceless piece of art.

That’s what happens when you surrender yourself completely to God’s loving hands. You see, God specializes in fresh starts. It’s never too late to start over. Bring whatever chaos is in your life to God, the Great Potter. Trust him to do a new work in your life. What mistakes and messes in your life do you think God cannot redeem and use for good? What do you think he would say about them? How have you seen God create good out of a mess, either in your own life or in someone else’s?

So, in looking at these two mighty men of God. What do you think they had in common, besides the trials → victory they experienced by allowing God to work in their circumstances? Well with Joseph, God took him thru the pain and process of transformation, with Jeremiah God showed him and made the analogy of the clay and potter as an object lesson. Were both effective? Yes, same outcome, different methods. Each of us are different, and God will do and use whatever it takes to get us where we need to be in relationship with Him, to mold us into the vessels that we can be most effective for the kingdom.

The first thing they had to do was hear the voice of God and second be obedient to His instruction, be teachable! And you say, “Well how do I do that?” To grow through any season, you need deep spiritual roots. During the springtime, which is usually a time of rain, all the grass turns green, the wildflowers and poppies bloom, and it’s beautiful. But the moment the rains stop, the hills turn brown again. Why? Because the grass has shallow roots. The roots can’t go down deep enough to get water from the springs that are deep beneath the ground. When a plant has shallow roots, it may initially sprout and look good, but it withers quickly and doesn’t last. It’s the same for your spiritual life. To grow through any season, you need deep roots.

Luke 8:13 says, *“The seeds that fell on rocky ground are the people who gladly hear the message and accept it. But they don’t have deep roots, and they believe only for a little while. As soon as life gets hard, they give up”*.

Sometimes you may hear God’s Word and get excited about it without allowing it to change you. You act superficially. You react emotionally. You’re moved impulsively. But you don’t take the time to let it sink in.

Do you really want to be that way? No! You want to be a deep person, not a shallow person. You want to be a person with deep spiritual roots so that when life happens and may last several years, you’re able to keep bearing fruit. When the rough winds come and somebody in your family gets sick or a close friend dies, the trial doesn’t blow you away, because you’ve got roots.

How do you develop spiritual roots? You do it by having a daily time with God and a weekly fellowship with other believers. Remember, you were created to be in relationship with God and other believers.

If you’re not spending time with God daily, you’re going to dry up and blow away when the pressure is on. You won’t be able to handle it. You need to make daily time with God. Sit and be quiet. Read the Bible and talk to God. Play Christian music. If you like to journal, do that. Do whatever it takes for you to keep your focus on God.

You also need to be in community with other believers. No one has a complete perspective on life. Everyone wears blinders. The people in your group can see things in your life you can’t see. That’s why we need each other! Have and be a mentor, someone that will help you in your walk with God, someone who will speak truth in love to you and keep you accountable. You learn from the people in your group as you encourage each other, and your roots go deeper. And yes, you can have that in prison. Even a round table discussion about these monthly newsletters, reviewing the scriptures, praying for each other’s needs, family needs, these things are important for spiritual growth and maturity. Listen to what God is saying to you through the scriptures and the events in your life. Sooner or later,

life will throw hard things your way. The question is whether you'll have the deep roots you need to survive and even thrive through those times.

Now, there are things that keep us from hearing God and we are going to talk about a few of these here:

You can't hear God if your mind is crowded with other thoughts or concerns—particularly worries, plans, and activities. If you're always listening to the radio or watching TV, it's difficult to hear God when He calls. To hear God, you have to eliminate distractions. A wise mentor once told me, you can't kiss and talk at the same time. When you are spending intimate time with the Lord, just be still, no words are necessary, ask Him to speak to you and He will, but you are not going to hear Him if you are doing all the talking or you have so many distractions going on your focus is not on God.

Jesus says in Luke 8:7, *"Some other seeds fell where thornbushes grew up and choked the plants"*. In this story that Jesus tells, seeds are planted and begin to grow—but the seeds are in weed-infested soil. So, as the plant grows, the weeds grow up around it. The weeds choke out the life of the plant, and it never bears fruit.

Here's what Jesus says is the meaning of Luke 8:7: *"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature"* (Luke 8:14 NIV).

These three things can choke spiritual growth in your life and keep you from hearing God:

Worry. Worries are weeds. When you're preoccupied with the problems and pressures of daily living, it's harder to hear God. *"This is why I tell you to never be worried about your life, for all that you need will be provided, such as food, water, clothing – everything your body needs. Isn't there more to your life than a meal? Isn't your body more than clothing? Look at all the birds – do you think they worry about their existence? They don't plant or reap or store up food, yet your heavenly Father provides them each with food. Aren't you much more valuable to your Father than they? So, which of you by worrying could add anything to your life"* (Matthew 6:25-27 TPT).

Riches (Plans). Are you so busy making a living that you don't make a life? Working to pay bills for things you don't need, to get out of unnecessary debt, or to make more money than you actually need can stunt your spiritual growth. If we put God first in our lives, He will provide all we need. In Matthew 6:19-21, *"Don't keep hoarding for yourselves earthly treasures that can be stolen by thieves. Material wealth eventually rusts, decays, and loses its value. Instead, stockpile heavenly treasures for yourself that cannot be stolen and will never rust, decay, or lose their value for your heart will always pursue what you value as your treasure. The eyes of your spirit allow Revelation light to enter into your being. If your heart is unclouded, the light floods in! But if your eyes are focused on money, the light cannot penetrate and darkness takes its place. How profound will be the darkness within you if the light of truth cannot enter! How could you worship two gods at the same time? You will have to hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You can't worship the true God while enslaved to the god of money!"* (Matthew 6:19-24 TPT).

Pleasure (Activities). There's nothing wrong with pleasure but be careful that you don't become so busy pursuing fun that you miss God and His plans for your life. *"Make God the utmost delight and pleasure of your life and he will provide for you what you desire the most. Give God the right to direct your life, and as you trust him along the way you'll find he pulled it off perfectly! He will appear as your righteousness, as sure as the dawning of a new day. He will manifest as your justice, as sure and strong as the noonday sun. Quiet your heart in His presence and pray; keep hope alive as you long for God to come through for you. And don't think for a moment that the wicked in their prosperity are better off than you."* (Psalm 37 4-7 TPT).

Do you know what's always true of weeds? You don't have to cultivate them. They grow automatically. In fact, weeds are a sign of neglect. If you see weeds in your yard or garden, it means you're not tending it. It's the same with your spiritual life. The weeds in your spiritual life show that you're neglecting time with God.

Spend time each day tending to your spiritual garden. Pluck out the weeds as soon as they appear so they don't take over the good work God wants to do in you.

What do God's voice and cell phones have in common?

For both, you have to be positioned correctly to hear them clearly! Reception quality with your cell phone varies widely. In a big, sturdy building, your coverage may be spotty. In a wilderness area, you'll likely have no cell service at all. You have to be in the right position to have a clear, reliable signal.

The same is true with your relationship with God. If you want to hear God's voice clearly and consistently, you must be positioned correctly.

What does it look like to be in the wrong position to hear God? When you're in the wrong position, your mind is closed - you want to do what you want, not what God wants. In the wrong position, your heart is hardened-you're unwilling to listen (unteachable).

What keeps your heart hard and mind closed to God? Here are three barriers that keep you closed to God's message:

Pride. If you think you don't need God in your life and you want to handle things yourself, you're probably not listening for God to speak. Pride keeps you from being open to the possibility that God might want to say something to you. 1 Peter 5:5-6 says: *"In the same way, the younger ones should willingly support the leadership of the elders. In every relationship, each of you must wrap around yourself the apron of a humble servant. Because: God resists you when you are proud but multiplies grace and favor when you are humble."* (TPT).

Fear. Many people can't hear God because they're afraid to hear God speak. You might think that hearing God's voice or sensing his leading makes you some kind of religious fanatic. Or maybe you're afraid of the changes you'd need to make in your life if you listened to God's leading. In a previous newsletter I talked about fear, and the 365 times it is mentioned in the Bible to not fear, be not afraid, or fear not. I don't think it is a coincidence that there happens to be 365 days in a year and it is mentioned 365 times for us not to be fearful. I think the most important part of fear may be that we fear the changes that has to be made in our lives if we truly do listen to God's leading. But even in that, we must remember what Jeremiah 29:11 tells us: *"For I know the plans I have for you; declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope"*. (NASB).

Bitterness. When you hold on to hurt, resentment, or a grudge, you're not able to hear God—because your heart is hardened. A hard heart grows cold and makes you defensive, even to God's love. James 1:21 says, *"Get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls"* (NLT). Can you imagine how different the story of Joseph would have been if he allowed bitterness into his heart for the actions of his brothers, or even Potiphar. Part of his favor was because he was able to hear God clear enough to interpret dreams for the royal cupbearer and the baker, that eventually awarded him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. That led him into his position as viceroy, second in command only to the king himself.

It's time to get rid of the bitterness, fear, and pride that keep you from hearing God's voice and living out his purpose for your life. Then you'll be able to hear God with an open heart and mind and "humbly accept" what he's saying to you. Is there something God has been telling you that you've been ignoring? Are you ready to respond to him today? Are you ready to become the good soil and allow the Potter to form you into a vessel of honor, a masterpiece, for kingdom use?

We are all pots of clay in process. Let's strive to be the best we can out of honor and respect for the One that created us, the Potter, our Father in heaven!

Ms. Chief (aka Ms.G)

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