

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



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The Spirit of Joseph

When life seems designed to beat us down, we should study the life of someone else who had it rough, and learn how he overcame his hardships.

“So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?’ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you’” (Gen. 41:37-40).

Joseph’s rise to power over Egypt from his humble origins as a Hebrew shepherd is one of the great success stories of history. But the path that Joseph took to that success was not a pleasant one. A study of Joseph’s ordeal, especially the attitude he maintained through all his trials, provides an excellent model for how to deal with our own hardships in life.

First, Joseph was determined to doing his best in whatever circumstances he found himself. As a shepherd boy, he faithfully executed the instructions of his father. As a slave, he was the most dependable, hardest working slave

in the household. As a prisoner, he stood out as cooperative, helpful, trustworthy—not exactly your typical felon. It was Joseph’s commitment to doing his best, no matter his circumstances, that drew the attention of others, and paved the way for his promotions.

Second, Joseph was a man of integrity, and lived his core principles even when there was no compelling reason to do so. The enticements of a willing woman would have melted most men’s resolve, but Joseph refused to compromise his convictions: “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God” (39:9). That kind of noble idealism will take a man far in life.

Finally, Joseph refused to allow room for bitterness in his heart. When he confronted the men who had sold him into slavery and destroyed his life, he had an excellent opportunity to make them pay for their sin. Even they fully expected to feel his wrath (50:15). But Joseph had no desire for vengeance. Instead, “he comforted them and spoke kindly to them” (v. 21). Remarkably, through all those years of servitude in a

strange land, Joseph refused to nurse a grudge. His commentary at the end, that “God meant it for good” (50:20), was not an epiphany that suddenly came upon him. It was a conviction that motivated his entire life. Everything happens for a reason, even bad things, so what’s the use in becoming bitter about it? Joseph’s refusal to drink the poison of resentment freed him to focus on his work and become successful.

In our own lives, we may find ourselves trapped in a loveless marriage, or stuck in a dead-end job with no hope of improvement, or even—like Joseph—framed for a crime we did not commit. Whatever the misfortunes that befall us, we have a choice: We can waste our life raging against the fate that has entrapped us, cursing the people and circumstances that put us there; or we can accept the hardship as a learning opportunity from God, and roll up our sleeves and get to work. It’s that simple.

The spirit of Joseph is a rare gem among the human race. But for those who learn how to manifest that spirit, it is the key to a happy and successful life.

– David King