

JOSEPH DREAMED A DREAM

“Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.” (Gen 37:5)

Joseph came from a dysfunctional family. His father had 2 wives, 2 concubines, and 12 sons and they fought all the time. Joseph's brothers not only hated him, they actually wanted to kill him. His older brother, Judah, argued that there was more “gain” in selling him as a slave than in killing him. So that's what they did. They sold him as a slave for a measly 20 pieces of silver. How sick! Then they were so calloused that they covered up their crime by convincing their aged father that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. This was even sicker! Joseph's oldest brother, Reuben, had sex with his step-mother, Bilhah (Gen. 35:22), and his brothers Simeon and Levi lied to and murdered all the men of Shechem (Gen. 34:1 - 31). Sick! Sick! Sick!

Joseph's family and personal problems were compounded by the fact that his mother was dead and his father was a liar. Jacob, you remember, lied to his father Isaac and stole his brother's blessing (Gen. 27:19). His grandfather, Isaac, was also a liar who claimed that his wife, Rebekah, was his sister (Gen. 26:7). His great-grandfather, Abraham, was also a liar who claimed that his wife was his sister (Gen. 12:13). To say that Joseph came from a dysfunctional family almost seems charitable.

In spite of the sad circumstances surrounding him, however, Joseph dreamed a dream. Even the caustic criticism of his brothers did not put out the flame of his faith, and he dreamed another dream. His latest dream was even more audacious than the first and his father rebuked him for it (Gen. 37:10).

Robert D. Kuest, in his book *“Uncommon Leadership”*, extols the virtues of “servant leadership in a power based world”. He points out that great Bible leaders like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, etc. were all shepherds. When Moses was about to die he prayed that God would appoint a man over His people so that they would not be like sheep without a shepherd (Nu. 27:15 - 17). Obviously, God's view of leadership is different from that of the world.

In this regard, Joseph's family actually had a positive impact on his future as a leader. The “good shepherd” keeps constant watch over his sheep. Since the sheep cannot communicate with words it is the shepherd's watchful eye that is trained to discern their discomfort and danger. It is the prosperity of the sheep, as you know, that determines the success of the shepherd. Thus, because Joseph was a shepherd, he was mentally prepared to skillfully manage the household of Potiphar, the affairs of the prison, and ultimately the destiny of a nation.

Jesus once pointed out that when you are invited to a wedding, it is best not to arrogantly choose a place of honor, lest a more distinguished guest arrive and you find yourself humiliated and asked to move. Jesus advised that we choose the lowest place and wait for the host to move us up higher. Then Jesus stated this principle: **“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11)**

This advice from Christ resonates on every day of the year, but especially as we stand on the thresh hold of a brand new year. Joseph could have tried to exploit his relationship with Potiphar's wife to his own advantage. Remember! Joseph was a slave! Her attention to him must have stroked his ego. Lesser men would have dignified such sin as “God's way” of deliverance from slavery. This powerful woman was in a position to promote Joseph to a new level in Egyptian society. As you know, she was also in a position to persecute those who dared to deny her wishes.

Joseph made the correct choice. Two thousand years before Paul wrote to the Romans Joseph put this principle into practice: “If God be for us, who can be against us” (Rom. 8:31). Joseph was willing to take the lowest place and patiently wait for God to exalt him.

What about you? Have you dreamed a dream? Have you dared to consider the possibility that God actually wants to exalt you beyond the dismal circumstances which seem to hold you in a vice like grip. When God calls you up higher, the power behind you is always greater than the tasks before you. Perhaps this is the year to say “why not?” instead of merely “why”.