

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

246

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about Joseph. Even though he came from a dysfunctional family he was still successful. He was able to "act" not "react". His positive attitude in the face of adversity was key to his success. He had more family problems than most. His father had 2 wives, 2 concubines, and 12 sons and they fought all the time. Joseph was a dreamer. This is one reason why his brothers hated him. (Gen. 37:5). Their hatred was serious enough that they even wanted to kill him. His older brother Judah, however, reasoned that there was more "gain" in selling him as a slave than killing him. So his wicked brothers sold him into slavery. His price was only a measly 20 pieces of silver. How sad! 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. There were also many other problems in his family. Joseph's oldest brother, Reuben for example, had sex with his step-mother, Bilhah (Gen. 35:22). His brothers Simeon and Levi lied to and murdered all the men of Shechem (Gen. 34:1 – 31). Etc., Etc., Etc. Joseph's attitude in the face of adversity helped him to succeed in spite of the hardships he endured.

Joseph's personal problems were compounded by the fact that his mother was dead and that he came from a family of liars. His father Jacob, you recall, lied to his father Isaac and stole his brother's blessing (Gen. 27:19). His grandfather, Isaac, lied about his wife, Rebekah, and claimed she was his sister (Gen. 26:7). His great-grandfather, Abram, also lied about his wife, Sarai, and claimed she was his sister (Gen. 12:13). Joseph, however, dared to be different! He didn't have to lie to promote himself, for he trusted God to do that for him! Joseph humbled himself and God exalted him.

In spite of the sad circumstances surrounding him, Joseph remained positive and dared to dream a dream. In the face of caustic criticism over his first dream he dared to dream 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.

Sinful as they were, the many shepherds in Joseph's family had a positive influence on his life. It helped his dreams come true. A "good shepherd" is selfless. His focus is on the sheep! Since the sheep cannot communicate with words, the shepherd's watchful eye is trained to discern their discomfort and danger. It is the prosperity of the sheep that determines the shepherd's success. So, 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. The fact that Joseph came from a family of shepherds was providential. It helped him to serve others and make his dreams come true.

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 are humiliated. Jesus said to choose the most humble seat and wait for the host to honor you by moving you up. Then Jesus stated this principle: "**For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**" (Luke 14:11) Jesus was humble and God exalted Him! (Phil. 2:5-11). He felt comfortable washing feet because He knew who He was, where He came from, and where He was going (Jn. 13:3). Joseph also knew who he was and where he was going. It was his humility enabled God to exalt him.

Please prayerfully consider these Christ like words written on the wall of Mother Teresa's home for children in Calcutta. They could just as easily apply to Joseph, Jesus, or you and me.

- People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self centered. Forgive them anyway!
- If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway!
- If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway!
- If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway!
- What you spend years creating what others could destroy overnight. Create anyway!
- If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway!
- The good you do today will often be forgotten. Do good anyway!
- Give the best you have and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway!
- In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It never was between you and them anyway!

What about you? Have you dreamed a dream? Have you dared to consider that God has as purpose for your life? When God calls you up higher, the power behind you is always greater than the tasks before you. So, instead of saying "why", dare to dream and say "why not?"

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce