**The Significance of Doing Right**

The story of Joseph is one of the most inspirational and fascinating accounts in the Old Testament. The eleventh son of twelve, favored by his father Jacob and hated by his brothers, his life was characterized by the lowest of lows and the most exhilarating highs imaginable. Yet through it all, he managed to maintain a consistent trust in God and never seemed to lose track of who he was.

There were times in Joseph’s life when he found himself in circumstances that would have driven most of us into total despair. Sold to traveling merchants by his own brothers, he became a slave in a household in a distant land, falsely accused of attempted rape and thrown into prison. Forgotten by those to whom he had shown kindness, he languished there for an additional two years with no idea when or if he would ever be released. Yet through it all, he remained faithful to Jehovah and His principles.

The tendency to allow hatred and resentment to fill his heart, the temptation to give into pressures to engage in immoral behavior, the demoralizing hopelessness of an Egyptian prison cell must have been as powerful for Joseph as it would have been for the rest of us. But I believe we sometimes project on Joseph a sort of super-human strength, an impervious shield of protection. After all, we know the rest of the story; that Joseph eventually became second in command only to Pharaoh himself and orchestrated a grain conservation program through seven years of plenty that sustained much of a famished world during the following seven years of drought.

We can’t imagine Joseph jeopardizing his future over a fling with a lonely housewife. How could he possibly become discouraged in a prison cell when he had such a bright future ahead of him? He had had some dreams when he was young about enjoying preeminence over his brothers, but we have no reason to believe that he had a clear understanding of what lay ahead for him.

We would do well to learn from Joseph’s sense of resolve in the face of uncertainty. When temptation and difficulty come our way, we often succumb to a childish, short-sighted assumption that the decisions we make will be of little consequence. We have 20/20 vision when considering the life of Joseph, but we fail to see that each decision we make in our own lives could make the difference between great good or great harm.

I may never save millions from starvation like Joseph, but God intends to accomplish great good through my life and through yours. It is up to us to develop the character of Joseph in our lives so that we don’t squander the opportunities that God sends our way. May we never underestimate the value of doing the right thing.

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