

# Hanging out With Heros

## JOSEPH

The lemonade principle  
makes dreams comes true



Lorraine  
Peterson

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**Lorraine Peterson**

**JOSEPH: THE LEMONADE PRINCIPLE MAKES DREAMS  
COME TRUE**

**Contents:**

Three Strikes Against You – So You Hit a Home Run!

The Way Out of Temptation City

The Minus that Makes a Real Plus

Is God Your Partner?

Are You a Product of God's Remodeling Factory?

How Far Is It from Under the Pile to on Top of the World?

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**New International Version of the Bible**

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**Joseph: THE LEMONADE PRINCIPLE**  
**MAKES DREAMS COME TRUE**

**Introduction**

Question: What should you do if life throws you a lemon?

Answer: Make lemonade.

Not a bad principle. You need to learn to make the best of even a bad situation, and the life of Joseph provides Lesson One. But first, a bit of background.

## **A Difficult Home-life**

Joseph was born in the sixteenth century B.C., the eleventh son of Jacob who had two wives – the rivalry was fierce, and, Joseph’s mother, Rachel, was the favorite. She died after the birth of Benjamin, the youngest child in the family. Because Joseph was the oldest son of Jacob’s favorite wife, Jacob gave him special attention and thus infuriated the boy’s ten half-brothers. He even gave this son a beautiful long-sleeved coat that was worn only by the noblemen of that time.

Joseph dreamed the sun, moon, and eleven stars (symbolizing his parents and brothers) bowed down to him; then, rather than silently waiting for God to fulfill this prophesy, he blabbed about the dream, only adding to his brother’s jealousy. One day Joseph’s father sent him to check on the ten brothers who were tending Jacob’s flocks several miles away in Dothan. When Joseph found them, some of the brothers wanted to kill him. They finally compromised by throwing him in an empty cistern, used to collect rain water, and leaving him there to die. When a caravan of traders passed by, Judah got the bright idea of selling his brother as a slave! After the caravan left with their kid brother, the rascals killed a goat, dipped Joseph’s gorgeous coat in the blood, and brought it to Jacob. The brothers convinced him they had found it beside the road and that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

## **Unfair Treatment**

The traders hauled Joseph to Egypt and there sold him to Potiphar, commander of the king’s Not-So-Secret-Service. Joseph remained obedient to God, working faithfully at his duties. As the months passed, Potiphar noticed Joseph was a trustworthy and gifted administrator, so he placed him in charge of his entire household.

Potiphar’s wife noticed something different – Joseph’s good looks, and set out to seduce him. Unwilling to sin against God or her husband, Joseph refused her advances. But he could not escape her, for he was a slave in that house. One day, in desperation, the woman grabbed him by his jacket and pleaded with him to come to bed. He ran, leaving the jacket – and his fate – in her hands.

Angered by Joseph's rejection, she told her husband his slave had tried to rape her. She showed the jacket as evidence and Potiphar threw Joseph in the dungeon.

Even in prison Joseph kept trusting God and performed his duties faithfully. Like Potiphar, the warden soon recognized Joseph's character and ability and placed him in charge of all the prisoners. One day the Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer (he checked all the king's beverages for poison) became inmates. Before long they each had a dream that Joseph interpreted. And exactly as Joseph had predicted, the baker was soon executed and the cupbearer returned to his position in the palace. But he forgot to mention Joseph to the Pharaoh.

## **Making It Big**

Two years after his cupbearer's return, the Pharaoh dreamed that seven fat cows were devoured by seven scrawny ones. Puzzled, he mentioned the dream to various people. Then the cupbearer remembered Joseph.

At the king's request Joseph came from the prison to stand before him and interpret the dream. The seven fat cows would be seven years of good crops, he said, but the skinny cows were seven years of famine. Then Joseph suggested a plan to store food for the dry years. The Pharaoh recognized a born leader in Joseph and named him prime minister. Quite a leap from prison. And Joseph set about constructing warehouses and filling them with surplus grain.

When the famine finally came, it affected neighboring countries as well. Jacob's family also suffered from the draught, and he sent his sons to buy grain in Egypt. They had to deal directly with Joseph. But they didn't recognize him, and he didn't reveal his identity until he had tested them and arranged circumstances that brought them to repentance for their deeds against him.

Finally, Joseph exposed his identity. He harbored no bitterness. Instead, he had seen God's hand working in all his hard times. He then invited the brothers to move their entire family to Egypt.

Egyptians despised shepherds so the family of Jacob was not accepted by these idol worshipers. This was God's way of keeping His people set apart for himself.

### **Three Strikes Against You – So You Hit a Home Run!**

*“So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem) ... Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. ‘Listen,’ he said, ‘I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the thing in mind. So, Joseph went after his brothers, and found them near Dothan. They saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. ... Judah said to his brothers, ‘What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites.’ ... Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there” (Genesis 35: 19; 37: 3, 4, 9, 11, 17, 18, 26, 27; 39: 1).*

Have you ever thought your tough home situation, bad grades, and lack of talent make your life almost hopeless? Well, you need to meet Joseph. Theodore Epp, a respected Bible teacher, wrote of him: “In Joseph, God wanted to show us how a person can live honorably before God regardless of his heredity and environment.” 1)

- 1) Theodore H. Epp, *Joseph; God Planned It for Good*. Lincoln, Nebr.: Back to the Bible, 1982, p. 9.

Perhaps your parents are divorced and you don't get along with your stepfather. On the other hand, you may be a spoiled brat who has developed selfish habits and attitudes that are now ruining your social life. Perhaps alcoholism, mental illness, or drug abuse has ruined your home life. Whatever the problem, here's good news; God is in the business of remaking

people, healing broken hearts, and putting together the shattered pieces of mixed-up families.

The life of Joseph proves God can work out His great purpose despite difficult circumstances. And his were difficult. His father's wives, who were sisters, hated each other. Joseph had to live with the consequences of the disobedience to God that had caused this horrible home situation. To make matters worse, his father favored him. This not only inspired his brothers to hate him, but probably left him spoiled and untrained to face tough breaks of adult life. Because Joseph lost his mother during Benjamin's birth, Jacob no doubt gave him an extra dose of coddling. The fancy coat and the dream that Joseph couldn't keep secret finally caused the half-brothers' jealousy to explode – they sold their own brother to some traders, and Joseph found himself on the auction block in Egypt.

If someone who didn't know the end of Joseph's story heard only this much, he would assume Joseph became a drug addict, had a nervous breakdown, or became very bitter. This probably would have been the case without God. But God surprised everyone and made Joseph a forgiving, prosperous, highly respected man.

What will be the end of your story? God can transform your life, no matter how messed up it is. You may feel you have three strikes against you, but with God you still can hit a home run!

*“The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures forever – do not abandon the works of your hands” (Psalm 138: 8).*

*“I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me; God sends his love and his faithfulness” (Psalm 57: 2, 3).*

*“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1: 3, 4).*

1. What do the above verses say to a person who feels unable to overcome a bad background?
2. Notice these verses say God promises to fulfill *His* purpose for you, not the goals you've set for yourself. Are you willing to let God determine your future?
3. In order to live above your background, how must you receive what you need for "life and godliness"?
4. Which of the above Bible promises will you hang onto this week? How will you apply it to the problems you'll face?

## **The Way Out of Temptation City**

*"So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, 'Come to bed with me!' But he refused. 'With me in charge,' he told her, 'my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?' And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, 'Come to bed with me!' But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house" (Genesis 39: 6-12).*

How do you respond to temptations too hard to resist? With excuses? Maybe you can relate to some of the following statements:

"Whenever I see my old friend, I start smoking again."

"If I really acted as a Christian at school, I wouldn't have one friend."

"My girlfriend and I can't hold out much longer. We love each other too much."



If anyone could have used these kinds of excuses for yielding to temptation, it was Joseph. He was far away from home, with no one around who knew him. In fact, he lives in a society that approved of premarital and extramarital sex – he wouldn't have to explain to anyone. He might have reasoned, "Can I help having sex appeal?" Besides, he was a slave, bound to do whatever Mrs. Potiphar ordered. He could try to avoid her, but he was her property and thus had to work in her house every day. He knew the possible consequences of refusing her commands. Nonetheless, Joseph resisted. Why?

First, he based his actions on God's Word, rather than on the opinions and views of other people. He refused the woman's invitation to adultery, not on the basis of logic that could be refuted, or customs that vary from country to country and decade to decade, but on the basis of God's commandment against adultery. The biblical argument against illicit sex is not the possibility of pregnancy or an STD. It is: "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord ..." (1 Corinthians 6: 13). New antibiotics or birth control methods will not change this kind of reasoning.

Don't ever judge God's commandments through the eyes of logic, tradition or majority opinion. Use those commandments, as Joseph did, to guide your life.

Second, Joseph could resist temptation because he took a strong stand against it from the beginning. Epp notes: "By a definite act of Joseph's will he refused to yield to what he knew was sin. Once we have said no to sin, it is easier to reject it the next time." 2. Because Joseph had the Spirit of God living in him, he knew "to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8: 6). Had he allowed his mind to be preoccupied with sex, he would easily have fallen prey to sin. Instead, he filled his mind with God's commandments.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Third, Joseph could resist temptation because he chose to be popular only with God – no matter what the price. He knew the fury of a rejected woman could throw him into serious trouble. But he didn't care. Temptation isn't so hard to resist if you really want to obey God.

Fourth, he could resist because he was willing to run from temptation, to

avoid it at all cost. You must do the same. Don't read a few pages in that novel with a sexy cover to see if it actually is dirty. Walk away. Stay miles away from the party that will tempt you back into drugs. Carefully plan your dates to avoid any possibility of sexual temptation. Vow that popularity with the kids at school will not control your life.

The way out of Temptation City is the steepest and least travelled road, but the end leads to heaven, and there are some beautiful rest stops along the way.

*“Test everything. Hold onto the good. Avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5: 21, 22).*

*“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10: 13).*

*“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever” (John 14: 15, 16).*

*“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5: 3).*

1. Is it hard to obey someone you really love?
2. If you don't enjoy obeying God's commandments, check out your relationship with Jesus. Ask Him to show you where you need to improve that relationship.
3. The key to avoiding temptation is setting your mind on a clear goal: being like Jesus. Using the above verses as a guide, write down the principles by which you intend to live a “Jesus life.”
4. What attitudes and actions must you change in order to resist temptation?

## **The Minus that Makes a Real Plus**

*“When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, ‘This is how your slave treated me,’ he burned with anger. Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did” (Genesis 39: 19-23).*

How do you handle the teacher who picks on you, the boss who gives you all the dirty work, and the little brother who gets away with murder while you're expected to do things right? Have you learned the secret of handling these predicaments successfully? Joseph’s stay in prison reveals it.

After surviving his father’s favoritism, his brothers’ hatred, and finally slavery, Joseph was unjustly imprisoned – just when it seemed God should have given him a gold medal for resisting temptation. Joseph’s secret was a life minus bitterness. He certainly had reason to be bitter. But he wasn’t.

Hidden bitterness always leaks out – as disrespect for authority; or as an everybody-picks-on-me, or I-never-get-a-fair-shake attitude. Or it shows on one’s face. But Joseph’s jailer didn’t detect any of these in Joseph. Instead, he noticed, “the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did” (Genesis 39: 23).

Later, when Joseph – as prime minister – had authority even to kill his brothers, he never tried to repay their evil deeds. Although he tested them to see if their characters had changed, he was never bitter. Instead, he told them, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done; the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50: 20).

This was part of Joseph’s secret. He believed everything fit into God's purpose, that God can use even evil attitudes and sinful deeds to bring people closer to Him, to fit them for His purpose, and to mold them into His image.

With such an outlook you also can overcome bitterness. Someone in your geometry class needs to see you react with love when the teacher unfairly accuses you. Humility and helpfulness will touch the heart of your boss who gives you the hard jobs because you don't complain. And maybe your little brother needs a role model for his life.

Joseph not only trusted God's long-range plans, he knew how to receive power from God for each day. He didn't say, "I'm supposed to be a good boy, so I'll act nice, keeping in all my pent-up anger." Instead, he trusted God to give him an attitude of forgiveness. He decided not to brood over the wrongs done to him and attacked the job at hand with the Holy Spirit's enthusiasm and energy. He had no time left to be bitter.

Someone has said hardships either make you bitter or better. Let Joseph be your example for the "better". Don't let injustice, tragedy, or indifference sour you. A life minus bitterness is a real plus.

*"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12: 15).*

*"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 4: 31- 5: 2).*

1. How can bitterness keep you from receiving all of God's kindness and love?
2. With what are you to replace bitterness?
3. From where does the love that erases bitterness come?
4. Ask God to show you what things you are bitter about. Decide to receive His power and love so healthy attitudes can replace your bitterness.

## Is God Your Partner?

*“I cannot do it,’ Joseph replied to Pharaoh, ‘but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires’” (Genesis 41: 16).*

Joseph had just walked out of prison and was standing before the Pharaoh, the most powerful king in the world. And now he was expected to interpret the king’s dream. Kicking a field goal from the 50-yard line in the final thirty seconds of a tied Super Bowl game would have been easier. The words Joseph spoke in that tight spot revealed another secret of his life, a secret that enabled him to trust God to bring him through tough circumstances victoriously. He told the king, “I can’t do it. But God will.” Joseph was in partnership with God.

You face “pharaohs”: the driver’s license exam; and oral report in chemistry class; batting with the bases loaded and two out in the bottom of the ninth inning; witnessing to friends at school; family squabbles. And God will perform miracles when you face those trials – if you cooperate.

Making way for a miracle is a bit like walking to the bus station while lugging two heavy suitcases, a guitar, and a tennis racket. You’re certain your body can’t endure the remaining eight blocks – you need a miracle. Just then a world-class weightlifter appears.

He says, “I’d be glad to carry everything for you. Just tell me where you’re headed.”

The offer troubles you. You’d love the help, but you’re unsure the man can be trusted. Will he steal your possessions? Will he carefully handle your new guitar? You must choose between freedom from the load and control over your possessions. Miracles don’t come when you’re in control.

If Joseph had thought, I’d better say everything right – my whole future depends on it, he would have been under great strain. His mind would have been on himself and possible failure, and he wouldn’t have received God’s revelation. But he trusted God, and the insight Joseph received catapulted him to the position of prime minister.

You can do the same. Relax and let God help you through the driver’s test. It

won't be such a terrible ordeal. Give that chemistry report to glorify God – not to impress your classmates. If you flub a few times, He'll understand, and you won't feel so much tension. If you're in partnership with God, you can calmly enjoy the ball game, even if you strike out in the bottom of the ninth with the bases loaded. If your witnessing to friends or trying to keep your cool at home, the Holy Spirit will make it happen – if you give Him your reputation and allow Him to work through you in His own way.

Partnership with God is a binding commitment, not something you can jump in and out of like a swimming pool. It is more like being a canvas and letting the Master Artist paint anything He wishes on your life. It is a partnership in which your only duty is to cooperate. If you are that kind of partner you can stand before any “pharaoh” and expect your divine Partner to come through.

*“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say” (Luke 12: 11, 12).*

*“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3: 20, 21).*

*“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him” (2 Corinthians 2: 14).*

*“The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27: 1).*

1. What can God do through you if you let Him?
2. What attitudes and actions can prevent God from doing His work through you?
3. What “pharaoh” must you face this week? Pick a truth from one of the above verses and use it to guide you as you face your tough

challenge.

## **Are You a Product of God's Remodeling Factory?**

*“So Pharaoh asked them, ‘Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God? Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you’” (Genesis 41: 38, 39).*

“I'm just a klutz.”

“What more can you expect of an inner-city kid?”

“It's my suburban stupidity.”

“I'm nervous, just like my mother.”

“I inherited my bluntness from my father.”

“Oh, well, everybody in my family hated to study and thus earned bad grades in school.”

Do these statements sound familiar? Do you feel as if you can't do anything right when under pressure? Do displaying poise in social situations, giving appropriate replies, and handling emergencies calmly seem to be skills only other people possess? And it probably never occurred to you God might be able to do something about your lack.

If you are thinking this way, you are limiting God, who has the ability to change you. You expect Him to help you stop sinning – even tough sins such as drug abuse and dishonesty. And He will. But you've probably thought He can do nothing to change your personality defects. Not true. Here again, you can learn from the life of Joseph.

Joseph grew up among shepherds, then endured slavery and imprisonment. Imagine yourself coming from such a background – then being instantly promoted to the palace! That would be a pressure situation. But Joseph didn't cave in under the pressure. Instead, the pagan king was amazed, and he recognized Joseph's poise and inner strength had come from God. He even

was impressed by the discreetness of Joseph – who had once blurted out all his dreams to anyone within earshot. Joseph certainly had experienced a miracle, but how?

First, the miracle occurred because Joseph had willingly gone through God's remodeling factory. He believed God could remake him completely. That is why he could later tell his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good ... “Joseph had seen that from any heartache, scar, or nasty circumstance, God could forge the jewels of character: compassion, patience, and understanding of others. So, Joseph had sustained pain and suffering, always trusting God to do His work.

Second, the miracle occurred because Joseph learned the lesson of patient waiting. Slaves and prisoners, of course, have no choice but to wait, so Joseph was in an ideal situation for remodeling – personality remakes take time. And he learned to wait for God's perfect moment, even though Joseph, as prime minister had complete authority over people. When his brothers appeared to buy grain, he could have pulled rank on them. He could have confronted them with their sin of selling him, extracted a confession, and vented all his emotions within an hour. And don't think the temptation to do so never entered his mind. Instead, Joseph obeyed God and step-by-step placed his brothers in circumstances that brought them to repentance. This probably took at least two years. That's patience!

Do you often jump from the mold that would reshape your character and improve your personality? Do you insist on clearing up a misunderstanding today? Demand a hearing immediately? Try forcing your parents to conform to your viewpoint? Do you forget people's emotions are delicate and must be handled with God's wisdom, and impatiently fumble each chance God gives for learning tact and poise? Would you prefer to improve your study habits by rubbing Aladdin's lamp, rather than by consistent hard work? Would you prefer to receive an injection that will instantly heal your broken heart, rather than slowly learn God's lessons?

Would you like to acquire gracious speech habits without having to listen to others and be sensitive to their feelings?

If you find yourself guilty of any of these attitudes, it's time for you to start



acting like a product, rather than a boss, in God's remodeling factory. If you want to be a Joseph, you must obey like Joseph.

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, that comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3: 18).*

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8: 28).*

*“A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6: 40).*

*“The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught” (Isaiah 50: 4).*

1. Where does the power for a changed personality come from?
2. Jesus has a perfect personality. Since He has the power to be perfect, why don't you pray and ask Him for power to do things like lose weight, be understanding toward others, and the ability to make new friends?
3. Once in God's remodeling factory, can you expect to specify the method He uses to change you? If not, are you willing to place yourself in His hands to do as He pleases?
4. Find a statement in one of the above verses that you can claim as a promise. On the basis of that promise, trust God for a specific change in your personality.

## **How Far Is It from Under the Pile to On Top of the World?**

*“So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. ‘This is what it means,’ Joseph said to him. ‘... Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position ... But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison.*

*For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.' Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he ... restored the chief cupbearer to his position ... The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him" (Genesis 40: 9, 12-15, 20-23).*

“Sir, can you tell me how to get from under the pile to on top of the world?” Sounds like an introduction to a kid’s cartoon feature. But if you're honest, you may admit having thought those very words about your own life. In fact, you feel like a permanent resident of “under the pile.”

You know what that means. Just when you wish you could take things a bit at a time, everything comes at once. Sixth-hour Biology gets more boring by the day. The depressing ramifications of nuclear war have been discussed in Social Problems class for six weeks. Your ex-boyfriend’s new chick just moved into the locker on your left. Your family has serious money problems and your father fears he’ll be losing his job. When life overwhelms you, you’re under the pile.

How can you handle overwhelming problems that seem as if they’ll never go away? Again, take a good look at Joseph.

For Joseph, both slavery and imprisonment appeared hopelessly permanent. First came the loss of freedom and never-ending work with no paycheck at the end of the week. Then chains and dungeon gloom darkened the picture. And just when a ray of hope entered – the king’s butler returned to his palace job, where he could have put in a good word – Joseph had to endure two more years of darkness, dirt and depression. How could he be victorious in all this? He had a formula: Victory = Faith + Faithfulness.

*Faith* made Joseph successful, even in prison, enabling him to bring cheer to others. You need such faith that believes God will never allow you to experience trials greater than He will give strength to handle. (This guarantee won't hold if you attempt to face problems in your own strength.) Claim God's promise: “Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to thee; at a time of distress, in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. Thou art a hiding place for me, thou preservest me from trouble; thou dost encompass me with deliverance” (Psalm 32: 6, 7). Never let the devil convince you God

doesn't care or can't give you strength for the problem you're facing.

*Faithfulness*, according to Epp, is “the duty of life.” 3.) Displaying faithfulness in all you do is not only your responsibility to God and others, it's good for you. Because Joseph faithfully performed his tasks in prison, he lived victoriously, and unknowingly prepared for a glorious future.

3) *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Faithfulness will bless you. If you carefully complete your Biology assignment, keeping your mind on Jesus, you can rejoice as you observe how God planned each organism perfectly. And your boredom will disappear. If you pray about how to approach your project on the dangers of nuclear war, God can not only help you turn out good work, He can make you a member of the “We-will-not-fear-though-the-earth-give-way-and-the-mountains-fall-into-the-heart-of-the-sea” Club (Psalm 46: 2).

Concentrating on doing your best for God in each class and task will give you little time to nurse your broken heart. And it will give God a chance to reveal your future “on top of the world.” You can get there, regardless of your circumstances, if you follow the formula of faith plus faithfulness.

*“If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the Day of Judgment, while continuing their punishment” (2 Peter 2: 9).*

*“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name” (1 Peter 4: 12-16).*

1. What kind of suffering do you unnecessarily bring on yourself?

Ask God to show you which of your sufferings are due to lack of faithfulness. Now confess your sin and decide to change your ways.

2. From the above verses, what promise can you claim for times you must suffer?
3. How can trials and suffering be a blessing?

## **Watch Out for Falling Stars**

*“Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother, Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now; do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God’” (Genesis 45: 4-8).*

When your friend is voted captain of the football team, is crowned Apple Blossom Queen, or gains the lead part in the school play, you find out what he or she is made of – especially if you don’t run around with the popular crowd. Does your friend still have time for you? Or are you lucky to get an appointment with the new star six months in advance? The temptations that accompany sudden power, prestige, or popularity can ruin a once-nice person. Authority and influence are easily misused.

Joseph was propelled instantly to the peak of authority and influence, the ultimate rags-to-riches story. Now he had the power to even the score with his brothers. But the same truth that sustained Joseph through slavery and imprisonment kept him from caving in under the temptation to misuse his authority. He knew God had promoted him in order to fulfill God's purpose. For that reason Joseph was not impressed with his own importance or anxious to use his great power for selfish goals.

When his brothers feared he might try to get even after their father was dead,

Joseph assured them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God?” (Genesis 50: 19). He meant to do God's will, not his own. He realized God had sent him to Egypt and granted his high position to save God's chosen people. So Joseph identified himself with his relatives and invited them to live in Egypt. By doing this he risked losing the Egyptian’s respect, for they despised shepherds. The Bible says, “ ... all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians” (Genesis 46: 34). Now all Egypt would know Joseph grew up as a shepherd. God protected Joseph’s reputation, however, and caused Pharaoh to support his prime minister.

God used the Egyptians’ attitude to keep His chosen people separate from the idolatrous religions in the country. And He used Joseph’s high position to keep them alive. Christ would come from these people, and His coming would be history’s most important event. All of this hinged on Joseph’s willingness to let God control and use his life.

You must leave the possibility of stardom in God's hands. If He gives you popularity and influence, remember a star’s purpose is to *give light*. You can show God's light by obeying His orders, by associating with people other kids look down on, by risking your popularity. God makes you popular because He wants to use you for His Kingdom, not because you're more intelligent or more talented than others.

Humbly thank God for your being elected to the National Honor Society or being chosen as class president. Thank Him for your solo in the upcoming concert or your Most Valuable Athlete award. Then determine to use each honor, each position, each talent for God and His Kingdom. Don’t become a falling star.

*“No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another” (Psalm 75: 6, 7).*

*“The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts” (1 Samuel 2: 7).*

*“Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special*

*attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2: 2-4).*

1. What do the verses above have to say about smugness or jealousy? Are you guilty of either attitude?
2. Do you constantly strive to be popular? Ask God what He thinks about your efforts.
3. What does Jesus think about your youth group clique that only admits new members if they "make the grade"?
4. Thank God for being exactly who and where you are. Determine to live for Him right where He has put you.