

Recipe for Life Success: Follow This Man's Example

"The Lord was with Joseph, so that he became a prosperous man. He was in the house of his master, the Egyptian" (Gen. 39:2).

As a slave in the house of Potiphar, Joseph should have lived in a state of dejection and bitterness. He had been betrayed by his brothers, kidnapped, exiled and sold. He had gone from the position of a favored son to that of a lowly slave.

But Joseph did not let his circumstances dictate his life. He refused to succumb to depression. Instead, he diligently set his hands to his work and quickly won the confidence of his new owner.

Where did Joseph find the inner strength to rise above bitterness? Some people cannot seem to let go of past wrongs, real or imagined. They wallow in self-pity and anger, holding on to old resentments. This seems to be a normal human reaction to misfortune and conflict. Someone like Joseph, who could shrug off even the worst of circumstances and make the best of whatever situation in which he finds himself, is exceptional.

The difference was that Joseph had an unshakable confidence in the goodness and faithfulness of God. He knew the stories of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He knew the promises he stood to inherit. He did not suppose God had forgotten or abandoned him. Instead, he humbly submitted himself to God's higher, mysterious purpose.

Many of us struggle with an artificial sense of entitlement. We assume that we have the right to be happy. We assume that we deserve the good and comfortable circumstances of life. Why? What makes us think we have the right to happiness or that we deserve anything? When things go amiss, we react with

shock, bitterness and anger, as if our rights have been violated.

This can be compared to a situation in which a benevolent and anonymous millionaire decided to send \$1,000 cash every week to a certain person. The recipient never knew where the money was coming from or why. Of course, he was grateful for the influx of cash, but week after week, month after month, year after year, he began to expect that the cash would be coming in the mail next week. He made investments, purchases and life choices based on the regular \$1,000 installments.

One day the cash suddenly stopped. As inexplicably as it had begun, it ended. Would the man be justified in being outraged or bitter? Would he have the right to be angry? Of course not. He did not deserve the money in the first place. It was not a right or an entitlement of his.

Like the man in the parable, we take things like good health, adequate sustenance, food, shelter, relationships and all of life's comforts for granted. Because we experience them day by day, week after week and year after year, we think of them as rights rather than privileges. In reality, they are no more deserved than misfortune or woe. We have no right to be bitter when life's circumstances turn unpleasant.

Because of Joseph's steadfast confidence in God, he possessed an undying optimism that transformed even the low estate of slavery into success. As the Torah says, he became "a successful man." {eoa}

Daniel Thomas Lancaster is a writer, teacher, and the Director of Education at the Messianic ministry of First Fruits of Zion (), an international ministry with offices in Israel, Canada and the USA, bringing Messianic Jewish teaching to Christians and Jews. He is the author of several books about the Jewish roots of Christianity and the Jewishness of the New Testament, and he is the author of the Torah Club Bible study program ().

He also serves as the teaching pastor at Beth Immanuel (), a Messianic Jewish synagogue in Hudson, Wisconsin. Daniel can be reached at outreach@.