

What Happens When You Refuse to Get Bitter

When we look around at the world today, there seems to be so much instability—so much that it's easy to think you may be dealing with situations that no one has ever faced before. But according to the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50, that's just not true. If anyone ever had a reason to become unstable and bitter, it was Joseph. Just look at what happened in his life.

Disagreeing or dysfunctional families are nothing new. The Bible is full of dysfunctional families, and Joseph's family was no different. Joseph's father, Jacob, had children by several wives which caused great jealousy and competition in the home.

Joseph's mother died when he was young, and he became his father's favorite. Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful multicolored coat, causing great jealousy among his brothers.

In Genesis 37, we read that Joseph began having unusual dreams, including a dream where his brothers all bowed down to him. But rather than loving their brother and listening to his dreams, Joseph's brothers grew even more jealous and bitter. They rejected his dreams and hated him so much that they threw him into a pit, sold him into slavery in Egypt and told their father he'd been killed.

And if slavery wasn't bad enough, Joseph was bought by Potiphar, a powerful Egyptian who put him in charge of his household. But in the midst of what had begun to be an abundant blessing for Joseph, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. When he refused her advances, she accused him of trying to rape her, and Joseph was thrown in prison, though he had done nothing wrong.

How did Joseph keep his sanity? How did he keep from becoming

angry at God and filled with hate in the crazy, unstable world he was living in? He refused to get bitter.

I believe one of the reasons Joseph had emotional stability was because no matter what happened to him, he kept his eyes on the Lord and refused to get bitter. When his brothers sold him into slavery, he didn't get bitter. When he was thrown into jail for a crime he didn't commit, he didn't get bitter.

The Lord said in Romans 12:19b, "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay." That places responsibility in God's hands and releases you from any adverse actions. And the Bible says He is more than able. Joseph understood that, and he didn't waste his time trying to get even with his enemies.

No matter what people did to Joseph, he just kept moving forward with God. I believe Joseph knew God had a purpose for his life, and he trusted Him to turn what the devil meant for his harm into his eventual good.

Joseph had a gift from God to interpret dreams, and he used his gift to bless others. One day Joseph interpreted a dream for Pharaoh, and Pharaoh was so impressed that he made Joseph the No. 2 man in his government.

When Joseph's family ran out of food during the famine, they wound up at his doorstep, on their knees, asking for food. Remember that dream Joseph had many years before? Well, it came to pass! Joseph's brothers were terrified when he revealed who he was. But Joseph held no bitterness in his heart. He said, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many lives" (Gen. 50:19-20).

You can have what Joseph had. Joseph not only survived the instability surrounding him; he flourished. You may be facing different circumstances, but at some point, instability or unpredictability can feel very much the same regardless of who

is involved.

Friend, I believe when you stay focused on God as Joseph did, instead of the negative effects coming out of the circumstances of your life, you can have what Joseph had—you can find stability in the unstable world around you.

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