

Between the Pit and the Palace

The book of Genesis (chapters 37-45) tells the story of Joseph. He was the favorite of his father's 12 sons, and his brothers were very jealous of him because of it. One day when Joseph shared a dream he'd had of them all bowing down to him ... well, that was the last straw!

The brothers got together to decide how to get rid of Joseph. First, they threw him into a pit to leave him there to die. But later they decided to sell him into slavery to a band of traveling Ishmaelite merchants. They then devised a plan to convince their father of Joseph's death.

As you may know, this story ends triumphantly. Joseph becomes second in command to Pharaoh, is eventually reunited with his family, and all is forgiven. What happened to Joseph is proof that no matter what you go through in life, you can fulfill God's purpose for you. All things are possible with God!

But the part of his story we really need to focus on is what happened *in-between* the pit and the palace. Joseph's life took several turns during that time. But the one attribute of his character that brought him to this victorious end was perseverance. Because of Joseph's faith in God, he never gave up!

Quitting Is Not an Option

In our own lives, we may fall into a pit every so often. It could be a pit of sickness, financial lack, relationship issues or other problems. Whenever that happens, you need to be determined that whatever the situation may be, you will not give up!

Remember that testimonies come by passing tests. Jesus even

told us, "In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you]" (John 16:33 AMP).

It is inevitable that you will go through hard things. Sometimes you might even feel like giving up. But if you can just hold on and trust God through it all, He can restore you. He can take all the bad and make good of it (see Romans 8:29). He can even give you double for your trouble! (See Isaiah 61:7.)

What to Do When You're Hurting

In the meantime, your perspective while in your "pit" can make a big difference. Remember, it's a time of time when your character is being developed. This period is what I sometimes call the "silent years" because it's a time when you may feel like not much is going on in your life. Or you may be going through a lot of pain and upheaval and it feels like God is not doing anything about it.

But it's vitally important for you to trust Him during this time, because He is working in your heart to make you more like Christ. And the good news is you don't have to flunk a test with God; you can get "do-overs!"

So when you're in your pit and you're hurting, the best advice I can give you is, *don't give up*:

Fight the temptation to think there's no way out of your situation. Jesus *is* the Way. This is your time to draw close and follow Him.

Avoid blaming God or thinking He is punishing you for some sin. He is just using the situation to work in your life. And while it may not always feel good, His purpose will always be for your good.

Do what's right even when you're hurting, when it doesn't feel right or when others treat you badly. Do something good for as many people as you can as often as you can.

Don't withdraw and sulk or isolate yourself from others. Remember, you can be pitiful or powerful but you can't be both. Many times, God may use others to encourage you in this time.

Keep your word. Honor your commitments. This is a character building time and you are being prepared to take your place in the "palace."

Shake It Off

Maybe you've heard the story of a donkey that fell into a pit. His owner thought about it and decided the pit was too deep and the donkey was old, so he would just go on and bury him there. He called some friends and neighbors to help and they began to shovel dirt into the pit.

At first the donkey cried out, obviously terrified of his situation. Later his owner noticed that he'd gotten quiet and thought he'd probably already died. But the donkey had *not* died. When the owner looked down in the pit, he saw that every time dirt fell on its back, the donkey would shake it off and step on it, packing it down under his hoofs. This continued for hours until finally, the donkey had packed the dirt enough to lift himself up—and *out* of that pit!

We can learn something from that donkey. Life will throw dirt on us from time to time. It may be in relationships or our finances or health. But this is a time to learn how to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will show you how to shake off the dirt and step up, giving you glimpses of His glory in each step you take from your pit to your palace!

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