

Joseph 2 - Momentum

Joseph was blessed because early on in life, he had come to understand his mission from God. That sense of mission will carry a person through life. When our plans seem to fail and our efforts are frustrated, we are forced to adapt to keep moving on while trying to stay on mission. We can't just do anything when we adapt. In daily life we have to be careful to build to a career. It is like writing your resume. If you have too many *widely* different jobs in your past, it doesn't necessarily make you look like a *widely experienced* person — it *might* make you look as though you are unsettled, can't keep a job, or never really stayed at anything long enough to develop any one set of skills.

On the other hand, if you choose the wrong skills to develop, you might find yourself left in the dust as the world around you changes, like opening up a typewriter repair shop while Bill Gates is starting a company called Microsoft. Life is a gamble without knowing what God's will is for us. We might not know exactly what career field we are entering into, but if we can get a sense of *God's* mission for us, we can be sure that there are no dead ends in the maze of life because *every* experience will be a building experience for our ultimate mission in Christ.

I was asked to speak on improving and being creative in making solutions to your unique problem at the quad state Sunday School conference one year. Creativity can be a challenge but the first point in my workshop was that, in one way, there *are no* unique problems. All problems will be faced with a combination of skills that you have developed in your Christian growth.

As we saw last week, Joseph had a sense of mission from God that was going to carry him through life, so that one experience would build on another until he fulfilled the mission God had called him to. It is not enough to have just any plan in life. The mission we have in Christ starts with making sure you are a Christian to begin with and

moves on to fulfilling your part in God's mission of redemption for the world. Without knowing God's mission, you can only become the most spectacular and successful failure because that would mean either being lost, in Hell, or having your work for the world burned up. When you know and serve God's mission, you ride on his "coat tails" and are part of His eternal kingdom.

Mark 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

1. No fair!

Let's look at Joseph's next phase of development.

Gen 39:1-20 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

²And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

³And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

⁴And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

⁵And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

⁶And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. **[So far, so good. The**

sense of responsibility to his master that he had with his father, Jacob, is now going to serve him in this setting.]

Potiphar's wife cast her eye on Joseph and tried to seduce him. We will come back to look at this later, but Joseph resisted her and she falsely accused him.

¹⁴That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

¹⁵And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

¹⁶And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

¹⁷And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:

¹⁸And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

¹⁹And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

²⁰And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

Joseph's situation actually *isn't* fair, but there is an immature way to look at it. Joseph might have complained that he had done right in the face of his bad circumstances and that he should be rewarded by God for it. It just doesn't seem fair that after all he had done to maintain his integrity in the face of a bad situation that, on the surface, God didn't protect him. The problem with looking at

the situation this way is that it blames God as if the morality of our cause allows us to command God to perform. There is nothing wrong with bringing our cause before the Lord, but not in a way as though we are holding God to account. We sound so much like the kid who goes storming off crying, "It's not fair." This is the position the Jews found themselves in when they were taken into captivity.

Jer 29:7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

This is the position we find ourselves in before government and work.

1Pet 2:13-20 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

¹⁴Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

¹⁵For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

¹⁶As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

¹⁷Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

¹⁸Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

¹⁹For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

²⁰For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

Just like us, when we try to take the best advice and we are enjoying God's blessing, something comes along to ruin it.

- He was goodly, or beautiful
- There were things that should have worked in his favor
- God was blessing everything. Couldn't He have blessed Joseph for his faithfulness?

It's not just that life sometimes throws you a curve ball every once in a while. There are also *jerk*s who throw you a *bean* ball every once in a while. Along the way in life there are going to be injustices and things that don't seem fair. When they say it's not fair, they are really saying, I didn't get what I want. We've got to be careful when demanding what is fair. Even the worldly know there is a problem with "fairness."

If life was fair, Elvis would be alive and all the impersonators would be dead.
— Johnny Carson

If the world were so organized that everything has to be fair, no living creature could survive for a day. The birds would be forbidden to eat worms, and everyone's self-interest would have to be served.
— Author Unknown

I used to think it was awful that life was so unfair. Then I thought, wouldn't it be much worse if life were fair, and all the terrible things that happen to us come because we actually deserve them? So, now I take great comfort in the general hostility and unfairness of the universe.
— Michael Straczynski, writer

The truth is that good ethics sometimes is good business, but sometimes it's not. It depends on one's goals and how one defines

good business. **[Remember, this is coming from a worldly business person]** Sometimes, good ethics can end in bankruptcy. Of course, so can bad ethics.

A fairer statement is that good ethics can be a very powerful business asset and that good things tend to happen to companies and individuals that consistently do the right thing and bad things tend to happen to those that even occasionally do the wrong thing.

But the crucial point is that the moral obligation to live according to ethical principles is not dependent on whether it's advantageous. People of character do the right thing in the pursuit of virtue, not self-interest.

— Michael Josephson
http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/business-ethics_commentaries.html

What is fair is that we should be ultimately burning in Hell.

Gal 3:10-13 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

¹¹But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

¹²And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

¹³Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

2Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

That is why salvation must be offered

as a gift.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

If anything, salvation is not fair. We didn't get what is fair and Jesus didn't get what is fair. That's why salvation is by grace. People look at the horrendous cruelty in this world done even in the name of God and can't fathom how, if God exists, that He could possibly permit it. I find it perfectly understandable and impermissible that such evil exists. I am not shocked by it ultimately because I know that what we deserve is far worse than what we suffer at each other's hands. What is surprising is why things aren't *worse* in the world. We often underestimate the sinfulness of mankind due to our own pride.

2. Momentum.

From the time Joseph entered Potiphar's house, he stayed on mission as God's plans were being wrought. He stayed to true to the excellent character of a servant of God. But we need to look a little more closely at his situation for a very special principle that is at work when we stay on mission. It is called momentum. Momentum is defined as the impetus gained by a moving object and is measured as mass times velocity. It is harder to stop an object that has momentum. The average 300 pound NFL defensive tackle moving at 15 mph would hit you like a 20 lb cannonball dropped from the top of of the Freedom Tower, and yet both could be pushed over with one finger, mathematically speaking, if they were standing completely still. Momentum will carry you through on your mission. Staying on mission doesn't happen on the spur of the moment when you are faced with a challenge. Staying on mission means that you are constantly in motion to hit your trial with spiritual momentum. *That* is what happened to Joseph. He didn't pause in life to cry about what was fair.

He wasn't standing still to become an easy prey for Potiphar's wife. He didn't wait to start running from temptation at the impetus of her wicked momentum. He was running in his heart already! Let's go back to Genesis 39 and pick up that segment of the story.

Gen 39:7-13 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9*There is* none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

10And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her.

11And it came to pass about this time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business; and *there was* none of the men of the house there within.

12And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

13And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

Joseph was like a 300 lb. lineman. He was like a cannonball. He was out of there so fast he left his coat behind! He was out of there so fast she ate his dust! Even though he is going to land in prison, his spiritual momentum was carrying him through. The understanding we have is that the prison he landed in was not an ordinary prison but one for political prisoners. You have to wonder if Potiphar entirely trusted his wife! We are going to be looking at Joseph when he lands in prison, but the story is not

going to change, he will keep his spiritual momentum going while he is in there.

1Cor 10:11-13 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

12Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

[Don't stand still and be a pushover.]

13There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Rom 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

Heb 12:1-3 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Prob 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Phi 3:8,13,14 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom

I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,
13Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:3-5 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

⁴And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

⁵And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

1Cor 9:24-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

The time to ramp up your spiritual momentum is not when you are hit with a trial or temptation when you will be crying "No fair!" Just as physical momentum is made up of several factors, time being one of them, so also is spiritual momentum. The less time you have to get up to speed, the more effort you need to overcome your spiritual inertia. You can't wait till the last moment to save a relationship, build a reputation, get to know God, get armed

with Scripture from the Bible, figure out what to say when someone needs to get saved, gain confidence in the provision of God, impact a child before he is old enough to cross the street on his own (in a car, that is). Build the spiritual habits and they become you. One brother was reflecting on where he was spiritually 10 years ago compared to today. He really had come a long way and his spiritual confidence was far greater now. The reason why is because he has a lot more of the Bible in him...which took time to amass (amass is the best way to describe it because mass is one of the factors that *also* determines momentum). He grew in patience and found more joy in serving. The more a church is standing still because the more of its members are standing still is a church that is poised to be pushed over. The church that is on the move will leave the devil eating its dust.

It all starts with one step, a step out in faith to accept Christ (if you took that step already you are well on your way), a step out the door into the fellowship of God's church, a step forward to commit yourself to serve, a step down the street to hand out a tract or knock on a door, a step into a quiet space to meet with God, and then a step up to a greater impact.

Mark 8:36

1. No fair! Gen 39:1-20, Jer 29:7, 1Pet 2:13-20, Gal 3:10-13, 2Cor 5:14, Rom 6:23
2. Momentum. Gen 39:7-13, 1Cor 10:11-13, Rom 13:14, Heb 12:1-3, Prov 16:3, Phi 3:8,13,14 Romans 5:3-5, 1Cor 9:24-27