

The Joseph Model

Money Models for Believers:

Genesis 39:2-6, 20-23

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If God is loving and just, and if wealth is a blessing that comes from God, then why is there so little blessing for many? Why does half the world live in such desperate want while others grow fat in luxury? Why is there such disparity? Why are some of the righteous hunkered under debt or scavenging for necessities, and why are some of the wicked rich? We addressed that question last week. We considered a key principle: blessings come from God and flow to people, and they also flow through people. The flow of blessing, or its absence, dominates your financial health. Blessings and wealth flow to you from your nation and community, your ancestors and family, your leaders and friends. Deficits or curses or struggles also flow from them. Finally your relationship with Jesus is defining. That relationship can overcome all deficits. That is why we talked last week about *the model from God*.

Jesus presented a model as he told a couple stories in Luke 16 and offered some application. He said this: You are a manager! It is so important to understand that is your identity. You are not a victim. We may be hurt and victimized. We may be exploited, defrauded and attacked, but we are not victims. That is not our identity. We still are in control of ourselves. We still manage ourselves, or at least our thinking.

Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl spent 3 years in Auschwitz, Dachau and other Nazi concentration camps. He lost his mother, father, brother and pregnant wife in those camps, but Frankl did not think of himself as a victim. He wrote:

Everything can be taken from a man but ...the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

Frankl survived and helped many survive their experience of concentration camp because despite all the indignities, all the inhumanity, they were still in charge of their lives and detected their purpose. There is a parallel between Frankl and Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel.

Joseph, like Frankl, lost all. He lost his family and any right over most of the things we manage.

Nevertheless, he still managed his attitude and how he chose to respond.

According to Jesus we are managers of who we are and what we have. Jesus called us to be purposeful in Luke 16. He challenged us to be skillful and promised we would be accountable. That is what Joseph was: purposeful, skillful and accountable.

At age 17 Joseph's angry brothers sold him as a slave. He lived with a debt he could never pay off. He was owned by others and could not free himself. Others dictated his time, clothes, location and jobs. Yet he could manage his thinking, speech, and actions in regard to them. Indeed, Joseph exhibited purposeful, skillful and accountable management.

Joseph first served Potiphar, a member of the Egyptian Pharaoh's personal staff, the captain of the palace guard. Listen to what happened:

The LORD was with Joseph and blessed him greatly as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. So Joseph naturally became quite a favorite with him. Potiphar soon put Joseph in charge of his entire household and entrusted him with all his business dealings. From the day Joseph was put in charge, the LORD began to bless Potiphar for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs began to run smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't have a worry in the world, except to decide what he wanted to eat! (Genesis 39:2-6, NLT)

Do you notice the flow of blessing? It came from God and flowed to a teenage slave.

Then through that slave it flowed to his master and everyone associated with the household.

Notice that it was experienced in the management of Joseph. First, he was found skillful and trustworthy in little which brought blessing to his master. Then responsibility was added and more blessing flowed. Finally, everything was given into Joseph's hands. He was fully trusted.

Are you trusted in your work environment? Does your boss, supervisor, customer or patient trust you? Do they believe you serve their best interest with all your heart and skill?

Although Joseph hated his position, he could be trusted. Instead of whining and fussing, he sought God's blessings for those he served. He sought God's favor for them. Have you sought God's blessing for those you serve? Have you prayed for them? Have you prayed for your company, your customer, your supervisor and coworkers? Have you prayed for the prospering of their lives? Have you sought God's wisdom in serving them? Joseph became wise in serving Potiphar. He not only worked in the best interest of Potiphar. He dreamed and envisioned a better, more prosperous future for him and diligently pursued those goals. Can that be said of you? Do you realize that you have been placed to channel God's blessing to specific people? Are you that purposeful manager in your workplace and home? Have you spent time dreaming and visioning what is best? Have you spent time growing in skill so you can pursue those dreams? Have you grown in your ability to know, care and work with people? A huge part of management is relationships.

It is estimated that 20 percent of your income comes from learned skills and 80 percent from your attitude, especially your ability to get along and work with people. Many skilled workers languish because they have never worked on their attitude. Their attitude hinders them in all kinds of ways. It is especially damaging when it prevents them from developing enthusiastic work-relationships with others.

Despite Joseph's attitude and actions, he suffered terrible loss. Joseph was thrown in prison because of a manipulative, vengeful woman. Poptiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph; and when he ran away, she accused him of rape. Put that on your record, and how would things go? I've seen people that were falsely accused like that become suicidal. All of Joseph's good, honest, godly and skillful efforts ended in pain. Joseph sat in jail.

Could Joseph change his position? No, but God could. Was Joseph in charge of his life? Well, he was not in charge of many things, but he could manage his attitude and actions in response to others. Again the word *purpose* comes to mind. Jesus called us to be purposeful managers, to manage what we are and what we have to please God. What did Joseph do? He sought God's blessing for those he served. His attitude was so positive and energetic, and he did so many tasks well and with amazing insight that he ended up running the jail.

Before long, the jailer put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. The chief jailer had no more worries after that, because Joseph took care of everything. The LORD was with him, making everything run smoothly and successfully. (Gen 39:22-23, NLT)

Finally, after 13 years of being a slave and prisoner, after acting as a channel of divine blessing to all these people, God freed Joseph and exalted him as leader of Egypt. Even in that process of freedom, Joseph was a channel of divine blessing. He sought God's wisdom for two inmates and then finally for Pharaoh. As he served them prayerfully, faithfully and skillfully, he was freed and promoted.

Joseph models four essentials necessary for true financial health.

First, remember God is in charge and you are doing God's work. Perhaps, an undeserving person benefits from your work, but you are not to pass judgment. That is for God to do. God expresses his love and passes his blessings through you. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Work hard, but not just to please your masters when they are watching. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free. (Eph 6:6-8, NLT)

It is that kind of attitude and action that earns the trust of others. They can see that you genuinely love them, and they find you a genuine blessing. Most importantly, all your work becomes sacred because it is aimed at pleasing God and serving his children. Divine blessing flows through you. So whether human beings recognize and reward you isn't as important because God recognizes you and will honor you at the right time.

Second, work with thoughtfulness and vision. The issue isn't coffee breaks and paychecks. The issue is helping coworkers and others thrive and grow in achieving the mission. Don't spend your time bellyaching over problems. Seek solutions. Suggest solutions. Dream solutions. Pray for solutions.

Third, work with diligence. Whatever gift you bring, use it. Share it. You may be arthritic. You may have poor eye sight. You may be wheelchair bound. Regardless, you can excel in attitude. You can bring enthusiasm to the situation and challenges in which you live. That will lift everybody.

Fourth, let the reward come from God. As soon as you focus on and brood over others' poor treatment of you, you've abdicated control to them. Don't do that. Make your honest appeal when appropriate and move on. You are a manager from God. He will reward you. Whatever people do for evil, God can turn to good. Work for God in your home, work for God in your business and work for God in your school. You are the instrument of his blessing. He will reward you.

Because true financial health is blessing, become the manager God can bless.

