

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE MIND: FACING THE MONSTERS THAT COME CALLING DAY AND NIGHT

Chapter 6

When you're stuck at a dead end: Living in obscurity

(Revised 8/26/05)

If I asked you to make a list of things you've either misplaced or forgotten, chances are good that you could come up with at least 10 items in no time at all. I know I could! My list would include keys, comb, wallet, grocery lists, library books, appointments, car at shopping mall, promises, conversations, shoes, briefcase, and countless other things I've forgotten to list. It's not that I have a bad memory, it's just that I have a good forgetory. As the bumper sticker I once saw says, "Of all the things I've lost, I think I miss my mind the most."

Now while we can laugh about forgetting things (or at least we should, because we all do it), it's not quite so funny when we are the ones who were forgotten. As a child, I remember sitting down on the floor of a department store while my parents were shopping for clothes. A few minutes later I looked up and they were gone and I started crying because I couldn't find them. While they had only gone a few feet away, I was afraid I had been forgotten and left behind.

When my wife was a teenager, she was left behind at a gas station during a family vacation. The family had stopped for gas and to use the restroom. When they piled back in, her parents thought she was in the camper with the other kids and her sisters and brother thought she was up front with their parents. Thirty minutes later down the road

they discovered she was nowhere to be found and turned around and returned to the gas station. Sure enough, there she was patiently waiting on the curb for them to return. To her credit, she didn't panic, figuring that they had to come back sometime.

A few years ago, my wife's car broke down while she was out shopping. Being the gallant husband, I went and rescued her. Letting her take my car home, I waited with her car for a tow truck. Seven hours, two newspapers, three magazines, several phone calls, and four Diet Pepsi's later, I was still there. Seems the tow truck twice went to the wrong address and not finding me there, went back to their shop and promptly forgot about me. Boy, did I give them a piece of my mind I could ill afford to lose!

With time, stories like these become humorous and tales to entertain family and friends. They become gist for "Remember when . . ." or "Tell the story about . . ." at holiday get-togethers and family reunions. Our kids think it's hilarious that Grandpa Tom and Grandma Barbara left Mommy behind at a gas station. They laugh and want to hear the story retold again and again.

What is not quite so funny is when we feel like God has left us behind and forgotten all about us. Jonathan had once been considered a rising star in his company. He had been credited with several innovations and received the award for "Employee of the Year" for two consecutive years. But after two mergers and numerous company organizations, he had received so many lateral promotions that he felt like he was off the company's organizational chart. Stuck in a dead-end job, passed over for an upward promotion for the fifth time in three years, he whined in his cubicle, "What's the use? They don't even remember my name any more, let alone my talents and potential."

Jan felt isolated and ignored by her friends. After twenty years of marriage, her husband announced that he didn't love her anymore and was leaving. While her friends rallied around her at the time, they began to call less and less as the weeks went by. Not knowing what to say, her friends stopped saying anything at all. Now that the divorce was final, she felt like she had been sent to sit in the corner and take a "Timeout."

In chapters one and two, I related portions of my having been fired from my first pastoral position and being sent into what seemed like exile. I was crushed. I felt as if I had been folded, spindled, mutilated, and tossed aside.

It seemed as if I had spent all of my life preparing for ministry. I had invested nine years in graduate education, along the way earning both a Th.M. in Pastoral Ministry and an Ph.D. in Christian Education. I had worked hard on my teaching skills. I felt God had called me into ministry in general and to that church in particular. But before I knew it, I was out of work—for seven months. Like a can of lima beans that no one wants, I felt like I was pushed to the back of the cupboard and forgotten.

During times like these, it feels as if our only visitors are the monsters that come calling. They whisper in our ears, "How come you're by yourself? Your friends don't care about you anymore. They've gone on with their lives. They don't have time for you. In fact, they've probably forgotten all about you."

"Why do good things happen to other people, but not to you?" the monsters ask. "It's because God no longer cares. He's thrown you aside and discarded you. God has completely forgotten about you. He doesn't care about your pain."

During the time I sat alone on the shelf, I must admit that I listened to monsters for awhile. But then I was introduced to the life story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50. As I

studied the events of his life, I gained an appreciation for Joseph and learned to relate to him in new ways. He too was a man who had tremendous potential but who spent decades living in obscurity. He was an individual who had been all but forgotten.

Taking a journey through the photo album of Joseph's life, I discovered seven snapshots taken of him at various times and places. In each succeeding picture, Joseph's life seemed to slide farther downhill into a pit of obscurity and despair. Yet while his circumstances grew bleaker, his character shone brighter. His life experiences provide a picture of hope and encouragement. Let's explore them together.

THE JOURNEY INTO OBSCURITY

The first snapshot could be titled "Favored & Gifted" and is found in Genesis 37:3, 5-11.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. . . . Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and

bow down to the ground before you?” His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

The first snapshot of Joseph was taken in brilliant color and framed and matted with precision. Voted “Most likely to succeed”, Joseph was a man on the fast track, groomed for management and destined for great things. As a seventeen-year-old shepherd, he was favored by his father above all his other brothers. That’s saying something, considering he had eleven brothers and one sister. It seems that he didn’t even have to prove himself to dear old dad. He was Jacob’s choice, simply because he was born late in Jacob’s life.

To demonstrate his love for Joseph, Jacob gave him a special robe. Growing up in Sunday School, I remember all the stories of Joseph’s many-colored robe. How many crafts did we make of that robe with the rainbow sleeves? My picture may not have been accurate or well done, but my parents thought it was wonderful addition to their gallery of refrigerator art.

Rather than merely being a many-colored robe, it was actually a long-sleeved coat that was richly ornamented.¹ It identified Joseph not only as dad’s favorite, but as his choice for being the family heir and the leader of his family.²

In today’s world, Joseph’s coat would be the equivalent of receiving a classic Corvette on your 18th birthday and being added as a partner to your dad’s law firm without ever having gone to law school. Can you imagine how the other partner’s would feel? It would not be too difficult to imagine the discussions at the water cooler and the backroom deals that would be diagrammed on napkins. Joseph’s brothers were certainly

not as civilized as a lawyer would be. But I'm getting ahead of myself. More about his brothers' response later.

In addition to being loved and honored by his father, we also discover that Joseph was extremely gifted. God gave him the ability to dream and interpret dreams. And his dreams reinforced what the coat said about him. He was destined to lead. He had been chosen by dad and gifted by God to be in a position of prominence and leadership within his family. The brothers did not have to be rocket scientists to read the hieroglyphics on the wall concerning Joseph's ambition and their future status.

The coat and the dreams produced an obvious response in his family which is seen in snapshot number 2, found in Genesis 37:4, 8, and 11. You could entitle this picture, "Hated." The colors are a little harsher than the first photo and the facial expressions more strained. The photographer would have had a tough time getting anyone to be civil and stand next to Joseph in this shot.

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. . . His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. . . His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

If Joseph were asked to give his testimony in the midst of one of our worship services today, he would probably introduce himself by saying, "Hello. My name is Joseph. I am the adult child of a dysfunctional family." Joseph grew up in a dysfunctional home long before the term ever became fashionable. His brothers hated

him, and for good reason, at least from their perspective. Joseph's ethics and ambition far outshone their own.

The first hint of family trouble appeared in Genesis 37:2 when Joseph gave a bad report about his brothers. "This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them."

What did he report? We're not told exactly. But it wouldn't be hard to guess. Factor in the deception, revenge, and murder by Simeon and Levi following the date rape of Dinah in Genesis 34 and the deception and adultery of Judah in Genesis 38, and you quickly realize that the sons of Jacob could easily act like a bunch of thugs. Today, Joseph's brothers would have a better chance of appearing on "America's Most Wanted" than they would on "Funniest Home Videos." It doesn't take much of an imagination to see that a man with honesty and an ethical character like Joseph's would shine like a diamond against the black backdrop of his brother's actions.

Now while it doesn't say what his brother's reaction was to Joseph's bad report, we can assume that he wasn't at the top of their Christmas card list. But when Jacob favored Joseph and gave him the coat, that was the final insult. They were seething. They couldn't speak a kind word to him. He most likely became the brunt of all their jokes and the object of their scorn and sarcasm. Dinner around the family table was undoubtedly a war zone. I doubt Joseph was invited to many of his brothers' parties.

And then there were the dreams in which Joseph always came out on top. By that time, resentment turned to revulsion and sarcasm to scorn. What was once a tart reply was slowly transformed into plans for murder (Genesis 37:18-20). Fortunately for Joseph,

Reuben had a level head and talked his brothers into torture instead (37:21-24). Along came Judah and the plot took a turn for the worse which included slavery and deception and ended in a father's broken heart (37:25-35).

All of these machinations led to the third snapshot in Joseph's photo album entitled "Alien." It is evident that the colors in this one have started to yellow and fade. The foreign processing must not have been very good. Genesis 37:28 tells us that the slave traders took Joseph to Egypt. From a shepherd in the land of his birth, he became a stranger in a strange land. Stepping off the caravan bus, he probably had the look of a deer with headlights in its eyes.

On the surface moving to a new city doesn't sound like that big of a deal. But after having lived in five different states in the twenty-five years we've been married, my wife and I can attest to the fact that moving is unsettling. It has always taken us a year or so to adjust to a new location. There are many adjustments which include finding your way around town, a new job, developing new friendships, fitting in to a new neighborhood, finding doctors, dentists, grocery stores, and the list goes on.

Twice we took a new job and moved to a new city one month before one of our children was born. Talk about adjustments! The first time, we hadn't even found the hospital yet because our son arrived three weeks early and we hadn't had time to drive out there.

Moving itself is unsettling and discomforting. But when you don't know the language or the alphabet and can't even read the street signs, the butterflies in your stomach start flapping madly.

I can imagine how Joseph felt because I've examined my own face in the mirror and seen the same look in my eyes. I remember the first time I got off the plane in Moscow, Russia in 1992. I was originally scheduled to travel with a group of about 65 people. But due to a change in flight arrangements I had to travel from Seattle to Moscow by myself. No one was at the airport to meet me, I didn't understand the language and could barely identify the Cyrillic alphabet. I wasn't sure how to find the hotel. That was unsettling enough. Add to that the small matter of uniformed soldiers carrying machine guns. And then there were the long non-moving lines at customs and passport control. Molasses in January moves faster. A deer feels more secure staring down the barrel of a hunting rifle than I did at that moment.

Being an alien was another stair step down into Joseph's pit of despair. He went from being favored and gifted to hated, an alien, and now a slave.

The fourth snapshot of Joseph's photo album is entitled "Slave" and finds him as a servant in Potiphar's house.³ Joseph's features are highlighted with hope and promise and yet shadowed with betrayal. It would appear he has a confused and bewildered look on his face. This photo is closer to a mosaic than a snapshot.

As any Sunday School student can attest, Joseph was purchased by Potiphar. As captain of Pharaoh's guard, Potiphar was the leader of the king's bodyguard⁴, the chief of the executioners⁵, and in charge of the prison for royal prisoners.⁶ Unbeknownst to Joseph, he was now the property of the meanest man in all of Egypt, the 10-time winner of the "Worst Boss" contest in Egypt.

He quickly rose through the ranks, going from being just another slave to Potiphar's personal attendant to having charge of everything that Potiphar owned. With Joseph on the job, the only thing Potiphar had to worry about was his next meal.

Things were looking up and Joseph had to be encouraged. "Perhaps this is how God is going to fulfill the dreams and the promise of leadership," he might have thought to himself. "But what about the matter of my family bowing down? Did I misunderstand that part?" I assume that Joseph was hopeful though puzzled about the latest development in his life.

There's an old joke that says, "Cheer up, things could be worse. So I cheered up, and sure enough, they got worse." That certainly described Joseph's sense of hopefulness because it was followed by betrayal.

According to Genesis 39:6, Joseph could have been on the cover of *Egyptian GQ*, or maybe displayed prominently in the latest heart-throb calendar, "Hunks in Chains." Either way, he was certainly on Potiphar's wife's wish list for Christmas. Ever the faithful wife to her devoted husband, she repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph and get him into bed.⁷

If this occurred today, Joseph would accuse Potiphar's wife of sexual harassment and slap Potiphar with a suit asking for damages in the millions of dollars for mental cruelty. It's the stuff that the tabloids would eat up. Inquiring minds would definitely want to know.

But that's not what happened. Joseph's options were limited and the stakes were high. Either he jumped in bed or he jumped out of his coat and ran for his life. With the

former he would lose his integrity and his testimony. With the latter he would lose his freedom and his reputation.

Scripture records that Joseph chose the latter option.⁸ Instead of Joseph suing his employer for sexual harassment, Potiphar threw him in prison for the crime of attempted rape. No Egyptian lawyer would take on Joseph's case. After all, who would believe the word of a slave against the word of the wife of the captain of Pharaoh's guard? Most people counted Joseph lucky that Potiphar didn't kill him on the spot, as angry as he undoubtedly was. Considering Potiphar's position and influence, Joseph was fortunate to keep his head and "only" be in prison.

The next photo in Joseph's scrapbook was taken after he had been fingerprinted and given his new black and white striped uniform. Hardly a flattering shot, it has two views, one showing his face and the other his profile, both with the accompanying numbers underneath. It's entitled "Prisoner" and is found in Genesis 39:19-40:22.

If we went through what Joseph did, most of us would give up and throw a pity party. We'd complain to everyone within earshot. "Why do good things happen to other people, but never to me?" we'd whine. But Joseph was not like most of us. He settled down and went about his task and was soon promoted to the position of the warden's right hand man.⁹

From a human perspective, it would appear that Joseph had the Midas touch. Regardless of how bleak the situation, he could seemingly turn it into his advantage for a shining profit. But Scripture lets us in on the secret. God was with him.¹⁰ Because God's hand was upon him, he could prosper and rise into leadership in the midst of extremely trying circumstances.

Life seemed to be improving for Joseph. He had a respectable position of authority. The old dreams of leadership were coming true again. And he was even able to use his gifts. He had the opportunity to hear and interpret dreams once more.¹¹ He even began to get his hopes up again. After revealing the meaning of the cupbearer's dream, he made him promise that when it came true, the cupbearer was to plead Joseph's case to Pharaoh himself.¹²

Despite the promising outlook, the sixth photograph of Joseph is the saddest of them all. It is portrayed in sepia tones. It appears that the picture was haphazardly thrown into the album and not even taped down. It depicted Joseph alone in his prison cell, dejected. He is "Forgotten." Despite Joseph's interpretation coming true, the chief cupbearer did not keep his part of the bargain. Genesis 40:23 is one of the saddest verses of Scripture. "The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him." Joseph spent two more years in prison because he was forgotten.

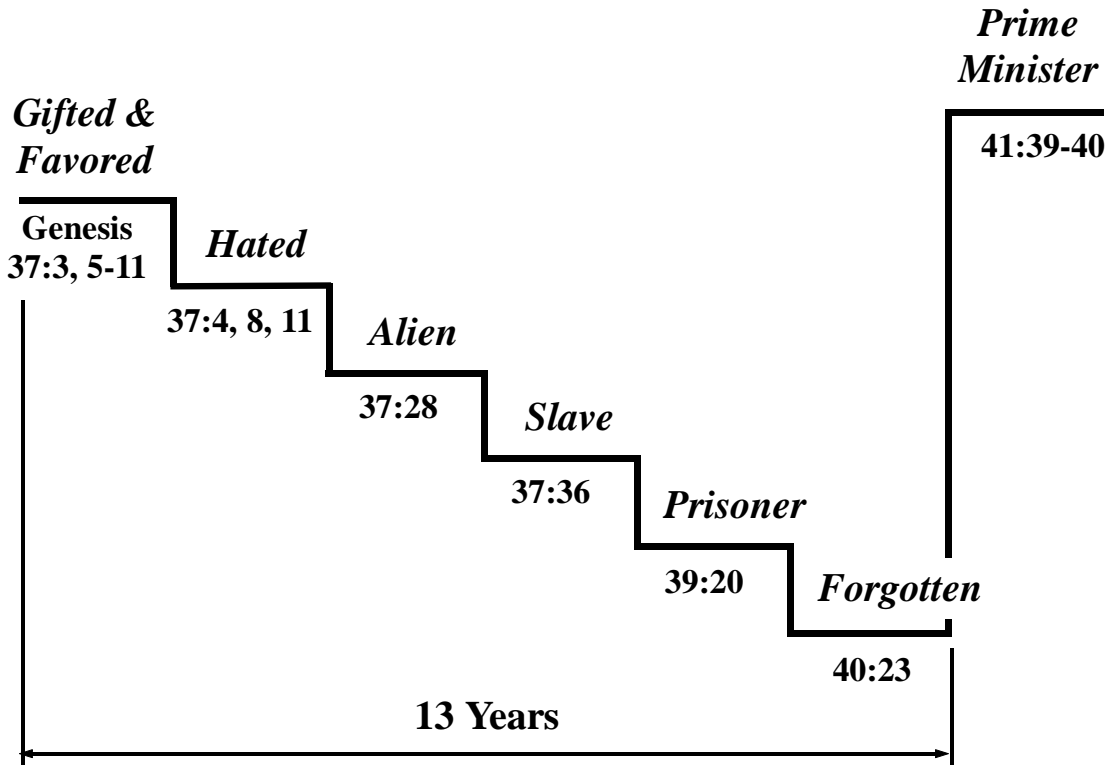
Life started out so positive and promising. He was favored and gifted. But then he was hated. He soon became an alien, then a slave, and then a prisoner. And finally, forgotten. He had reached the lowest point. Far away from home, framed and in prison, forgotten.

How did Joseph spend his time? How did he motivate himself to keep on going? Did he lie awake at night second-guessing God? Did he listen to the monsters who told him God had forgotten him and his earlier dreams? Was he haunted by unanswered questions like "God, what are you doing? What about the dreams? Will I ever see my family again? Will I ever fulfill the promise of my youth? Will I ever get out of here alive?"

We're not told exactly how he responded. All we know is that he was forgotten and remained in prison for two more years. One day two years later, Pharaoh woke up with a horrifying nightmare and his advisors were clueless as to what it meant.¹³ With a twinge of conscience, the chief cupbearer remembered, "Oh yeah, there was this Jewish kid in prison who could interpret dreams. Why not ask him what it meant?"

So the word went out and Joseph was brought before Pharaoh and he correctly explained the dilemma of the dreams. Pharaoh was so impressed that he commuted Joseph's sentence and promoted him to second-in-command of all of Egypt. Joseph entered into Pharaoh's service 13 years after leaving home for Egypt.¹⁴ Nine years later, Joseph's brothers headed for Egypt searching for famine relief, bowed down before him, and the dreams of Joseph's youth came true.¹⁵

The final photograph in Joseph's scrapbook is entitled "Prime Minister." It was taken in brilliant color and vividly shows the gold and finery of a government official. It is a regal sort of a pose that was matted and framed with delicate craftsmanship. He was elevated from the pit to the penthouse, from the prison to the palace, from the position of powerless to the pinnacle of power.



The chart above compares and contrasts the photographs in Joseph's portfolio. As you examine the first and last photographs in Joseph's portfolio, it is obvious that something took place, something changed. The question is: What? In my mind, it prompted three questions about God and his workings in Joseph's life:

- * During those 13 years of slavery and imprisonment, had God changed his opinion of Joseph? NO!
- * During the 22 years of being separated from his family, had God changed his plans for Joseph? NO!
- * Then what had God changed? JOSEPH.

As you examine the character lines in his face, you notice the understanding, the compassion, and the peace in his eyes. It is obvious that Joseph had changed.

During the period of time when I felt like I was in exile, I received a letter from Dr. Howard Hendricks, one of my former professors at Dallas Theological Seminary. In it he wrote, “Often the disappointments are a part of the Lord’s curriculum to prepare you for an even more determinative ministry. Nothing is ever wasted in the will of God. . . . Your future is as bright as the promises of God.”¹⁶

LESSONS LEARNED IN OBSCURITY

During those years of difficulty and absence from the family, Joseph earned a master’s degree in character acquisition. God’s curriculum included courses in advanced obscurity, false accusations, habits of the heart, and patient endurance. They were designed to shape Joseph in order to pass the tests in four arenas: pride, perseverance, performance, and perspective. Gods’ desire is to help us grow in those same areas in order for us to be effective servants.

In the first arena, God was preparing Joseph to be on guard against prideful behavior.

J. Oswald Sanders once wrote, “Not every man can carry a full cup. Sudden elevation frequently leads to pride and a fall. The most exacting test of all to survive is prosperity.”¹⁷ Studying the first photo in his collection, it is obvious that Joseph was a prime candidate for pride. He held a special place in the family (Genesis 37:3), even though he had brothers ten years older than he. His two dreams verified his place in the family and in God’s plan (37:5-10). He was well-built and handsome (39:6). His performance at home and in Egypt indicated that he had a great deal of intelligence.

And yet while he had great potential, Joseph needed to be refined, like gold in the fire.¹⁸ Oftentimes God uses difficult circumstances in our lives to refine our character

and remove our pride. Being promoted from the prison to the palace would fill the average man with pride and tempt him towards vengeance. But Joseph withstood the temptations of power, prestige, and pride and passed the test.

In addition to pride, God was preparing Joseph to pass a second test, that is to be able to persevere in some very difficult and demanding circumstances. High-level leadership brings with it: those who are jealous, rumors, false accusations, misunderstandings, breakdowns in communication, responsibility for the mistakes of others, and unsolved problems. Unless prepared for these pressures, no man or woman will persevere.

The hardest thing about life is maintaining discipline in the midst of the everyday, ordinary routine. It is even more trying when circumstances are less than ideal. Getting up at 5:30am to run 3 miles as part of your exercise plan is hard enough. Doing it when it's 30 degrees outside is even tougher. In the *Screwtape Letters*, senior devil Screwtape wrote to his junior devil Wormwood regarding the willingness of humans to persevere in the midst of adversity:

The long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather. You see, it is so hard for these creatures to persevere. The routine of adversity, the gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes, the quiet despair (hardly felt as pain) of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them, the drabness which we create in their lives, and the inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to it—all this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition.¹⁹

Rather than becoming worn out, each step in the process created greater depth and resilience in Joseph's character. He grew in the midst of difficulties such as being hated by family, falsely accused, and forgotten. He prepared spiritually and learned to trust God. In the end, he was under great pressure not to fail either his human master Pharaoh, or his divine master, God. But because God had prepared him, he was ready and he did not fail.

The third arena of Joseph's preparation was performance. God was preparing Joseph to perform well when given a very demanding task. With advancement comes greater responsibility, pressure, and the need for greater skills. For Joseph, he also gained more and more responsibility in each level of difficulty: his family, Potiphar's household, entire prison, entire nation. But with greater pressure also comes greater personal growth and more meaningful and lasting fruit in the kingdom of God—now and eternally.

The fourth arena in which God prepared Joseph to pass the test was in his perspective. We live in the culture of victimhood, as illustrated in the following "Calvin and Hobbes" cartoon:



Calvin: Nothing I do is my fault.

My family is dysfunctional and my parents won't empower me!

Consequently, I'm not self-actualized!

My behavior is addictive functioning in a disease process of toxic codependency! I need holistic healing and wellness before I'll accept any responsibility for my actions!

Hobbes: One of us needs to stick his head in a bucket of ice water.

Calvin: I love the culture of victimhood.

If anyone had the right to take up residence at #18 Victimhood Circle, it was Joseph. But he didn't. He understood that in spite of the circumstances, God was still on his throne. He expressed that twice in his interactions with his brothers. When he revealed himself for the first time, he said, "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God."²⁰ After Jacob's death, his brothers were afraid that Joseph would seek revenge. In calming their fears, he stated, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."²¹

Joseph could be thankful for the pain God brought into his life because he understood that God had a divine purpose in all that he did. Rather than being a victim, Joseph could look back and see that everything that came into his life helped to prepare him for where he was today. In his book on Joseph's life, Gene Getz makes the following comment:

Samuel Rutherford once stated that we should "praise God for the hammer, the file and the furnace." He went on to explain that the "hammer molds us, the file shapes us and the fire tempers us." All three experiences of course are

painful, but we can praise God for them because we know and love the God who wields them.

A. W. Tozer, commenting on Rutherford's statement, wrote, "The devil, things and people being what they are, it is necessary to use the hammer, the file and the furnace in the holy work of preparing the saint for the sainthood. It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply."²²

As painful as it may be, God allows hurt in the lives of his children for their greater good. Because he had hurt Joseph deeply, God could use him greatly. God had amply prepared him for his position. In the end, Joseph had no bitterness, a forgiving spirit, a servant's heart, self-confidence balanced with God-confidence, and a strong memory of the grace of God sustaining him through the trying years.

Think for a moment about the mosaic in your life. As you reflect, can you see meaning in your past and present experiences? What is God doing to prepare you, to equip you, to conform you into his image? Fortunately we have Joseph's experience to guide us, and the whole of Scripture. Even in the midst of darkness, we can see light because we know God loves us, that He will never forsake us and that if we trust him, we will "come forth as gold." Will you let him guide and control your life?

Tell the monsters that God has not forgotten you. In fact, tell them, "He's right here with me now, if you'd like to talk to him yourself."

WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE BEEN FORGOTTEN,

1. Remind yourself that God can overcome even the worst family background.
2. Remember that God is with you.

3. Look for the ways in which God is refining your character.
4. Submit yourself to his plan.
5. Learn the lessons he has for you.

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU TURN ON THE NIGHT LIGHT

1. In what ways has God prepared you for your current task?
2. As you read about the life of Joseph, can you identify with what he experienced?

Explain your answer.
3. How has God shaped and changed your character in the past five years?

¹ The phrase can be translated several ways. As Kidner points out, “Whether the mark of favour was a coat of many colours (AV, RV), a long robe with sleeves, or a ceremonial robe with ornaments, it was ostentatious and provocative. A garment so named in 2 Samuel 13:18 was royal apparel.” (*Genesis: An introduction & commentary*, by Derek Kidner, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967, p. 180). Getz goes on to say, “It was more than a typical garment with a few added touches of finery. The sleeves reached to the wrists and the main body of the coat to the ankles. And it was beautifully tailored and decorated” (*Joseph: From prison to palace* by Gene A. Getz, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1983, p. 22).

² The coat was not the type worn by a shepherd who needed freedom of movement in both arms and legs. But Jacob never intended for the coat to be functional. Instead, it was representative of Joseph’s favored position in the family. It symbolized that Jacob was letting everyone know that in effect, he was treating Joseph as the firstborn with all accompanying rights and privileges—namely, a larger or probably double portion of the inheritance and he would be the one who would carry on the family name. (See Getz, p. 22 and “Genesis” by Allen P. Ross in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1985, p. 87).

³ You can read the story in Genesis 39.

⁴Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. 1998. *Manners & customs of the Bible*. "Rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick"--Cover.; Includes index. ([Rev. ed.]). Bridge-Logos Publishers: North Brunswick, NJ.

⁵Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. 1997. *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA.

⁶Carson, D. A. 1994. *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) . Inter-Varsity Press: Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA.

⁷ Genesis 39:7-12.

⁸ Genesis 39:12-20.

⁹ Genesis 39:20-23.

¹⁰ The phrase is repeated four times in Genesis 39:2, 3, 21, and 23; twice while speaking of him as a slave and twice while describing his imprisonment.

¹¹ Genesis 40:1-22.

¹² Genesis 40:14-15.

¹³ You can read about the story of Pharaoh's dream and Joseph resulting promotion in Genesis 41.

¹⁴ Compare Genesis 41:46 with 37:2.

¹⁵ Read Genesis 42-46 for the story of the family reunion.

¹⁶ Private communication dated Summer 1989.

¹⁷ Cited in Getz, p. 94.

¹⁸ See Job 23:10 and 1 Peter 1:7.

¹⁹ Wayne Martindale and Jerry Root (eds.) *The quotable Lewis*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1989, p. 41, #28 (from *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter XXVIII, para. 1, p. 132).

²⁰ Genesis 45:7-8 (NIV).

²¹ Genesis 50:20 (NIV)

²² Cited in Getz, p. 98.