

**The Rock: 05-03-2020**

**Long-term faithfulness:**

**The journey of Joseph**

**Title:** Character formation

**Scripture:** Genesis 39:1-23

**Theme:**

Character is formed more often through the crucible of fire, and not on a feather pillow of ease.

What we see in Joseph is nothing short of a complete change. **OR**, was it always there and God just needed to re-position him for it to be revealed?

**Introduction:**

When you come into the lobby here at The Rock, on the wall we have banners hanging that read: **Discover God, Discover yourself, and Discover your purpose.**

I want to encourage you listen to this message, to hear it through that lens. What do I mean by that? Well, that is our purpose statement, Our reason for being, and in looking at our friend Joseph today through that same lens, I think it will help us all to understand a bit better what it all really means.

**1-Discovering God:** How is that happening here in Chapter 39, and how is that showing itself?

**2-Discovering yourself:** What has changed in Joseph? Is he a different person, a better person? Why or why not?

**3-Discover your purpose:** Has that happened yet in our story today? In part, we will find that, yes. But not in its entirety. That, we will find is going to take a life time.

Now, I ask that you think on these things as we unpack this chapter today, for it will be helpful as we grow forward.

It will allow us and teach us to look at our lives, our circumstances and situations we are in in light of these three statements.

It begins a healthy habit of rooting ourselves in the Scriptures as these are questions we have to ask in light of what the Bible says about God, about us, and about our purpose here in His world.

Through ups and downs, exile and exodus moments. All are necessary in the character formation of God's people.

Being conformed to the likeness of Jesus is God's purpose and plan for our lives.

Our purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy him every day.

When we discover that in ourselves, we are nothing, we find that because of what God has done for us in Jesus, we are then everything.

Everything he has called and created us to be. So, we ask the question today in this study: **How do we act when no one is watching?** For our character is formed in day to day "little decisions" we make when only God is watching.

### **The Story:**

As we begin our story, we find Joseph now in Potiphar's house:

"Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there."

### **-Genesis 39:1 ESV**

We really don't have any idea how much time has passed between being sold into slavery and his arrival here.

We can speculate, but it's not really that important. What is important is a

shift in attitude, as much as shift in location.

The incident with his brothers seems to have given him pause for thought, and what we begin to see here, is what God has seen all along.

In brokenness, in immaturity, there is character. But it is one, that as it is being revealed, is also being formed by the events Joseph finds himself in.

Last week remember, God puts us in places and positions outside of our comfort zones, in order to grow us into what He knows we can and should be. We have to choose to step into that reality.

While Joseph has been placed into a "forced" exile, his character begins to shine. What he does in his new situation, how he responds, reveals for us in some sense why God had given him the dreams:

"The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands."

**-Genesis 39:2-3 ESV**

These verses are very revealing. Character is not only what we are when we

are all alone, but it is also what comes out when we are being squeezed. When the pressure is on and we are in positions we don't like.

Frankly, sometimes I don't like what I see in myself, but, I too, am a work in progress and am thankful for God's grace and His desire to grow and use me.

God's favor is on those who honor Him by honoring others and doing the best one can in service. First to God and then for others.

This chapter sets the tone for the rest of our time with Joseph. It's from this point on where we see the Biblical giant of faith grow.

We discover here also, that Joseph, in every real sense, is all alone. No family, no friends, no familiar surroundings. But is he really alone?

Five times in chapter 39 we are told that the LORD was with him. And that begs some questions, in my mind anyway:

Was God with Him when his brothers beat him up and tore his coat apart? When he was in the darkness of the pit? On his journey into Egypt? Was God with him even then?

The answer has to be yes. But, did Joseph know that? Did he discover that in the pit during his time of self-reflection?

Perhaps in his realization that he needed more than his coat, his confidence and his dad's favor, to be all he was born to be.

You see, if we believe God is sovereign over all, in all, and through all things, we would have to say: "Yes", even in the ugliness, especially in the ugliness -GOD IS.

We **discover God**, don't we, and most especially in the hard times. We find him at work.

But, when did Joseph figure that out? We don't know. What is important is what we do know -and that is: Joseph DID figure it out, and that realization that God was with him, defined who he was and how he acted for the rest of his life.

He **discovered himself**, but not so he could stare at his belly-button and be proud. No, discovering who he was in light of who God IS, defined who he was to be and how he acted throughout all the events of his life.

That gives me hope. Because that means God, through His Holy Spirit, can do in

and through us, just what he did with Joseph.

No matter what your background, your brokenness, or even your long-term successes and lack of brokenness and dysfunction.

It is always God in us the hope of glory, who makes us everything he has gifted us to be. That is **discovering our purpose**.

What is our responsibility? Humble obedience. Sounds simple, but it is a daily battle and a life-time of work.

Both Peter and Paul discovered this and encouraged the church to stay the course:

"So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

#### **-2 Timothy 2:22 ESV**

"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

**-2 Peter 1:3-4 ESV**

A Christ centered character formation, is a battle we fight every day, in order that we be formed and conformed to His likeness.

And it's a choice -one that is made most of the time in the way Joseph's character is formed here, "alone". Back to our story.

"Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time, his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me."

**-Genesis 39:6b-7 ESV**

Potiphar's wife decides that Joseph is someone she wants and is surprised by his response.

Because he responds in two ways. The first is: He doesn't want to violate the trust Potiphar has placed in him.

Joseph has been faithful to honor his master in everything, especially when Potiphar is not around:

"But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in



this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife."

**-Genesis 39:8-9a ESV**

These verses are very important in my mind, because they sound very familiar to me. My master has given me access to everything except ONE thing -and that is you. Why would I violate that?

Adam and Eve were in the same situation, but made a very different choice. Instead of taking joy in all that God had given them, they focused on the one thing they couldn't have.

That led to not trusting the ONE who had entrusted them with the care of His creation -as a result of that choice, humanity fell into sin.

They did things their own way because they were convinced that somehow God was holding out on them. When in fact, He was blessing and protecting them.

Joseph's trust and character shine here - most especially in his commitment at the end of verse 9:

"How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

**-Genesis 39:9b ESV**

He recognizes who is really blessing him and caring for him. He knows who he would actually be sinning against, and he would not violate that covenant.

Joseph, through Potiphar's trust and faithfulness, was blessed. That blessing came from God through Potiphar.

That is how 99% of God's blessings show up in our lives. Through the faithfulness of others. AND not just other believers. Potiphar is not a believer, but Joseph is blessed none-the-less.

It is a beautiful thing when we get our hands around that truth. But we sometimes think that in order for blessings to be "from God" that some miraculous delivery is seen.

And in a sense that is true. James reminds us that:

"Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

**-James 1:16-17 ESV**

We just need to realize that God uses the giftings and the faithfulness of human-beings to bring about those blessings.

That is: **Discovering God** and **discovering your purpose.**

Who can you bless today? How can you serve here among the community of believers at The Rock?

Great questions to ask, as God wants to use each of you to bless others with the gift's He has given you. In blessing others, you will find that you are blessed in return.

But Potiphar's wife doesn't see it that way at all. And so, she persists:

"And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her."

**-Genesis 39:10 ESV**

Her character as well shines here. Not in a good way, but there it is.

And all of a sudden, in the midst of blessing, Joseph's world is about to fall apart again and collapse around him.

Except this time, it happens because he has stayed the course, refused to do the wrong thing, and is punished for it:

"But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with

me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of the household..."

**-Genesis 39:11-14a ESV**

"...and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house. As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison."

**-Genesis 39:17-20 ESV**

Here we go again! If you were Joseph right now, I want to ask you:

1-How would you feel about Potiphar and his wife?

2-How would you feel about God?

The answer to number one helps you to understand your character.

The answer to number two reveals your theology, your belief in God, of who God is, and perhaps even why it is you even follow Him.

For me, I want the character and belief of Joseph.

"But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it."

**-Genesis 39:21-22 ESV**

The jailer would not have put him in charge if his attitude was anything but faithful and obedient. His character was the same when leading a house of a prominent official, as it was as a prisoner, falsely accused, but now serving other prisoners.

This is the character God wants to form in us:

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

**-Philippians 2:12-13 ESV**

Only because of God. Only through Jesus.  
Only in the power of His Holy Spirit.

I leave you with this thought:

This doesn't even seem like the same  
Joseph. But it is. You never know what  
God can do in you and through you if you  
allow Jesus to be LORD and King in your  
life.

Be faithfully obedient to Him, allow Him  
that place and space in your life. Read  
your Bible, pray every day, and grow,  
grow, grow.