

## 1 THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

that God is faithful in keeping his promises and maintaining his character. We can rely on God to be thoroughly consistent. As read any Bible story we need to see it in the light of God's overall purposes.

- Promises to Abraham

The purposes of God are revealed in the promises to Abraham. In Genesis 12, 15 and 17 God tells Abraham that he is going to bless him with a great family, give him the Promised land of Canaan and through his family/nation, bring blessing to all the nations of the world. As the Old Testament unfolds we see these promises gradually fulfilled. God is faithful in keeping his promises in spite of the faithlessness of his people.

- Predictions to Joseph

Right from the start of the Joseph stories we have God's unexpected predictions laid out for all to see, especially the reader. At the time, Joseph is the youngest of 11 sons. Yet he is the apple of his father's eye, the favoured son. The coat of many colours, was a long coat with long sleeves. This indulgence caused resentment among the brothers. When Joseph told his brothers about the two dreams it was the last straw. The dreams predicted that they whole family would come under Joseph direction and protection. He was only 17 at the time. It would be many years before we could see how it all worked out. But it would be God's way of preserving the family in a time of famine and fulfilling his promises.

## 2 THE FAITHFULNESS OF JOSEPH

- Badly treated

Not long after the dreams had been shared, Joseph's brothers have an opportunity to get rid of him. Initially they planned to kill him, but out of a distorted kindness they sell him to some slave traders. This is an extreme form of rejection.

- Faithful in service

In the kindness of God, Joseph comes to work for the captain of the King's guard, named Potiphar. Joseph does not become bitter and twisted. He makes the most out of the situation in which he finds himself. He works hard for the benefit of his new master. We read that "the Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man." Genesis 39:2

- Faithful in temptation

When Potiphar's wife threw herself at the young and handsome Joseph, he could have easily given in. He was a long way from home. His family had rejected him. Why not go along with the deception and enjoy stolen sexual pleasure? Even before the 10 commandments had been given to God's people, Joseph knew that it was wrong. Even though Potiphar's wife is persistent, Joseph is resistant. He says: "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Genesis 39:9

He is a great example of godliness in the face severe temptation. What a contrast to Judah and Tamar in the previous chapter. What a contrast with King David and his shocking treatment of Bathsheba. Joseph anticipates Jesus who was faithful in all things.

### 3 THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

- In prison

And yet, the faithfulness of Joseph had its consequences. He went to prison on the false report of his master's wife. Again, Joseph could have been resentful and rebellious about his faith in God. We read in Genesis 39:21 "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed his steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison."

- With Pharaoh

Through a series of dreams which Joseph is able to interpret accurately, Joseph is eventually released from prison and invited to be part of Pharaoh's court. The blessing that came to Pharaoh from God through Joseph was the prediction of the 7 good years of plenty, followed by 7 years of famine.

- In blessing Joseph

God was again with Joseph in all that he did. His authority was very great and his work was very productive. We see Joseph's struggles and his faith in God reflected in the names he gives to his children: Manasseh "For God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house"; and Ephraim: For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

- In keeping promises

God knew what the future would hold for the land of Canaan and for the family of Jacob. In his kindness he provided a way of providing for the abundance in the land of Egypt to be the means by which the family would be preserved and prospered by having Joseph appointed to his position of power and crisis management.

### 4 THE FAITHFULNESS OF JOSEPH

- In Egypt

A long way from home, with lots of reasons for resentment and revenge, Joseph stayed faithful to his God and his Creator. We never see him failing to maintain the faith and live it out, even in though he is in very difficult circumstances.

- In caring for his family

In the providence of God, his family does come down to Egypt in search of food. Because Joseph is there he is able to give them the food they want and need, and eventually, to have them come and live in the land of Egypt. It is in Egypt that the family thrives and prospers and grows up to be a nation that starts to be threat to Egypt itself.

- In forgiving his brothers

One of the most amazing aspects of Joseph's faithfulness to God, is the way that he is able to forgive his brothers without excusing them. The brothers are afraid for their lives. They fear that Joseph may only have let them live while their father was alive. But Joseph tells them that vengeance is God's job, not his. He refers to God's faithfulness.

Genesis 50:19-21 (ESV)

But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? [20] As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. [21] So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph's story is a great encouragement for all of us to keep trusting in God, no matter what our circumstances, to keep praying to God, no matter what our circumstances and to keep working at forgiving people who have treated us badly.