
BETTER FOR IT

Part 3: The Way Forward

One of the reasons we respect the people we respect most is because of how they respond to adversity. Perhaps you've known someone who walked through seasons of intense pain without losing their faith, or admire a person who was mistreated without responding in hatred. What we often fail to acknowledge is that every human being possesses this same superpower: to choose our response to suffering and evil. It's what keeps us from becoming like our enemies, and gives each of us the ability to redeem the suffering we've experienced. But this kind of response doesn't come naturally. It has to be intentionally cultivated. So as we experience a season of intense suffering and unrest across our country, it's a perfect time to ask: What have I been doing that nearly led to my undoing? What should I begin doing that I should have been doing all along? What can I learn from the story of Joseph?

Start Talking

1. When somebody angers you, are you more likely to go off immediately, or stew on it for a while?
2. What's the longest you've ever held onto a petty sleight— the kind of thing that would strike even your friends and family as silly?

Looking Back

1. Did the confidence that God is with you allow you to do anything differently this week?
2. When did you exercise a measured response this past week? When did you merely "react?"
3. When were you most tempted to respond out of fear or anger this past week? How did it feel? How did you respond?



What About You?

1. Were your parents reactors or responders? How did their pattern work out for them? For you?
2. Were you raised to believe that God doesn't let bad things happen to obedient people? How has this affected you?
3. Have you ever experienced long stretches, even years at a time when you felt abandoned by God? What happened? How do you feel about it now?
4. In what kinds of situations do you find it easiest to choose a measured response? When is it hardest?

Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: Genesis 39:20–21. 40: 4–23. 41: 14–16, 37–40. 42:1–2, 6–7. 45: 3–5. 50:18–20. Romans 8:28.

1. What stands out to you about Joseph's response to adversity? Which parts of his story resonate with you the most?
2. The writer of Genesis claims that God was with Joseph even as he was wrongly imprisoned. Yet many of us balk at the idea of someone who has God's 'favor' experiencing hardship. What do you make of this part of the text?
3. What do you imagine Joseph was thinking during the years he spent in prison?
4. How does Joseph respond when Pharaoh asks him to interpret a dream? What does it reveal about him?
5. How would you describe Joseph's response when his brothers came before him to buy grain? What does it reveal about his faith?
6. How did Joseph's response change reality for the people around him?

Putting It All Together

1. Do you find it difficult to imagine that the events of your life are part of a bigger story? Read Romans 8:28. With Joseph's story as a back drop, what are the implications of Paul's words to all Christians who are navigating adversity?
2. Think about the major problems in your life right now. How would someone in your position respond if they were confident that God was with them?
3. What changes for you when you remind yourself that your current circumstances represent a chapter, not the entire story? How does it reframe the temporary predicament?
4. Where are you reacting as expected rather than responding in a way that opens the door for an unexpected outcome?

