

How You Bounce Back When You Get Knocked Down

Genesis 41

We all get beaten down in life. Many people find it very difficult to get back on their feet. Many choose to just stay down. Some have more bounce back than others. There are few people in the Bible who faced as many punches as Joseph. Everyone took a shot at him. Everyone tried to bring him down. It's like he just keeps getting knocked down and knocked down and knocked down. At 17, he is sold by his brothers and lands in a pit.

“When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— and they took him and threw him down into a cistern.” Genesis 37:23-24

“When the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him down to Egypt.” Genesis 37:28

Some Midianite travelers took him to Egypt and sold him to work in Potiphar's house. He worked his way up to the place where he was in charge at Potiphar's house. At 27 years old, he is falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and thrown into prison.

“Joseph was thrown down into the prison where the king's prisoners were held.” Genesis 39:19

He interprets the dream of a butler who promises to remember him when he gets back to Pharaoh's court, but he forgets him. For 2 more years he suffers in prison.

But Joseph becomes an example of someone who bounces back. We wonder, “How did he do that?” This gives us courage so we can say, “I can do that!” Joseph has a breakthrough experience. We all have moments when we need a breakthrough. When we bounce back from the punches in life.

Genesis 41 tells us the story of his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. Pharaoh was the unrivaled ruler of the world. He solicited no one's advice. He was his own congress. He was his own supreme court. He issued a command, and it became law. He entered a room, and he was worshipped.

He had two bad dreams, and they disturbed him. It's amazing how powerful you can be and still run into something disturbing and unsettling.

1. While You're Waiting, Trust God Is Working.

“And the Lord was with Joseph.” Genesis 39:2

The end of chapter 40 to the beginning of chapter 41 is about as wide as a ribbon and takes a millisecond to read, but it takes two years of time. 24 months of silence. 104 weeks of waiting. 730 days of wondering. 2,190 meals all alone. 12,360 hours of listening for God and nothing in response. God's waiting room. Waiting for deliverance. Waiting for rescue. Waiting for an answer.

We assume that if we are not working, no one is working, and that is not true.

Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” John 5:16

When you come to the end of Genesis chapter 40, Joseph is in prison, but God is at work.

“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” Psalm 37:7

“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

We can rest because God is God. God is always at work.

Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Exodus 14:13-14

They didn’t know his hand was already below the Red Sea ready to part the waters.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

Trust that everything will work out according to God’s will.

“And it came to pass”—Joseph’s struggle didn’t come to last. This too will pass.

“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:31

We have His help to deal with our past, our problems, and our pain His way. God can take the pain and use it for His glory. It’s hard to see Pharaoh’s palace from the pit or the prison. It’s so easy to focus on our problems, and the mistreatments and the iniquities of life. The pain takes its toll after a while. We get knocked down and feel like we will never bounce back.

The reason this story is in the Bible is for strugglers like us and tough times. God had a determined plan, and He would fulfill it.

“When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, ‘Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled.’” Genesis 41:1-12

There are few more dramatic moments in scripture than this moment where Joseph meets Pharaoh. Pharaoh had been born into royalty, and Joseph was born into disharmony. Pharaoh was from a lineage of mighty men, and Joseph was just a simple country boy from an unsophisticated family, and you find yourself transported to the capital city of the most advanced nation on the earth. Pharaoh has gold chains, and Joseph has bruises on his wrists and ankles from the shackles. Pharaoh has his armies and pyramids, and Joseph has nothing but borrowed clothing and a foreign little accent.

“So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.’ ‘I cannot do it,’ Joseph replied to Pharaoh, ‘but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.’” Genesis 41:14-16

Joseph immediately interprets the dream for the Pharaoh and then gives the Pharaoh advice.

“Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon. And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.’” Genesis 41:25-36

It all starts to make sense now. Joseph knew Pharaoh because Joseph knew the butler. Joseph knew the Butler because Joseph went to prison. Joseph was in prison because Potiphar's wife falsely accused him. He is in Potiphar's house because the Midianites bought him and brought him to Egypt. The Midianites bought him because Joseph had brothers whose greed and jealousy caused him to be thrown into a pit. His brothers were angry and jealous of him because their father made him the favorite. All of these bad things happened in Joseph's life like a crippling attack, but they all ended up as a great deliverance.

The Math of the pain is clear:

- 1 broken promise
- 2 betrayals
- Several outbursts of hatred
- 2 abductions
- 1 seduction
- 10 jealous brothers
- 1 case of poor parenting

There was abuse, improvement, 24 months of prison food. Mix it all together and sit for 13 years, and you get the grandest promotion in the Bible. You get a prison to the palace promotion. Joseph endured jealousy and rejection. God did something good with all the circumstances in his life. You look back and you see betrayal, someone sold out, someone given a promise and it wasn't kept. Have you ever been falsely accused, unfairly criticized, poorly parented, inappropriately touched? Joseph was, and he bounced back.

The bounce-back targets we buy have a secret we all need. There is something deep inside that settles and stabilizes us. Joseph had somethings to stabilize him.

2. When Things On Earth Are Out Of Control, Look To God For His Power.

Imagine how Joseph must have felt as the camels crested the last hill and the wonders of ancient Egypt spread out before him on the planes of Giza. The great pyramids would have been standing in Joseph's day. In fact, they would have been over a thousand years old when his great-grandfather Abraham visited that land many years before. Joseph would have seen the Sphinx, the great Egyptian temples, and the opulent palaces of the Pharaoh and his people. It must have been a great culture shock to this young man from the country.

On the surface, it seemed that circumstances could not have been worse for young Joseph. In truth, those difficult days were mere stepping stones along the path to greater glory. It may have appeared that all Joseph's dreams had been shattered, but the God who gave the dreams in the first place was working behind the scenes to ensure that they would all be fulfilled in His time.

God is always with His people to see them through their trials; to accomplish His plans in their lives; and to use them to point a lost world to Himself. What no one could see in all this trouble surrounding young Joseph's life is stated clearly in the Bible. It seemed that all had fallen apart for Joseph. Yet, if you will take a minute to examine the facts, it becomes clear that Joseph was in the hand of Divine providence. God set everything up just like it needed to be so that Joseph arrived exactly where he needed to be at the exact moment he needed to be there.

Joseph has a deep awareness of God and His power. Joseph saw a bigger picture. He didn't just see the current circumstances.

"I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." Genesis 41:16

"It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do." Genesis 41:28

Joseph has the most courage. Joseph has the most conviction.

Joseph has the most influence. Pharaoh is considered a deity. Joseph knew what Pharaoh didn't know. Joseph knew the name of the true King. The true King doesn't need a chariot. He rides on the clouds of the sky. He didn't build pyramids. He created the ever-expanding universe. Joseph knew the name of God. He talks about God. Joseph has immersed his mind in the grandeur of God.

"The matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon." Genesis 41:32

We think economy, layoff, bills, conflict, trouble, trouble, trouble. Change your perspective. We don't need fewer problems. We need more God. We will never have a problem-free life, no matter how perfect it looks. The key is to keep looking up to God.

3. Joseph's Life Was Not Defined By Problems, But By The Presence Of God.

God can give an elderly couple a baby. God can turn the Red Sea into the red carpet. God can take everything that is evil and turn it into the greatest good. The God of Elijah can start a fire in the wet wood of the altar. The God of Daniel gives lockjaw to lions. The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego can cover you and stand with you in the fiery furnace of life.

You need faith in a living God. Everything in our world measures success by wealth, fame, power, and prestige. God can take little people and use them to make a mighty deliverance.

Maybe you are on the eve of your deliverance. Maybe you are one day from your deliverance. Don't give up! You're only one day away.

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore." Psalm 121:1-8

- **GOD PROSPERED HIM.**

When Joseph arrived in Egypt, he no longer had his coat of many colors. He may have lost his coat, but his character was very much intact! The coat Jacob gave Joseph was a symbol of his position in the family. It marked him as the overseer. It marked him as the head of the family. It marked him as the one in charge of all things. It marked him as a man with authority. Joseph's authority did not come from a robe. His authority did not come from some piece of cloth. Joseph's authority came from his character! He was a Godly young man who walked before his father in absolute integrity.

- **GOD PROMOTED HIM.**

Potiphar saw that the hand of God was upon the life of Joseph. He knew there was something special about this Hebrew slave. As he watched Joseph work, and as he saw the results of his work, Potiphar saw that everything Joseph touched turned to gold. When Pharaoh promoted Joseph, he gave him some new possessions to go along with his new position.

- **A Ring** – This ring was Pharaoh's signet ring. It symbolized Joseph's authority to act as Pharaoh himself. He was given the authority to sign the king's name.
- **A Robe** – Joseph had lost the robe given to him by his father. That robe said that he was head of the family. Joseph only had that robe for a short time. He had lost a robe when he ran from Mrs. Potiphar. That robe identified him as a slave. He only possessed that robe for a short time. Now he is given a new robe made from expensive Egyptian linen. This robe identified him as the ruler of the land. Joseph held onto this robe for 80 years.
- **A Gold Chain** – This chain told everyone who saw him that Joseph was a man to be revered and respected. When he passed by, everyone was to bow at his feet.

Are you in need of some Divine intervention?.

Are you growing impatient as you wait for Him to move in your life? You should come and ask Him for help to trust Him.

Are you seeking meaning in the things you face in life? You should come and talk to the Lord about it.

If He has spoken to you on any level, you should come to Him today and get the help you need!