

Joseph – Giving God the Glory

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1 Pet 4:11 – “Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

This verse teaches us that whatever we do, whether teaching or serving, must be for the glory of God. There are two ways in which the word glory is used in the bible.

“Glory” is firstly used to describe God’s radiance, brilliance, and awesomeness. Basically all the greatness of God can be summed up in the word “glory”. We cannot “give” God this type of glory – it would be like asking a candle to add to the brilliance of the sun.

And yet the word “glory” is secondly used by means of credit, honor, respect, and praise that is due to God, hence “giving God the glory”. Learning to give God the glory in this respect is so important that we cannot be people of honesty and integrity without it being a basic part of our walk with Him. The old man seeks to glorify himself, but the new man is so overwhelmingly enamored with God’s glory (first definition) that he seeks to give God glory (second definition) in every way possible. He is not embarrassed to do so in public; he is not embarrassed to read God’s word in public, to pray evangelize.

There is perhaps no greater example of someone who gave God the glory (save Jesus Himself) than that of Joseph in Genesis. At the beginning of chapter 41, we read that God has decided to intervene in this young man’s life by giving Pharaoh a cryptic dream that only Joseph could interpret. Joseph uses this opportunity to give God glory

- 1) Giving God glory through our abilities – Joseph’s great temptation would have been to make self-glorifying boasts before Pharaoh. He could have waxed eloquent and advertised himself as the next great asset to Pharaoh’s administration. Joseph could have “networked” his way out prison by boasting in his successful management of Pharaoh’s household and the royal prison system. Worldly wisdom would say that this is the worst time to bring up anything related to God or religion. Instead, Joseph risks his freedom choosing to give God glory for his abilities:

Gen 41:16 – “Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”

Gen 41:25 – “Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do.”

Gen 41:28 – “It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do.”

Gen 41:32 – “Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.”

In everything Joseph advised Pharaoh in, God was given the glory. And because Joseph gave God the glory, so did Pharaoh:

Gen 41:39 – “So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.”

In whatever abilities God gives us, may we always give Him back the glory. If it is teaching, give God the glory. If it is serving, give God the glory. Whatever the talent, it was God-given and God deserves the credit. Because Joseph gave God the glory, God glorified Joseph. The truth is that God wants to do for us the same thing He did for Joseph. God has special plans for each of us. He has things for us to do. And He wants us to do them in such ways as to

maximize our effect and influence. But God cannot use us to accomplish great things until the credit belongs to Him. And just as he glorified Joseph for glorifying Him, so can He do with us.

2) Giving God glory through our children

Gen 41:50-52 – “Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On, bore to him. Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, ‘For,’ he said, ‘God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.’ He named the second Ephraim, ‘For,’ he said, ‘God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.’

Having children was probably the furthest thing from Joseph mind when he sat shackled in prison. But now God has given him a grace unexpected and undeserved. And so with his children, Joseph gives God the glory. Part of giving God glory through our children is realizing who they ultimately belong to. And through releasing our ownership of them to God, we’re better able to equip them for the purposes God has in mind.

Many in the bible followed this pattern. Hannah brought her son Samuel (the son for whom she had prayed), and presented him to God by handing young Samuel over to Eli the priest. (1 Sam. 1:27). Zechariah and Elizabeth circumcised the infant John the Baptist and gave him the name the angel had instructed them. This was an act of surrendering that child to the purpose and plan for which God had chosen him (Luke 1:57-66). Joseph and Mary brought the infant child Jesus to the temple following his circumcision at 8 days. They brought Him to the temple to “Present Him to the Lord ...” (Luke 2:22). And then who can forget the story of Abraham offering Isaac on Mt. Moriah, willing to kill his first born son, his only son, giving back to God what God had miraculously blessed him with in the first place.

When the time came for Manasseh and Ephraim to ask their father why they were named such, do you think his answer left an impression on them? When Samuel grew older and understood the reason for his separation from his mother was because of a vow she was keeping to God, do you think that made an impression on him? How deeply was Isaac impressed with Abraham’s faithfulness to God as Abraham raised the knife to strike him?

Giving God the glory through our children is something our children should see, and they should not see it through our words alone but through our actions. Perhaps it is no surprise that the children mentioned above all grew up to be pillars of the faith when we see the degree to which their parents dedicated them to God.

3) Giving God glory through forgiveness

When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and forgives them, he gives God the glory:

Gen 45:5-9 – “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, “God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay.”’

Being willing to forgive a person who has wronged us is absolutely for the glory of God. We know this because it is not within man to come up with a concept such as forgiveness once we’ve experienced the full brunt of hurt and pain from another individual. That’s one of the many reasons we know the bible is not from man. We would have never come up with a concept such as forgiveness unless we had at first been taught of it by God. It is too easy to be angry and hold grudges. It is too easy to resent and think malice of our enemies. Forgiveness is nothing less than a choice we do purely for principle’s sake, for God’s sake, to His glory.

Part of us being separate from the world is that by the light we shine, we bring God glory. But when we harbor bitterness and resentment, it not only dims our light, but it takes away the glory from God He desires to have through us. Someone once said that having an unforgiving spirit is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. But what's worse is that other people can see this attitude within us and it absolutely quenches our light.

Because Joseph was willing to forgive his brothers, the family could again be one, God's plan for them to become a nation could come to fruition, and Satan's efforts to sow resentment and malice could be quenched (2 Cor 2:11). Let us always bring God glory by forgiving those who do us harm.