

520 How Can I Live More Positively?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

Life is filled with plenty of bumps and struggles. It is hard to keep your head up and your attitude positive. No one wants to live life filled with negatives, doubts, and fears. We want to live with confidence and assurance that God is with us and that we can overcome whatever obstacle comes our way. When we come back we are going to look into the life of a young man who held fast to God even in the most difficult of times. We'll find that no matter what may happen to us, we can still live with a positive attitude.

Do you have a dream? Dreams in ancient times sometimes were a means of God's revelations. It was so for Joseph. It planted in his heart a vision of what the future would be. His dreams gave him hope. We don't have miraculous dreams today that reveal prophecy, but we still do dream. Sometimes dreams are realized; at other times dreams fail. Has your dream been shattered? Worse yet, has your dream turned into a nightmare and the worst happened? Joseph was called, derisively, *the dreamer*. Some of his dreams were prophetic. He saw himself as a leader of men. Joseph knew that God had a plan for his life...he didn't know all the details. **He knew God was shaping and molding him for a greater service.**

What happened to Joseph never caused him to give up on God. In fact, everything that happened to him only drew him closer to God. The Scripture says of Joseph in Gen. 39:2-3, "And the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand." One reason Joseph did so well in life is that he lived with the consciousness that God was with him, helping him through the problems he faced.

You'll remember that his master, Potiphar, had a wicked wife who tried to seduce Joseph. When her attempts failed, she screamed and accused Joseph of sexually assaulting her. Potiphar was angry but he knew Joseph. Gen. 39:20-23 says, "So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. And the chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail... so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper."

When the Lord is in your life, and you live with Him in mind, the Lord can work His will through you and can bless your efforts. God has a plan for each of our lives, and when we live according to His will as revealed in the New Testament, we can live assured that He is with us, helping us and blessing us. Real prosperity is the prosperity that comes at the hand of God and with His blessing.

A person who lives positively also learns how to make the best of even the worst situations. Joseph was hated and sold into slavery. He was unjustly accused and placed in prison. Though forgotten, he never lost hope. We couldn't have blamed him if he had. But, whatever happened to Joseph, he kept on making the best of it. He was sold into slavery only to become the head servant. Sent to prison, he took over the administration of that prison. Brought before the king, he became Pharaoh's right hand man. Joseph made the best of what he had, and we can only admire him for it. He could have shrunk back into pity, but instead chose patience.

Are you faced with troubles that bear down on you? It may be that God has allowed this for some greater reason. God may be shaping you for a greater service. Before Joseph ran a nation, he had to run a house and then an institution. Whatever your task before you, follow Paul's advice to slaves in Col. 3:23,24, "Whatever you do, do

your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. When God is ready for you and you are ready, God will use you for a greater service.

Living positively means maintaining your principles even when inconvenient. Joseph faced his biggest challenge when accosted by his master's wife. In Gen. 39:7-11, Moses wrote, "It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me.' But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Behold, with me *here*, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. *How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?*' As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her."

So much of life is determined by the choices we make. Joseph decided not to listen to a woman that would have cost him his life, if he had consented to her desires. You see adultery in those days carried the death penalty. A moment of sin can cost a lifetime of heartache. A moment of sin can cost a man all that he has—even his own life. Saying no to our desires is not easy, but it is wise. No wonder God could see Joseph as a great asset to His cause.

Our choices matter, and every day people make choices they wish they could take back. Every day in America people choose things that hurt them. Here is what I mean. Today 2556 babies are born out of wedlock; 7742 teens will become sexually active; 2795 teens will become pregnant; 1106 teens will have abortions; 3561 couples will divorce today. Each of these events came by a bad choice by someone. Paul said in Gal. 6:7, "Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that will he also reap." It is easy to deceive ourselves thinking we can sin and yet have no consequences to our actions. Wisdom means we think before we act!

Sometimes our problems come from our own making, because we forget the will of God and do what we want to do. Joseph could have given all kinds of excuses to give in to the woman's temptation, but he was not willing to give in to sin. He decided to do what was right, in spite of the consequences. Paul said in Romans 13:13-14, "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." When the Lord is in your heart first and foremost, you'll choose wisely.

Whatever problems Joseph faced, they were not as serious as being lost. A moment of sin is not worth an eternity without God. Paul said in Colossians 3:5-7, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them." Joseph was able to overcome sin because he feared God. He said, '*How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?*' He realized that all sin is an offense to God. He died to sin.

Peter reminds us in 1 Pet. 4:1-2, "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." The best antidote for sin is a relationship with God that puts God first. When God is all-important in one's life, one will cease from sin. I don't mean he'll be perfect, but sin will not be the constant focus of his life. We will all be mistreated at some point

in life. The best answer to the ugliness of life is the goodness of God. Keep your focus there!

Living positively with God means realizing that in all things God is still in control. Even if the brothers treated Joseph cruelly, even if Potiphar's wife falsely accused him, even if Joseph spent years in jail, God was in control to do him good. When Joseph was reunited with his brothers, he said to them in Genesis 45:5-8, "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." Joseph did not allow himself to become bitter or judgmental. In Genesis 50:19-21, Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. When we know God's will for our lives, we can survive even the hard times with grace and compassion towards others.

Have you wondered if God has deserted you, or if your life has any purpose at all? If so, you need to dare to dream again. To look positively that God has a plan for you! God works His will in His time; it took some years for the dream of Joseph to become reality. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "He has made everything appropriate in its time." His time may not be your time. Be patient with God. Solomon says in Prov. 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." God may not be done with you

Have faith in God, that God is working in your life to shape and mold you, so that He can use you to do good. Even if you have failed in the past God can still use you for His good. The evil Saul of Tarsus became the apostle Paul, and God may not be through with you. Paul said in 1 Tim. 1:12-16, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of

all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." My favorite saying is: "I'm not all I want to be; I'm not all I'm going to be; I'm not all I ought to be; but, thank God, I'm not what I used to be." My friend, have hope in God. He can make all the difference in your life. He can help you through the most difficult times.

You don't have to live in negativity, filled with depression, bitterness, guilt and doubt. We can live joyful, positive, loving, hope-filled, and confident lives because God is our Father and Jesus is our brother. We can overcome whatever struggle comes our way because we are not alone. We have the blood of Jesus and the promise of the Word to guide us and bless us in this life. But we have to trust in God and lean not on our own understanding. It is only when we obey God, yielding our hearts to Him completely, that we have such hope and joy. Do you have that kind of joy in your life? Have you obeyed the gospel of Jesus?

The Bible says in Ephesians 1:3 that every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places is in Christ Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul said that all the promises of God are "yes" in Christ. There is a difference, a substantial difference, between living with God and living without God. Many people live dark and hopeless lives because they have no place for God. They listen to everyone but God. They follow every fad and ignore God. It's no wonder they find little hope beyond today and can't seem to find much joy in life. They have themselves off from the source of joy and life—our God! God in your thinking, your focus, and your life makes all the difference. Paul, who went through so many struggles, said in Colossians 4:1-4, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." The closer we get to God the brighter, more hopeful, and lovelier our lives will be.

Today we're offering a pamphlet free of charge, entitled, "Ten Things God Wants in Your Life." It tells of all the wonderful things God wants for you. With all the blessings of God, it is no wonder that we should draw near to Him always. Where are you in your life? Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? Do you have peace of mind and heart inside? God hasn't left you; it may be that you have left God. The greatest need of our time is to know God and to draw close to Him again by listening and obeying His Word. Won't you do that?

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