

Choosing Hope When You Feel Hopeless

"What's On Your Mind?" series- Part 01

Use the next few minutes to connect and fellowship with other members of the group by discussing the following: What one thing would you like to change about your high school experience?

Let's get on the same page -

Read the following two stories about individuals expressing hope in a losing situation:

A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon. He asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing—we're behind." "Boy," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged." "Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!"

A man sentenced to death obtained a reprieve by assuring the king he would teach his majesty's horse to fly within the year—on the condition that if he didn't succeed, he would be put to death at the end of the year. "Within a year," the man explained later, "the king may die, or I may die, or the horse may die. Furthermore, in a year, who knows? Maybe the horse will learn to fly."

What was the basis for each person's hope for a good outcome?

Who had the greatest chance of experiencing a positive outcome?

Which person was truly experiencing real hope?

Book: Genesis 40:8- 41:1

Gen 40:8 And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean." "Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

Gen 40:9 So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me.

Gen 40:10 The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes.

Gen 40:11 I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

Gen 40:12 "This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days.

Gen 40:13 Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer.

Gen 40:14 And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place.

Gen 40:15 For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."

Gen 40:16 When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head.

Gen 40:17 The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head."

Gen 40:18 "This is what the dream means," Joseph told him. "The three baskets also represent three days.

Gen 40:19 Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh."

Gen 40:20 Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials.

Gen 40:21 He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup.

Gen 40:22 But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream.

Gen 40:23 Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

Gen 41:1 Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River.

Let's get into the Word:

Look above at the "white space" between versus 40:22 and 41:1. Using your imagination, what do you suppose is contained in that white space for Joseph's life that is not written?

How did Joseph feel about his current imprisonment (verse 40:15)?

In your past experiences, how have you personally dealt with the same kind of feelings?

Someone has suggested that there are certain signs that someone has an attitude of hope in God, even in a bleak situation. Look at the following signs and discuss the Biblical evidence of these in Joseph's life:

1. There is not a focus on self-pity, but instead a desire to serve others.
2. There is a positive attitude, and not a cynical, throw-in-the-towel, why bother attitude.
3. There is a quick response to include God in the solution.

How would you counsel a Christian who was disappointed with God? What steps should he/she take?

How would you answer a skeptic who said that hoping in God is just "pie in the sky when you die" wish fulfillment?

In my personal time with God:

Is there an area of life right now where I am experiencing a level of hopelessness? What are the next steps that you need to take to change your attitude?

If serving others is a key ingredient to combatting hopelessness, who needs your help in the coming days? What's your next step?