

How to Remember God is at Work

Anyone who is familiar with the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis remembers the climatic way Joseph himself wrapped up the whole story:

“You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result —the survival of many people” (Gen. 50: 20).

Don't you love that? Every time I read through the life of Joseph—his dreams, the hateful attitude and actions of his brothers, the slavery, the imprisonment, his role of leadership in Egypt—the phrase is running through my head.

“God planned it for good.”

However, I doubt that phrase was running through Joseph's mind as he was sold and shackled to the wagon of Midianite traders (37:28). I doubt he uttered that phrase to himself as he was unjustly accused and thrown into prison (39:19-20). And I doubt that, when he helped a cupbearer who promised to speak up for him, he spent the next two forgotten years repeating the phrase to himself every morning (40:23).

It was only in hindsight that Joseph could see that God indeed was working His plan—a plan for good.

Have you heard utter the phrase, “I'm glad I went through that—but I don't want to go through it again!”? I've heard it related to surgeries or prolonged therapy or treatments ... trying years of raising a teenager ... a stressful time with a work assignment. I recently said that phrase to my pastor who is currently pursuing his doctorate. I remember the untold hours of reading,



researching, and writing when I'd rather be resting or watching TV with my wife. It was hard and I'm glad I did it—but I'm also glad it's behind me!

It's when we're in the middle of the medical problems, financial crisis, stressful demands, unfair treatment, or anything that tries to keep us up at night that it's difficult to say, “I'm glad I'm going through this, because God has planned this for my good.” That's why hindsight is a powerful gift that we need to regularly practice. In those moments when I question what God is up to, I have learned to reflect on how He has worked in my life in the past. I remember how He got me through the last crisis—and the one before that—oh, and the one before that. He was there then—even when I didn't see His hand—and He is with me even now.

But God didn't just bring me through my problems; He worked through them. Joseph's climatic statement in Genesis 50:20 has been called the Old Testament version of Romans 8:28:

“We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

You may be in a Genesis 37 moment in your life, but if you lean on God even when you don't understand, you will come to a Genesis 50 moment when you can declare: “God planned it for good.”

With each succeeding year of my life, I find it increasingly easier to sing along with David, “I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous abandoned” (Ps. 37:25). God has been faithful to me in the past. He has worked in every situation I have been in, so I choose to trust Him with today.