



MAY 2021

Women of Witness

TIPS TO BETTER YOURSELF

God Has Not Abandoned You

By Erik Raymond

Hardship is almost as common as breathing. The question is not *if* but *when* we will find ourselves in one of the painful pits of life.

At the same time, trials come with uncertainty. *How intense will it be? How long will it last?* This is why the counsel of well-meaning friends is often met with a bit of a grimace. When they say, “*You’ll be okay,*” we want to believe it. But if we are honest, we just don’t know it’s true.

But what if there was something to cling to? Better, what if there was *someone* to fasten our hope on? The Bible teaches us that God not only offers us encouragement when we’re in a difficult pit, but he actually enters into the pit with us to see us through. We really will be okay, because God is with us.

Joseph in the Pits. Imagine the emotional vice Joseph must have endured. After his brothers beat him and sold him to human traffickers, Joseph watched as another painful deal was made. The Ishmaelites sold him to an Egyptian. Separated from his family and his homeland, Joseph would’ve felt alone. This is a surprising place for a man born into a family enveloped in promises, most notably of the closeness of God.

Now he is in a foreign land, cut off from his family, and — it would seem — drifting away from the shoreline of God’s blessings. Joseph is in a pit, and he seems to be very much alone. The writer of Genesis wants us to see and feel the bleakness, if only to show us God’s purpose in it.

God’s Purpose in the Pits. We might be tempted to conclude from his circumstances that God was either angry with Joseph or had abandoned him altogether. Likewise, when we encounter difficulty, we may think that God has disappeared, or that he is displeased with us.

But what if the trials were intended to reveal something else? What if God means to show us the preciousness of his love, while strengthening our faith? Later in the story, we read these words: “The Lord was with Joseph” (Genesis 39:2). God had not abandoned him in the pit. Far from it. God was actually with him.

What's more, God was doing something with him. This pit was purposeful, not pointless. We are instructed throughout the Bible not to dismiss personal hardship as something bad. Instead, with eyes of faith, we are to see beneath the surface, where God is making us more like himself. James instructs believers to joyfully embrace these trials because they are providentially used to strengthen our faith and make us mature (James 1:2–4).

How God Gives Humility. The psalmist reminds us that God used affliction as a tool to make him obedient (Psalm 119:67).

In Joseph's life, we see God working this type of change into him. Reading through the Joseph narrative, we are struck by the moral compass of this man. But where did he receive his training? How did God work in him the humility that trembles before God and clings to his promises? Let's remember that it was the younger Joseph who not only lacked considerable tact, but also humility, when talking to his brothers about dreams (Genesis 37:1–11). God humbled him through these trials. But not only did God humble Joseph, he also showed him the preciousness of divine love and faithfulness in real time (Genesis 39:21–23).

Far from being abandoned by God in a pointless pit, Joseph was actually right where God wanted him. It was here in this surprising station that God worked to change Joseph, even as he cheered him with his nearness.

God Is with You. When we read through and consider the life of a man like Joseph, we're not watching another powerful documentary on Netflix. Sure, there are facts and details to observe about that time and culture. But there is much to apply to our own lives. As believers, we are clinging to the same God who speaks *to us* through his word and promises to work through *our* circumstances for his glory and our good (Romans 8:28).

Consider how powerful this truth really is. There is nothing random about your life. Every hand is dealt by divine providence. Every circumstance we find ourselves in — whether good or bad — is actually working together for our everlasting good. The difficulties are not pointless but purposeful. God is making us more like himself by them and through them.

But God is not only changing us through this. God is also with us through this. He enters into our struggles. He cheers us with his presence, shows us kindness, sympathizes with our weakness, and refreshes us with his word. We never sink lower than Christ can descend. We can never outrun his loving sovereignty. He joins us in the pit, to give us more of himself.

Whatever Pit You're In. What can help the one who cannot cry another tear? What consoles you when there are no other medical options? How can you be comforted when relationships are shattered? Who can you turn to when many falsely accuse you? How can you be strengthened to stand when tragedy has buckled your knees?

When the trials of life feel like they have you rushing uncontrollably down a river of despair, cling to the presence and purposefulness of God. This is not an accident, and you are not alone. You are not abandoned. God is with you in this pit, for his glory and your good.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-has-not-abandoned-you>