

Sunday

# Witnessing in Times of Personal Struggle

Learning from Joseph

**J**ane Marzewski (“Nightbirde”) exuded quiet confidence and peace as she stood on the stage and told the judges her story. She was a singer-songwriter, she was 30 years old, and the cancer she had been battling off and on for several years had metastasized. As she sang her original song, the judges and audience wiped tears from their eyes. When the judges expressed their awe at her positivity, she remarked simply, “You can’t wait until life isn’t hard anymore before you decide to be happy.”<sup>1</sup>

Jane openly shared her faith and her struggle with cancer on her blog. “Even on days when I’m not so sick, sometimes I go lie on the mat in the afternoon light to listen for Him. I know it sounds crazy, and I can’t really explain it, but God is in there—even now. I have heard it said that some people can’t see God because they won’t look low enough, and it’s true. If you can’t see Him, look lower. God is on the bathroom floor.”<sup>2</sup>

Have you ever thought that it would be better to wait until you are healthy or successful before witnessing to others about God? It’s easy for us to think that we need to have everything “together” before we share the gospel with others, but several stories in the Bible show us just how effective it is to witness through the chaos and struggle of our daily lives, even in the most difficult of circumstances. Joseph is a prime example.

As the older son of his father’s favorite wife, Joseph was privileged and loved above his brothers. By 17 he had been gifted a beautiful robe by his father and received prophetic dreams that predicted his rulership over his brothers and even his father. It was too much for his brothers. When presented with the opportunity for revenge, they seized Joseph, took off the offending robe, and threw him into an empty cistern. Then they sold him to a passing caravan of traders destined for Egypt.

## **FROM SLAVE TO TRUSTED SERVANT**

Joseph survived the trip to Egypt and was sold by the Ishmaelites/Midianites to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. But “the Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man” (Gen. 39:2).<sup>3</sup> Joseph may have been forced to leave his family, but he

## Joseph may have been forced to leave his family, but he brought his faith with him.

brought his faith with him. He did not hide his beliefs from Potiphar, and while Potiphar may not have worshipped Joseph's God, he saw and understood that God was with Joseph and that his household benefited from the blessings God poured out on him.

This prompted Potiphar to promote Joseph to overseer of his entire house. God acknowledged this positive treatment of Joseph: "From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field" (verse 5).

### FROM PRISONER TO RULER

Unfortunately, Joseph's success did not last. Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him, then accused him of a terrible crime. Although he was innocent, Joseph was cast into prison. Joseph could have allowed himself to despair. Who would blame him? There seemed no hope of freedom or seeing his family again.

He could have let circumstances diminish his faith and morality, or at least his work ethic! Instead, he continued his habits of faithful service, and God blessed him, even

in prison. "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. . . . And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed" (verses 21-23).

Joseph's interaction with the chief cupbearer and the chief baker reveals his sympathy and respect toward his fellow prisoners. Ellen White wrote that "it was the part he acted in the prison—the integrity of his daily life and his sympathy for those who were in trouble and distress—that opened the way for his future prosperity and honor."<sup>4</sup>

His behavior during a time of personal darkness was a witness to those around him and an example for us today. "Every ray of light that we shed upon others is reflected upon ourselves. Every kind and sympathizing word spoken to the sorrowful, every act to relieve the oppressed, and every gift to the needy, if prompted by a right motive, will result in blessings to the giver."<sup>5</sup>

It was several years before Joseph was released from prison, and even after he was promoted to governor of Egypt it was some time before he was reunited with his family. When he finally revealed himself to his brothers, he declared to them: "Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5).

When he was first sold into slavery, Joseph could not have known that he would become governor of Egypt or that his leadership and God-given wisdom would secure the well-being of his family and all of Egypt. He could not see how God would use the terrible situation he was in. But Joseph did not wait until he was overseer of Potiphar's house or governor of Egypt to be faithful to God or give Him the

glory for his successes. Indeed, it was *because* of his witness that Potiphar and Pharaoh recognized the true source of Joseph's success.

He did not give up even when his circumstances worsened. Instead, he used every opportunity to live the faith of his fathers, bringing light to the very darkest corners of Egyptian society. As a slave Joseph could speak with common members of Potiphar's household and possibly other estates. In prison he encountered inmates of various backgrounds. And as governor he mingled with leaders. God used Joseph to reach every social strata.

Perhaps you find yourself "on the bathroom floor," like Jane, or "in the pit," like Joseph. You might wonder how you could possibly be a witness during a time of personal darkness and pain. Yet even as you cling to God in your struggle, your perseverance and faith may be an inspiration to others. ☺

<sup>1</sup> Michael Foust, "AGT's 'Nightbirde' Dies at 31: Her Legacy Is the 'Strength She Found in Jesus,'" *Christian Headlines*, Feb. 22, 2022, <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/agts-nightbirde-dies-at-31-her-legacy-is-the-strength-she-found-in-jesus.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Nightbirde, "God Is on the Bathroom Floor," Mar. 9, 2021, <https://www.nightbirde.co/blog/2021/9/27/god-is-on-the-bathroom-floor>.

<sup>3</sup> Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 218.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

## Questions for Reflection:

1. How can you be a witness where you are right now?
2. Think about a time someone was a blessing to you. How did God use them to bless you?
3. What may keep you from committing to proclaim God's grace in your life, no matter what the circumstances are?