



Can you imagine if our present quarantine lasted 11 years!? I suspect by that point most of us would have memorized every line of the three trilogies of Star Wars, painted every wall and ceiling in our homes, and adorned our heads with the most amazing set of dreadlocks! In the Bible, we encounter a man who was most likely “quarantined” for a similar length of time. *Alone*. In fact, his family had no idea that he was still alive. No fine dining experiences - not even a carry-out meal. Limited social interaction as a foreigner serving as a slave and then eventually closed off from the rest of the world as a prisoner. Sold into slavery by his own brothers at 17 years of age, Joseph will not be set free until he is 30 years old. With all his hopes and promises seemingly shattered, Joseph faced circumstances outside of his control.

How does a young man, such as Joseph, persevere over such a long period of time? After all, in just two months, I am ready to paint my face blue and run up and down the streets yelling, “Freedom”! How did Joseph do it? Answers to this important question can be found in Genesis 45:5-8. In the heart-wrenching scene when Joseph reveals

his identity to his brothers, he displays the very essence of the word perseverance:

- *Joseph **recognized** that God is always present.* One scholar makes this astute observation: “The story [of Joseph] assumes that the presence of God does not mean the total exclusion of adversity; nor does adversity necessarily mean the absence of God” (Jacobs, “The Conceptual Dynamics of Good and Evil,” *JSOT* 27.3 [2003], 328). Later in the New Testament, Stephen declares: “The patriarchs, because they were jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt. But God was with him, and rescued him from all his troubles, granting him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh” (Acts 7:9-10). While we mourn the loss of lives from COVID-19 and the havoc it has created globally, we must not forget that God is still on the throne. Additionally, the Lord is with us; He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us - even in a pandemic!
- *Joseph **understood** that God is sovereign.* Four times Joseph mentions “God,” and three times Joseph reminds his brothers that the Lord was responsible for sending him to Egypt. The story of Joseph clearly refutes scholars who argue that God is not involved in evil, and who reject the notion that God ordains then uses evil to accomplish His good purposes. “God was not uninvolved; rather, He was orchestrating all that occurred!” (B. Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism*, 199-200). The life of Joseph is evidence that nothing in life is trivial and meaningless according to God’s plan.
- *Joseph **praised** the Lord for His provisions.* In Psalm 80:1, the Lord unveils His great care for His people through the life of Joseph. The psalmist declares, “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!” Joseph’s story is yet another exhibit of how God will be faithful to honor His covenant with Abraham. Indeed, God had orchestrated the events in order to maintain His credibility and ultimately provide glory for Himself (see Psalm 105:16-22). If nothing else, these past couple of months have allowed us to experience the Lord’s provision in a unique and wonderful way. Additionally, our present circumstances assure us

of God's future provision - the promise of dwelling with our Lord and His saints for all eternity.

As days turned into years, Joseph clung to the truths that God was always with him, that God was sovereign, and that He provides. These truths allowed Joseph to declare to his brothers, “. . . you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose” (Gen 50:20). It is Joseph's willingness to act on these truths that this man is included in the great “hall of faith” of Hebrews 11 (see verse 22).

Hebrews 12 teaches that Joseph also serves as a member of the “great cloud of witnesses”. These witnesses encourage us, even in the midst of our quarantine, to, “. . . lay aside every sin that clings so closely and run with perseverance the race that has been set before us” (Heb 12:1). And thus, whether it is 11 years or the next 11 minutes, we are called to emulate the lives of such men as Joseph - men who persevered in their commitment to the Lord.

### **Day by Day**

by Carolina Sandell Berg, trans. by Andrew L. Skoog

Day by day, and with each passing moment,  
Strength I find to meet my trials here;  
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,  
I've no cause for worry or for fear.  
He, whose heart is kind beyond all measure,  
Gives unto each day what He deems best,  
Lovingly its part of pain and pleasure,  
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

Every day the Lord Himself is near me,  
With a special mercy for each hour;  
All my cares He fain would bear and cheer me,  
He whose name is Counsellor and Pow'r.  
The protection of His child and treasure  
Is a charge that on Himself He laid;

“As thy days, thy strength shall be in measure,”  
This the pledge to me He made.

Help me then, in every tribulation,  
So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,  
That I lose not faith’s sweet consolation,  
Offered me within Thy holy Word.  
Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting,  
E’er to take, as from a father’s hand,  
One by one, the days, the moments fleeting,  
Till with Christ the Lord I stand.