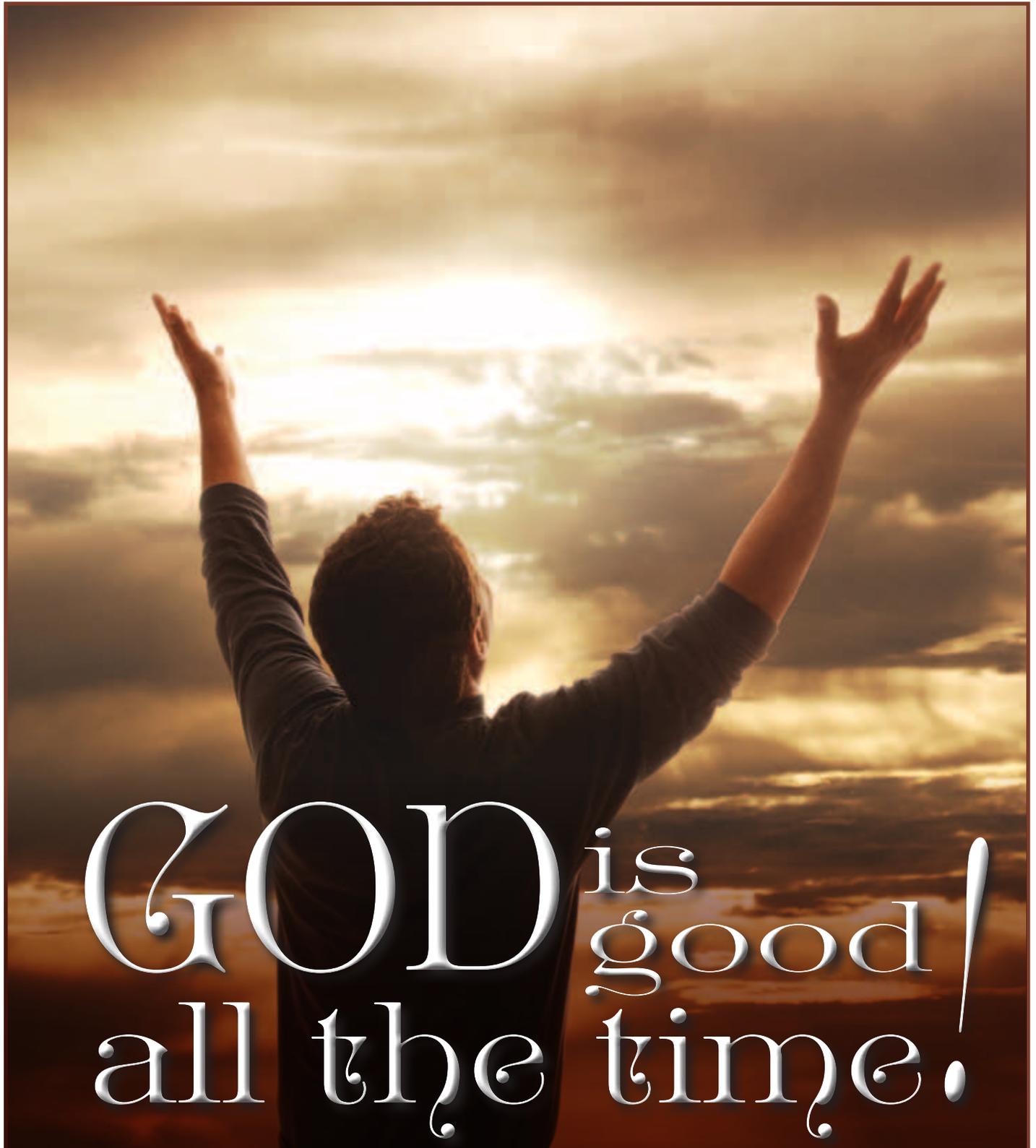


ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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GOD is good!
all the time!

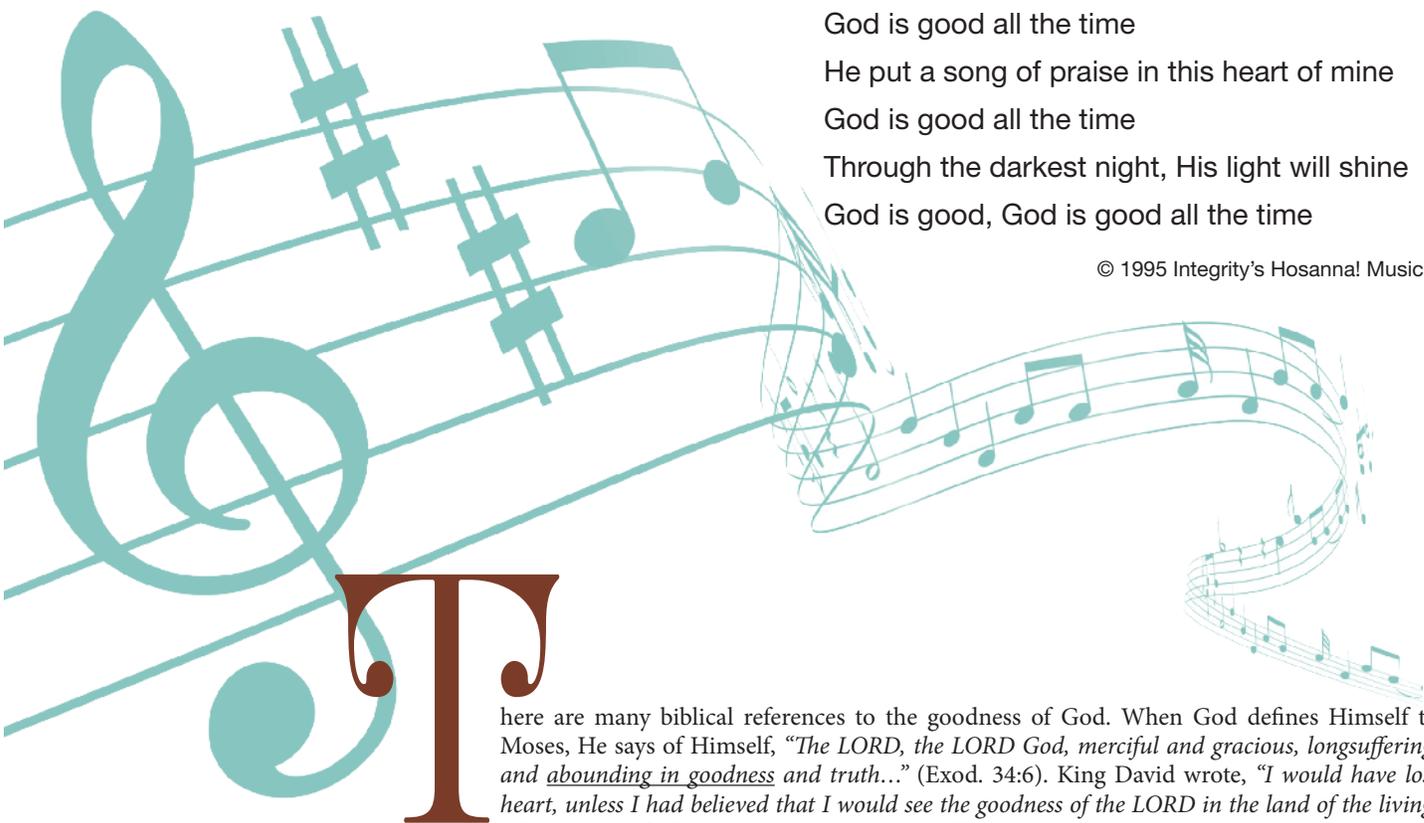
GOD is good!

all the time!

I love the song “God is Good” written by Don Moen.

God is good all the time
He put a song of praise in this heart of mine
God is good all the time
Through the darkest night, His light will shine
God is good, God is good all the time

© 1995 Integrity's Hosanna! Music



There are many biblical references to the goodness of God. When God defines Himself to Moses, He says of Himself, “*The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth...*” (Exod. 34:6). King David wrote, “*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: Wait I say on the LORD*” (Ps. 27:13–14).

One of my favorite scriptural promises says, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*” (Rom. 8:28).

I have heard it said, “If it is good, it is God, and if it is bad, it is not God.” I wholeheartedly agree with the first half of this statement. God is always good! However, our human understanding of good and bad may not match God’s understanding. For example, as a child I viewed the discipline I received as “bad.” It was uncomfortable—why, it even hurt! But from my parents’ point of view, even though difficult, discipline was a good part of my maturing process. In a similar fashion, we don’t always understand the events of our lives. Sometimes when we are experiencing painful situations, we find it difficult to see that God is working for good in our lives.

The Lord God...
is abounding
in goodness...

Exodus 34:6



Subbotina Anna/Shutterstock.com

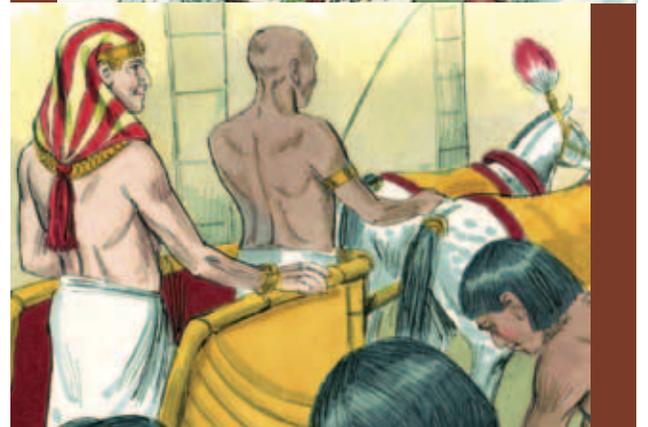
Joseph

A perfect example of this occurs in the biblical account of Joseph. What drama, pain, and victory are encapsulated in this story! He was the favored son of Jacob and his brothers hated him. *“Now Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him”* (Gen. 37:3–4). To add insult to injury, Joseph had dreams which portrayed his brothers bowing to him. The Scripture says that after he shared the dreams, *“...they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words”* (Gen. 37:8).

The plot thickens and his brothers plan to murder him, but at the last minute sell him into slavery. Imagine the shock! The pampered, much loved son becomes a slave. Oh, the pain and loneliness he must have suffered! The psalmist tells of his pain, *“He sent a man before them—Joseph—who was sold as a slave. They hurt his feet with fetters, he was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him”* (Ps. 105:17–19). Seventeen-year-old Joseph was suddenly plunged into the darkness of slavery. Later he was falsely accused of violating his master’s wife and thrown into prison. How much lower could he sink?

While in prison he meets two officials who worked with Pharaoh, and interprets dreams for them which are fulfilled literally. Two long years follow this event and Joseph continues to suffer in prison. Then, Pharaoh has two dreams which he understands are important. He seeks help in determining their meaning from the magicians and wise men of Egypt. But none of them can interpret the dreams. The chief butler then remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh about him. Joseph is brought before Pharaoh and is able to interpret the dreams. He also gives some advice to Pharaoh, who elevates him to second in the kingdom. Joseph is then given the task of storing grain for the coming famine. Through careful planning he was able to save the nation from starvation, and also to save the lives of his entire family.

Joseph was in the right place at the right time, with the right knowledge and wisdom to bring relief to nations in a horrific situation. God cared so much that he gave warning dreams to an idol-worshipping king. Just as the dreams were interpreted, seven years of famine came upon the world and it was a desperate situation—life and death! But Egypt was prepared for the disaster because God gave dreams to a king and their interpretation to Joseph; the king heeded the warning and preparations were made for the difficult times to come.



Photos by www.sweetpublishing.com



Times of Desperation

We live in a world which is facing desperate times. Poverty, dwindling water supplies, drug and alcohol abuse, wars, financial collapse, crime—all are plaguing our planet. These are times of shifting and change, just like Egypt in Joseph's day. Imagine, that once fertile land was going to deteriorate in seven years. God sent Joseph to be His agent to bring provision. He was filled with the wisdom of God. Even the idol-worshipping Pharaoh saw this (Gen. 41:38–39).

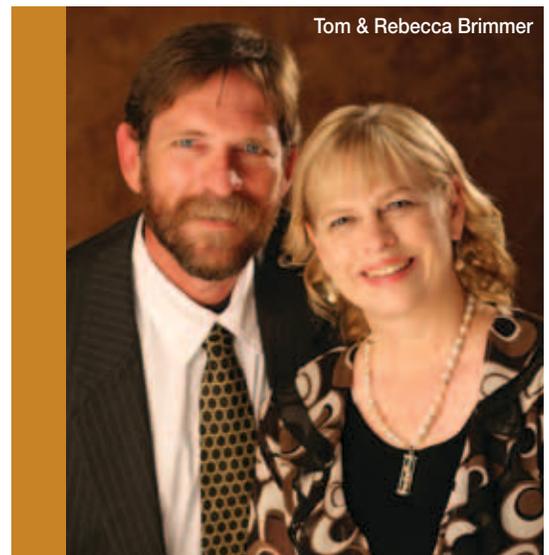
I am sure that Joseph would never have decided to move to Egypt as a slave, be falsely accused by his master's wife, and be put in prison for years. I certainly would not. We know that as a youth God had given Joseph hints of his future stature in the form of dreams. But the biblical record never says that Joseph understood what he would endure before the fulfillment of those dreams!

Many years ago my husband Tom and I experienced a call of God. We understood that our future was to be in the Land of Israel. We were young (early 20s) and didn't understand God's ways of doing things, or His timing. We thought we would be in Israel within six months at the latest—but it took eight years. During that time we did a variety of things. Often our jobs and activities seemed totally unrelated to our call. We didn't understand that God was preparing us for our future. We experienced frustration and confusion. Nearly 30 years later, we look back on that time and realize that God was teaching us things that we had to know before we could be effective in our calling. Looking back now, all those zigs and zags our lives took look like a straight line. Everything we learned, and the character which we developed during this waiting and maturing time, was needed for our successful service in Israel.

After Joseph's elevation to second-in-command in Egypt, I am sure he also looked back and saw the hand of God on his life. All the difficulties suddenly made sense—they brought him to the place where God would use him to save many lives. After being re-united with his brothers he says to them: *"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt"* (Gen. 45:5–7).

Later, after the death of Jacob, Joseph's brothers were afraid that Joseph would still hate them for their actions, but he again says, *"Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive"* (Gen. 50:19–20). God meant it for good.

As I have read this account, I have been considering our present day reality, and am asking some deep questions.



Tom & Rebecca Brimmer



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What is God's Plan for Our Time?

In difficult times God, in His goodness and mercy, always has those He raises up to be like Joseph, bringing answers to the hurting. Everyone recognizes the seriousness of our times—the problems are readily apparent. But, who is God calling to be part of the answer? Who does He use? When the chief butler described Joseph to Pharaoh, he described an unlikely candidate for the leadership role he eventually filled. Joseph was a prisoner, a foreigner, a youth, and a slave. God must have been moving on the heart of Pharaoh because he chose this unlikely man to be second-in-command of the entire country. The times may look bleak to you. You may not be happy with the leadership of your country. Just remember that God is able to move the hearts of kings—even idol-worshipping pagan kings.

...for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.

1 Samuel 2:30

Humility and Integrity

When Joseph is brought before him, Pharaoh says, "...I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream to interpret it" (Gen. 41:15). Notice how Joseph responds: "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (Gen. 41:16). What humility. And what integrity—he could have been looking out for himself—this could have been his "get out of jail free card!" After all, isn't he the mighty dream interpreter? But Joseph acts in humility and integrity and gives the credit to God. Not some of the credit—all the credit.

Daniel is another example. When asked to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he said: "There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days...But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living ..." (Dan. 2:28, 30). God says "...for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30). God is able to use anyone who is willing to give Him the credit. God is looking for men and women who know Him, walk in humility, and act with integrity.

I don't know what will be required of us in the days to come. I am convinced that these are urgent times and each of us must search our own heart and ask God what assignment He has for us in these critical times. Are you willing to work for Him and give Him all the credit? Are you willing to spend time with Him so He can impart wisdom and knowledge to you—even if it is not comfortable? I believe that there are many being called for important roles in these days.

However, beware; there will be a time of preparation required. You may not understand how the difficulties you have endured, or perhaps are enduring now, are preparing you. We didn't understand during the eight years of waiting. I doubt that Joseph understood why slavery, false accusation, and prison were his lot. Yet God used all those things to bring him to the place where he was able to bring deliverance to his family, his country, and the entire region. God has Bridges for Peace preparing food to feed the people of Israel in times of crisis. We aren't doing this because we are wonderful. We are just willing vessels, happy to be part of God's plan. It is God's plan—we are just His servants.



Bridges for Peace storehouse in Karmiel

Joseph acts with integrity in the face of temptation.



Photos by www.sweetpublishing.com

Keeping Ourselves Spiritually Pure

...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Matt. 28:20b

The second question I am asking is, “How can we keep ourselves from anger, bitterness, and discouragement during the times of preparation?” How was Joseph able to keep his heart pure before God through years of pain and suffering? We know that anger, unforgiveness, and bitterness can block our ability to hear God. Joseph had every reason to be angry, after all his own brothers had sold him into slavery! How was he able to forgive them and trust God? How did he keep from bitterness? Everywhere he turns Joseph finds trouble, even though he has diligently applied himself to be faithful. He acts with integrity in the face of temptation.

We also see Joseph excelling in difficult situations. Even in prison, God gave Joseph favor, “*But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph’s authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper*” (Gen. 39:21–23).

Joseph is not the only example in Scripture of a righteous man placed in prison. Remember the story of Paul and Silas? After being beaten, they were thrown in prison, and fastened in stocks. At midnight they were praying and singing hymns to God when an earthquake miraculously freed them. Instead of taking advantage of the situation, they acted in integrity and remained in place. The jailer was so impressed with their character that he became a believer. Daniel’s friends were thrown into a fiery furnace, and miraculously delivered by God. Daniel himself was thrown into a den of lions but God shut the lions’ mouths and he was not harmed.

As I reflect on these accounts, the first thing that I perceive is that no matter how difficult the circumstances, God will always be with His children. Yeshua (Jesus) said, “...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20b). The ArtScroll Jewish commentary on Genesis 39:21 says, “Even in prison. This was yet a further manifestation of God’s grace, for whenever an individual of Israel suffers bondage, the Shechinah [presence of God] accompanies him, if one may so express it, as it is written ‘I (God) will be with him in trouble’ (Ps. 91:15).”

The prophet Isaiah also communicates this truth, “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned...Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west...*” (Isa. 43:1b-2, 5).

Preparation Required

God doesn't promise a life without struggle, conflict, or persecution. He does promise that He will be with us in the midst of the prison, lion's den, and fiery furnace. We must develop a heart attitude that recognizes that no matter what our circumstances, God is planning everything for good. As Joseph said after the horrendous events that happened to him—"God meant it for good." Twenty-two years Joseph endured before he understood God's plan. During that time God was with Joseph. He matured Joseph and helped him to be an overcomer. I pray that life's struggles will not overcome you, but that you will walk in faithfulness and trust God in the midst of the storms you pass through.

We need to learn to not despise the time of preparation. Unless we know God and His Word, we will not be able to stand when the days are difficult. Without the lessons the Lord taught us during eight long years of waiting, we would have been ill equipped to deal with our life and ministry in Israel. Joseph undoubtedly grew up learning about the Almighty and His mighty deeds. He recognized that God was the one who gave him the ability to interpret dreams. God prepared Joseph his whole life, including the time as a slave and the time in prison, to be ready and able to do His will at the right time.

God will
always keep
His promises,
but you may not
receive them
if you give up.

Rev. Jess Gibson

Endurance

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4, NASB).

The person who overcomes is the one who faithfully keeps moving forward, as God leads, despite the difficulties that life brings. I have heard our beloved Chairman of the Board, Rev. Jess Gibson, say that God will always keep His promises, but you may not receive them if you give up. Too many believers give up when the path gets rough. Joseph could have given up. He could have lain in his prison cell feeling sorry for himself. But that is not what he did. He made himself useful to the prison warden and continued to learn valuable lessons, even while in prison. He endured long years of incarceration before seeing the fulfillment of the dreams God had given.

Rabbi Daniel S. Wolk wrote about the "caper phenomenon." The caper is a wild bush that grows in Israel, often springing forth from walls. Rabbi Wolk had questioned a gardener about a caper bush that he felt marred the beautiful garden at the French Consulate. He was told that you cannot stop a caper bush. No matter how much you cut it back, it will re-emerge. In his book, *The Time is Now*, Wolk quotes the gardener: "You cannot kill the caper. Each time you cut them back they return. With more force. I have seen them split sidewalks in two. The caper never gives up. Against all odds. How can you help but admire the plant's desire to live? How? Maybe more of us should follow the caper."

From that day, Rabbi Wolk says that he "became an advocate of the caper phenomenon: an ability to seize upon the slightest opportunity and push forward in life." He goes on, "Each of us experiences a period when our days seem too heavy to bear; when the life-giving forces of laughter, love, contentment evaporate and are cut away at the roots. Where do we find the inspiration to come back? From within." He concludes by saying, "We cannot purge life of sorrow but we can triumph over that sorrow. The caper says, 'Cut me back. Sever my branches, but I will re-emerge on another day.' We may learn from the caper."

Cut me back. Sever my branches,
but I will re-emerge on another day.

The Caper



Photo by Daniel Kirchhevel

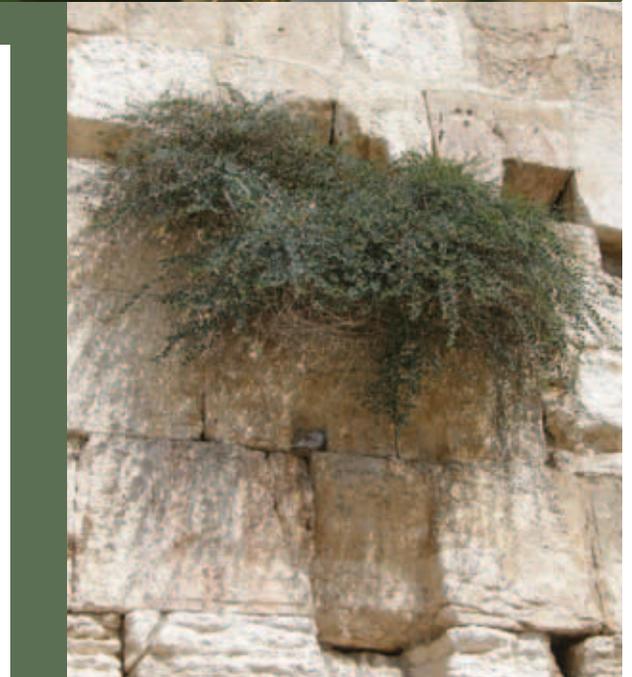


Photo by Rimonah Traub

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The same God who created the tenacious caper bush, created you and me with the ability to bounce back. As believers, we can rest assured that our God is not weak, nor absent. We are not alone in our times of trouble. The Almighty God is with us. “*Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of Hosts*” (Zech 4:6b). His master plan may not fit our idea of good timing. It may not seem good to us as we walk the valleys of despair. But, just as in the example of Joseph, God means it for the good. Yes, all things will work together for good—in God’s timing and way.

God is the Answer

The answer to the woes of this world is God Almighty! His master plan is written in the Bible. In Israel we sometimes see signs saying “We want Moshiach (Messiah) now.” The signs are right—the world needs the Messiah. In Genesis 41:14, Joseph is brought quickly before Pharaoh. The NKJV says “brought him quickly;” a Jewish translation says “they rushed him.” The Jewish sage Sforno says, “Every case of Divine salvation comes hastily and unexpectedly. Similarly, the coming of Messiah will be sudden and hasty as is stated in Malachi 3:1: ‘Behold I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold He is coming,’ says the LORD of Hosts.”

I join with millions of Christians who cry “even so, come Lord Jesus!” In the meantime I pray that you will experience the presence of God ministering to you, leading you, calling you, and equipping you for service. May He find us faithfully doing His will when He comes!

Rebecca J. Brimmer
International President and CEO, Bridges for Peace

Yes, all things will work
together for good—
in God’s timing and way.



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All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Bridges for Peace is a Jerusalem-based, Bible-believing Christian organization supporting Israel and building relationships between Christians and Jews worldwide through education and practical deeds expressing God’s love and mercy.

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