

February 24, 2021

Read Genesis 39:1-6

Key verse: Genesis 39:2a

The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man.

The Lord Be with You

There have been times in my life when I've wished that God would just appear to me in some miraculous way so that my doubts would be assuaged and I would *know* that God is real. Thankfully, after many years of struggling with faith I have just come to accept that God is with me as he is with everyone. Some folks know this; many don't.

The story of Joseph (the Old Testament Joseph) illustrates how we can easily ignore God's presence and thus ignore God's counsel. Joseph's father Israel clearly favored his young son over his older brothers, creating jealousy and resentment. Joseph himself showed little regard for his brothers' feelings when he tells them of a dream where events suggest that they will all bow down to their little brother. And Joseph's enraged brothers sell him into slavery and tell their father that he has been killed by wild animals. Joseph ends up in a foreign land, far from his family, and enslaved to an Egyptian official.

God does not miraculously appear to anyone in this story. There is no mention of anyone praying. There are no signs or visions of God. But the narrator explains that "the Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man." True, he was a slave who was wrongly imprisoned twice, but Joseph came to know God's presence amidst his tragic circumstances. In the end Joseph acknowledges that God had intended for him to endure suffering and hardships in order for him to rise to a position of power that enabled him to save many lives.

Most of us will go through life without having any extraordinary encounters with God, but we can find grow more conscious of his presence nonetheless. In fact it's often under the worst of circumstances that we grow more aware that God abides with us. And while being conscious of God's presence does not guarantee that we will rise to any position of power and wealth as Joseph did, we will be successful by God's standard of success.

Prayer: Almighty God, help us to know your presence with us. When tragedy strikes, when disappointments and hardships engulf us, remind us that you are there with us, and as long as we remember that we can remain hopeful. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.