

JOSEPH: Navigating the Maze of God's Providence

The primary lesson learned from Joseph is God's providence. The word *providence* is not found in the Biblical account of Joseph's life, nor is it found anywhere else in the Bible, but the word captures one of the most important truths about God seen throughout the Bible. Providence comes from the Latin *provideo, pro* meaning "before" or "on behalf of" and *video* meaning "to see." Providence is God foreseeing all things before they occur and then using that knowledge on behalf of His child to guarantee their provision & protection in accomplishing God's plan. God's child will never encounter a need, crisis, adversity, or enemy that God did not foresee and already provide the answer. In the life of God's child, God permits only what He can use to advance His plan, and prevents everything that would derail His plan. God's providence ensures there are no random events in the life of God's child; that when there seems to be no rhyme or reason for what is happening, behind it all is God watching over His child and working for their good.

God does all this working quietly behind the scenes, out of sight, in the shadows. God's providence does not involve supernatural interventions but God working in and through ordinary circumstances and people to ensure the preservation of His people for the accomplishment of His plan. In Joseph's story no sea divides for God's child to walk across on dry land, no manna falls from heaven to provide food, no lions' jaws are held shut by angels, no one walks into and then walks out of a fiery furnace, no angels are sent to destroy the opposing force, no one walks on water or is healed or raised from the dead. Instead, God accomplished His plan for Joseph working through the daily decisions and actions of both the good and the evil people in the story. God's providence achieved God's predetermined outcome without using miracles, and that is the miracle of all miracles.

God's providence does present a great challenge of faith. For example, it is easy, knowing Joseph's story from beginning to end, to connect all the dots and see God's providence. We see the reason behind every heartache & delay, that the glory in the end far outweighed the years of suffering. We conclude God is great and God is good! But for Joseph during the years of suffering, God's providence was shrouded in mystery, his life made no sense, he felt trapped in a menacing maze of darkness, and yet, maintained faith in God.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM JOSEPH

1. When persecution, pain, & perplexity come and you feel lost in the maze of God's providence, and there appears to be no rhyme or reason for what is happening, rest in God's _____ (Genesis 45: 4-11 & 50:15-21 with Romans 8: 28-29).

2. Accept the fact many things happen in life that will never be understood until God completes the story. Therefore, _____ in God is required so you do not _____ the book on God before the story is _____ (James 5: 11).

3. The key to successfully navigating the maze of God's providence is to keep _____ God even though there appears to be no _____ (Genesis 39: 9b).

4. Hope is kept alive in the maze of God's providence by what you choose to focus on. Will you focus on the _____ of your circumstances or the _____ of God breaking His promises? (Psalm 105: 16-24)

5. The way out of the maze is not by focusing on finding the way out, but expressing _____ to the people you encounter while in the maze (Philippians 2: 3-11).