

Those who are called by God are trained by God.
February 25, 2018 Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

I love to read inspiring stories of people who have overcome great obstacles and moved forward to gain great victories. There are many of those heroes in the Bible and they have been a source of encouragement to me in my life. There have been many heroes in our history that also overcame hardships and became an inspiration to others. Abraham Lincoln has always been someone that I have had great respect for because of the tribulations and barriers that were all a part of his life, yet he set his goal high and obtained it. His perseverance, courage and upright character led him to the path from poverty to the presidency of the United States.

There is a great difference between the world's formula for success and the way God chooses to elevate a person. God uses creative personal ways just suited for the individual that molds and shapes character that God uses to show his power, glory and wisdom.

If you look at the life of Moses, you will learn that few men had a greater responsibility placed on their shoulder than the man, Moses. God gave Moses the command to lead the Israelites out from under the slavery of Egypt into the promised land of Canaan.

Let's look at the total picture of this life's journey of Moses. In Exodus 1:22, Pharaoh commanded all his people to cast every male baby into the Nile River, but every female baby was spared. There was a Hebrew woman who bore a son and she saw that he was a beautiful baby so she defied the king and hid him for three months. After that she realized that she could no longer hide him so she made a water proof basket and laid the baby in it and placed it in the reeds near the water where the princess came to wash. His sister watched from a distance and when the princess drew near, had compassion on the baby, Miriam asked her if she would like a Hebrew woman to care for the child. Thus Moses' mother was paid to take care of her son until the day that the princess took Moses to be raised in the royal house of Pharaoh. The princess named him "Moses" for he was drawn out of the water. See Exodus 2. Still Moses had no vision for success as he grew up though he was the adopted son of Pharaoh and enjoyed a certain degree of privilege from that position. Moses tried to protect his people by his own power, but when he killed an Egyptian and buried him in the sand while trying to defend a Hebrew man, he realized that his life was in danger and he ran away. Neither he nor his people benefitted from his actions. It took years for God' to prepare Moses for the task that God had in mind for Moses. God always clarifies our responsibility so we can respond with obedience to his will. He will never leave us nor forsake us and He didn't leave Moses even though he started out being hotheaded and impulsive. Moses fled to the land of Midian and because he protected some ladies from some shepherds that were bullying them, their father, the priest, when he heard their story, invited Moses to live with them. He worked for the priest as a shepherd on a mountain and eventually married one of the priest's daughters. God used a burning bush to get Moses' attention. See Exodus 3:3-9. One day after 40

years, God appeared in a burning bush and Moses went to investigate to see why the bush was burning, but was not being destroyed. There God spoke his name and told him that he was to deliver God's people from the bondage of Egypt. This was the life's mission that Moses had wanted to pursue many years before but had given up on it. God protected Moses, gave him words to speak to the Pharaoh and even gave him his brother Aaron to speak for him so they would have success. There were obstacles along the way, but Moses by this time was willing to listen, to obey and to be faithful until the job was completed.

God never gives us a responsibility without the resources, the wisdom, and the directions on how to complete the tasks. He guided Moses and Aaron and as they followed the instructions of the LORD, they were successful. Even Moses' staff was used to show God's power. Everything that God spoke to Moses came to pass and finally the people were driven out of the land by Pharaoh and he came to see the power of God to deliver his people from his cruel hand. There is always a waiting period between the call of God and the fulfillment of that calling. Moses learned that there are no short cuts to fulfilling the calling that God places on his people. God molds and shapes his servants and prepares them for the work that He has planned for them. The person that has a calling of God on their life must have confidence in God's calling and ability; the courage to obey regardless of the cost; and a commitment to Jesus Christ. God gives us limitless opportunities but we must assume responsibility and obey His call. Through prayer and reading of God's word, a person is drawn to opportunities that will open up and as we are obedient in taking care of the small things, God will give us bigger challenges and opportunities to serve him. Look at Luke 16:10. It says that those who are faithful in the small things will be faithful in the larger responsibilities and he that is dishonest in small things will be dishonest if given greater tasks. One of the most cherished words that God will say to those who endure to the end is found in Matthew 25:21-30. To those who have been faithful and productive, God says "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things; I will make you a ruler over many things."

If you study the life of Joseph, you find some remarkable characteristics that he had.

Joseph, as a young lad, had a dream that he would be honored over his family. He spoke about these dreams and his brothers hated him for he was the eleventh son of Jacob's twelve sons and he was favored above them. Jacob honored him with a coat of many colors and his brothers were jealous of Joseph. His dreams of ruling over them infuriated them. Even his father wondered about them. When the opportunity presented itself, the brothers threw Joseph in a dry pit and threatened to kill him. One of the brothers suggested that instead of killing him that they should sell him to some traders that were heading into Egypt that happened to be coming by. Joseph pleaded and begged, but no mercy was shown to him. He was stripped of his coat and later the brothers tore the coat to pieces and after killing a lamb, dipped the coat pieces in the blood and persuaded their father that a wild beast had devoured Joseph. Joseph was faithful to God through the trials that came to him.

in the land of Egypt. See Genesis 39. He was bought by Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officers and captain of the guard. Because of Joseph's integrity, he was made manager of all of the affairs of Potiphar and God prospered him because of Joseph. After a while Potiphar's wife noticed Joseph and tried to get him to commit adultery with her. He refused and day after day she pressed him to sin against God and her husband with her. Joseph refused her advances telling her that he would not sin against God and he would not do anything to hurt her husband who had entrusted him with all of his possessions except his wife. But one day when no one else was in the house except the woman and Joseph, she grabbed him by his coat and tried to force him to lie with her. He fled leaving his coat behind. She screamed and lied about Joseph causing her husband to get angry and he sent Joseph to prison. Verse 39 says this: But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy and he gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. Joseph was placed in charge over all the prisoners in the dungeon. The LORD was with him and everything that he did, God prospered. While he was there the king's butler and baker were thrown into prison and they each had a dream. When Joseph came in to them the next morning, they both looked downcast and he asked them what was wrong. They said that they each had a dream and didn't know what they meant. After listening to the dreams, Joseph told them the interpretation of each of the dreams. In three days, one would get reinstated in his position before the king and the other would be hanged. Just as he predicted, the chief butler was given back his position and the baker was hanged. Joseph asked the chief butler to speak to the king on his behalf, when he was reinstated, but he forgot to mention it to the king until 2 years had passed and then he remembered Joseph. The king had dreamed 'a dream and there was no one to interpret the dream. The butler remembered and spoke to the king about Joseph's ability to interpret dreams. Because of this encounter, Joseph was brought before the king and he interpreted the dream that Pharaoh had. He told him that there would be seven years of plenty and a severe famine would follow the years of plenty. Pharaoh should appoint someone to oversee the gathering of the grains during the productive years and then there would be food enough to sustain the people during the famine years. Pharaoh was pleased with the interpretation and he appointed Joseph to be next to him as a ruler. Joseph was given a beautiful girl to marry and fine clothes to wear and all the best of Egypt were in his hands. The LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph. Genesis 39:2-6.

Joseph's father's house was affected by the famine and Jacob sent the sons to Egypt to buy food. The story of Joseph forgiving his brothers and attributing his journey into Egypt as being planned by God in order to keep his people from starvation is incredible. As I read this account I wonder what I would do if put in that situation. Jealous brothers without a cause, being sold to traders and taken to a land of a different language and culture that I didn't know all by myself; sold on a slave market, treated fairly and given responsibility only to have someone lie about me and though I was innocent, placed in prison. Being a faithful servant to God yet not seeing any deliverance ahead. Doing a person a favor and

asking him to let the king know, that I' am in prison on false charges and asking him to just mention my name to the king only to have the man forget to even mention my name. Two more years in that place was the result. Yet when the king had a dream, in God's timing, Joseph's life was changed forever. He forgave his brothers, had all of 66 members of his family travel to Egypt and he placed them in the land of Goshen where all of them were well taken care of. Joseph was reunited with his father, Jacob, and he and his sons were given a double portion of Jacob's blessing when Jacob called his sons to him to bless them before he died.

Many of us have suffered unfairly in this life and we wonder why God allows certain things to come our way that hurts us and causes us to be disheartened. God allows testing and trials to come our way to mold us and shape us for his purpose and to glorify his name. His power to save, keep and satisfy our souls are in his hands and if we are faithful to him, regardless of what comes our way, we will be amazed at what He will bring forth from our lives. Proverbs 3:5-7 is so pertinent to everyone. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear, the LORD and depart from evil. It shall be health to your naval and marrow to your bones."

God alone can take evil and bring forth goodness. He turned the water into wine; he raised the dead man back to life and presented him to his mother; he healed the sick, fed the multitudes with a little boy's picnic lunch. He can take your circumstances and bring forth victory for you and bless you in ways that are not visible to you today. But you must believe; you must have faith; you must listen to his voice and follow his calling on your life. It is no secret what God can do!!!!

In our lifetime, Chuck Colson, Nixon's advisor, was sent to prison due to the Watergate scandal. Chuck had become a Christian prior to his sentencing and there were Christians that didn't trust him thinking that he was just using Christianity to his advantage. However, God allowed Chuck to go to prison and he established the Prison Fellowship Organization that has benefited prisons around the world. God used Chuck Colson's testimony and his experience to minister and bring the gospel into the dark places of prisons around the world and to use him to spread the gospel to the lost. It wasn't Chuck's intent to minister to prisoners, but God called him, gave him the tools and the opportunities to be His servant to the lost that are incarcerated and all around the world, there are people associated with Prison Fellowship, Angel Tree programs, and reentry programs because of Chuck Colson's determination to follow God's calling on his life.

God is calling men and women today to continue building up his kingdom. Are you willing to answer the call?