

## No Less God Even In Difficult Times

-There once was a little girl, dressed in her Sunday best, running as fast as she could, trying not to be late for Bible class. As she ran she prayed, 'Dear Lord, please don't let me be late! Dear Lord, please don't let me be late!' While she was running and praying, she tripped on a curb and fell, getting her clothes dirty and tearing her dress. She got up, brushed herself off, and started running again! As she ran she once again began to pray, 'Dear Lord, please don't let me be late...But please don't shove me either!' ☺

-This is a funny story... but there are times in our own lives when we ask God for help and it seems like things seem to get worse instead of better. We may have even prayed and then...plop!...we fall into more hardship.

-Let's ask ourselves several questions to see if we've been there:

-Have any of us ever experienced a time of great struggle and wondered where God was? (...)

-When we prayed did it seem to just get worse instead of better? (...)

-Have we ever wondered as we were going through a hard time why we could not hear God, as if He were silent, or we could not see His hand of protection? (...)

-Have we ever struggled with the thoughts that God is not doing what He should do? (...)

-If we were honest with ourselves, we all have felt at least one of these ways at some point in our lives.

-There are times all throughout our lives that things do not go as we plan, but as difficult as this may seem and understand, those are the times it is going as God plans. Sometimes He may be testing our character and refining it to do great things for Him where He chooses to put us and other times His plans may never be known until we see Him in Heaven.

-When these times happen, are we willing to still believe He is God and 100% worthy of our trust and praise? (...)

-There are two stories in His Word that we are going to look at today that describes two events that share the truth that God is no less God even in difficult times and circumstance. From these stories we are going to study how the main characters responded when all seemed hopeless and futile. We are going to learn from their testimonies and hopefully be encouraged that God is there with them in it all and no matter what happens, we will see that He is still God and worthy of our trust and praise.

-Let's begin in Psalm 105, which was written by King David about a time in Jewish history when God took a young man, around 17 years of age, and allowed this young man to go through great hardship for a greater purpose. It is the story of Joseph. He was the favorite son of Jacob who gave him a coat of many colors and he had 11 jealous brothers.

-How many of you remember the story of Joseph? (...)

**-Can anyone tell me what happened to Joseph, the favored son, by the hands of his brothers?** (He became a slave. His brothers sold him in to slavery and they took him to Egypt.)

**-So he goes from being the favored son to a slave in a foreign land, far from home and all that he loves and knows.**

**-Let's continue, once he became a slave in Potiphar's household, can anyone share what happened to him?** (Potiphar's wife accused him of attacking her so Potiphar had him imprisoned.)

**-So he goes from being a favored son to a slave to a prisoner. Do you think he was asking some of those same questions we asked ourselves earlier? (...)** Things just seemed to be getting worse.

**-After he was a prisoner for years, what did he become after interpreting Pharaoh's dream?** (He went from being a slave and prisoner to being second in command under Pharaoh as ruler of Egypt, etc.)

**-So we see God's hand in it all.**

**-Let's read how King David tells the story with God in the forefront. Let's begin by reading our first verse on our Verse Sheet together, #1:** (Psalm 105:16 "*God* called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply.")

**-Let's stop here for a second and let me ask, who called the famine on the land of Canaan?** (God)

**-Do you think that God has every right to do this? Why or why not?** (Yes. He is God. He is the Creator of all that exists and can choose to do with it as He pleases. He chooses the paths of mankind but we all must remember it all leads to eternity with Him. There is sweet comfort in this particular verse because through God's wisdom in doing this, He meant for his people to go down into Egypt to make them a great nation, and the scarcity of food was His method of leading them there. Again, His purpose prevails.)

**-God has the right to do exactly as He desires in our lives because His plans have eternal meaning for all mankind and not just momentary comfort for our individual lives.**

**-Let's continue with the story and read verse #2 together:** (Psalm 105:17-18 "*Then God* sent someone to Egypt ahead of them –Joseph, who was sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar.")

**-Who sent Joseph ahead of them?** (God)

**-Do you think Joseph would have gone on his own free will, seeing that he was the favored son of Jacob and completely spoiled? (...)**

**-Sometimes God has to push us out of our comfort zones and many times it isn't pleasant. Have you found yourself in that place before, where God has pushed you out of your comfort zone? (...)**

**-Even though it may not be pleasant, God has a plan and we can trust Him in it.**

**-What do you think may have been going through Joseph's mind at this time, being a slave, his neck in an iron collar and his feet beaten and put in fetters?** (Maybe

thoughts such as: “Those who I trusted and loved have failed me, where is God, who can I trust and believe in now, there is no hope...” etc.)

**-Did you know that scripture never says that Joseph ever complained?**

**-In fact, there are several verses where he talks about God in his temptations and struggles and he never took his eyes off of God. He said the following Gen. 39:9 when Potiphar’s wife tried to sleep with him while he was still a slave “How then can I do this great wickedness, *and sin against God?*” It was all about God to him.**

**-He also said the following to Pharaoh when he could have taken the credit for interpreting Pharaoh’s dream while still a prisoner, “Do not interpretations belong to *God?* Tell me then, I pray you.” (Gen. 40:8). Again, it was all about God to Joseph. He also said it again at another time in Gen. 41:16 “It is not in me: *God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*”**

**-Joseph knew that no matter what happened to him that God was no less God and was worthy to be trusted and praised in every situation.**

**-Let’s read our next verse together, #3: (Psalm 105:19 “Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the *Lord tested Joseph’s character.*”)**

**-Is God allowed to test His children? Why or why not? (Yes, for He is our Creator and His testing is meant to prove to us that our faith is real. God isn’t doing this to prove it to Himself that our faith is real for He already knows it. But in our testing He is proving to us that our faith is real and that we are truly His children and that no trial will overcome our faith. It makes our character stronger.)**

**-Do you feel that God has tested you over certain periods of your own life? (...)**

**-God’s testing is not without His presence, His power and His strength that He gives to us as we go through it. His testing refines our character, making us humble and dependent on Him so He can use us the way He knows will bring us closer to Him and bring Him glory.**

**-He tested Joseph’s character and Joseph came out with a deep faith and trust in the Lord, despite all of his circumstances.**

**-Do you believe when all seems hopeless, the One Who is the author of our lives and eternal destiny is worthy to be trusted and praised despite our temporal circumstances here on earth? (...)**

**-Let’s continue with what happened in our next set of verses, #4: (Psalm 105:20-22 “Then Pharaoh sent for him and set him free; the ruler of the nation opened his prison door. Joseph was put in charge of *all the king’s household; he became ruler over all the king’s possessions.* He could instruct the king’s aides as he pleased and teach the king’s advisers.”)**

**-Where did God allow Joseph to end up? (Ruler over all the king’s possessions.)**

**-When our time here on earth is ended, where do we end up as God’s children? (In Heaven, ruling with Jesus. 2 Timothy 2:12a says “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him (Jesus)...)**

**-Like Joseph, if we remain faithful and remember that God is God no matter what, we will rule with Jesus one day.**

**-Joseph was willing to trust God in all His circumstances, never believing that God was any less than Who He said He was, and because of that belief and unwavering faith, God gave him charge over all of Pharaoh's possessions. We too can trust God to do that for us one day with Him.**

**-Let's read our about our second story that reminds us to believe in God no matter what difficult trials may be ahead of us. For God is no less God, worthy of our trust and praise despite the circumstances all around us.**

**-How many of you remember Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? (...)**

**-What story do you remember the most about them?** (From Daniel 3, when King Nebuchadnezzar wanted his whole kingdom to bow down to worship him as a god and if they would not, they were to be cast into a burning fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused and were cast into the fiery furnace.)

**-Let's read together from God's Word what they told a very furious King Nebuchadnezzar when their accusers brought them before him, verse #5 on our Verse Sheet:** (Daniel 3:16-18 "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve "is able" to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.")

**-What is the first thing they said that is underlined?** ("We do not need to defend ourselves before you.")

**-At a time when things just seemed hopeless, were they begging, defending themselves or complaining to others to help them get out of their situation?** (No, they were trusting in God.)

**-What is the second thing they said that is underlined in these verses?** ("The God we serve 'is able' to deliver us from it.")

**-Who did they believe had the utmost power in their situation?** (God)

**-Even when things seemed hopeless, they did not question God's power and authority over their situation.**

**-Do we tend to do that sometimes, question His power and authority when it seems as if the world and wrongness around us is prevailing? (...)**

**-But, what did they say in the 3<sup>rd</sup> set of underlined words?** ("But even if He does not...")

**-What does this say about their faith in God no matter the outcome? (...)**

**-They knew that He was God no matter what their earthly outcome was going to be. They were content to leave the outcome in God's hand, knowing obedience to God was better than their own lives. Their words shows us that they did not expect a miraculous deliverance but a faith in God's decision over their destiny, knowing their final destiny was going to be with Him no matter what.**

**-They teach us that God is God, no matter the outcome. He is the ruler of our destinies and worthy of our trust and worship and obedience despite what lays before us.**

**-Does anyone know what happened to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they threw them in the fiery furnace?** (The Angel of the Lord was with them and protected them from the flames. They were not even singed!)

**-Let's read our last set of verses to see how this impacted others who were watching this whole scenario play out in their lives, #6** (Daniel 3:27-28 "And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, or the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered *His servants that trusted in Him*, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.'")

**-What impact did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have on all those watching as they put their destiny and faith in God alone?** (It became a testimony of God's grace and mercy over the lives of His children.)

**-As we go through difficult situations in our lives, can we have the faith to believe that God is God and in charge of our destiny no matter what we see or hear? (...)**

**-Can we trust Him in ALL things in our lives and worship Him for Who He is no matter our outcome? (...)**

**-Can we be a testimony of faith and trust in Him to others who may be watching? (...)**

**-Even though these men in both these stories did not know whether God was going to come through for them here on earth or on into eternity, these men teach us that it is better to believe in God and trust in Him in all things in our lives.**

**-He is God no matter what we see or hear.**

**-He is mighty to save and worthy of our honor, glory and praise because of Who He is! Let us praise and worship Him with our lives and our faith in Him.**

**“NO LESS GOD EVEN IN DIFFICULT TIMES” Verse Sheet**

- 1. Psalm 105:16 “(God) called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply.”**
- 2. Psalm 105:17-18 “Then (God) sent someone to Egypt ahead of them –Joseph, who was sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar.”**
- 3. Psalm 105:19 “Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the Lord tested Joseph’s character.”**
- 4. Psalm 105:20-22 “Then Pharaoh sent for him and set him free; the ruler of the nation opened his prison door. Joseph was put in charge of *all the king’s household; he became ruler over all the king’s possessions*. He could instruct the king’s aides as he pleased and teach the king’s advisers.”**
- 5. Daniel 3:16-18 “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve” is able” to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”**
- 6. Daniel 3:27-28 “And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, or the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered *His servants that trusted in Him*, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.’”**