

SESSION 3

OVERCOME BEING FORGOTTEN



When have you rediscovered something you forgot you had?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLforgotten

THE POINT

Keep doing what God has gifted you to do.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

When my oldest child was around five years old, I forgot her and left her at a restaurant several states away from home.

We were on vacation in Florida, traveling in a large SUV with three rows of seats. As our family left the restaurant, my daughter slipped into a game room near the exit. She always sat in the back of the car and kept to herself, content within a nest of books and blankets. So, my wife and I assumed she had already hopped in as we buckled the other kids into their car seats. It wasn't until we pulled into the driveway of our rental home five miles away that my wife asked, "Where's Katherine?"

Have you ever felt forgotten? Ever felt like the world has passed you by—like friends and family have gone on to bigger and better things and you're just stuck? Ever felt like even God has forgotten you?

The life of Joseph offers proof that God doesn't forget you. He's always aware of your circumstances. And, like Joseph, you can choose positive action while you wait to see what God is doing in your life.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Genesis 39:21-23; 40:5-8,20-23 (HCSB)

39:21 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him. He granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

22 The warden put all the prisoners who were in the prison under Joseph's authority, and he was responsible for everything that was done there.

23 The warden did not bother with anything under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him, and the LORD made everything that he did successful.

40:5 The Egyptian king's cupbearer and baker, who were confined in the prison, each had a dream. Both had a dream on the same night, and each dream had its own meaning.

6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they looked distraught.

7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?"

8 "We had dreams," they said to him, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

40:20 On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he gave a feast for all his servants. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker.

21 Pharaoh restored the chief cupbearer to his position as cupbearer, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

22 But Pharaoh hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had explained to them.

23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

Key Words

Cupbearer (40:5)—A staff supervisor and responsible for tasting the ruler's wine before serving it to him to ensure it did not contain poison. Often the cupbearer became the ruler's confidant and adviser.

Lifted up the heads (40:20)—The phrase "lifted up the heads" carried a double meaning: restoration for the cupbearer and death for the chief baker.



Genesis 39:21-23

It's clear once again that God was with Joseph at every turn—even when it may have appeared otherwise. Not only that, but Joseph remained faithful to God by continuing to do what God had gifted him to do. God had equipped Joseph to dream and to lead; therefore, Joseph exercised those gifts by managing with excellence even in the depths of an Egyptian prison.

We also need to be aware of what God has gifted us to do. In His sovereignty, God knit you together in your mother's womb (see Ps. 139:13). He made you to fit into His body, the church, just the way He wants you to fit (see 1 Cor. 12:12-31). So we, like Joseph, must take our individual gifting and abilities seriously. **Even when we face difficulty, we can—and we certainly should—continue to use the gifts God has given us.**

Look at Joseph's situation. He went from being the favored son of Jacob to being a slave, but he served with excellence. Now he had gone from being a slave to a prisoner. His position went from bad to worse. We don't know what Joseph did to distinguish himself in prison, but he did it with excellence. Consequently, he was given responsibility and authority. An Egyptian prison surely was a far cry from where Joseph expected to be, but instead of wallowing in self-pity, he continued to serve.

I don't love God by attempting to do something I have no business doing. For example, He has not designed me to lead others in praise and worship. I can't sing at all and am not musical in the least. (That's what I've been told. By everyone.) So, I can rest assured knowing that's not what God created me to do. But God has equipped me to serve as a pastor. Therefore, when I express love to Him and others by preaching, I'm doing what God gifted me to do. Consequently, I know that I'm following His will.



How do we remain faithful when we find ourselves where we didn't expect to be?

QUESTION #2

Genesis 40:5-8

One day a couple of new prisoners were added to the prison population: Pharaoh's cupbearer and chief baker. We don't know what their specific crimes were, but they had obviously offended Pharaoh and made him angry enough to toss them into prison.

Having proven himself responsible, Joseph was assigned to be the personal attendant to both the cupbearer and baker (see Gen. 40:4). This assignment implies that these were men of rank. More than just men in charge of the wine cellar and bakery, they were also advisers to Pharaoh. Verse 7 refers to them as "Pharaoh's officers." They may have been prisoners at that moment, but it became Joseph's duty to wait on them.

Joseph did more than his duty to merely serve these men. He showed genuine concern for them when they became distraught. Noticing their sadness, Joseph asked how he could help. Such compassion surely was beyond his job description.

That same night both men had troubling dreams—dreams they could not understand and no one could interpret. Joseph agreed to help and told them the ability to interpret dreams came from God. No doubt, God gave him great insight (v. 8), and Joseph's skill in interpreting dreams was another indication that God was still with him. Joseph pointed to God, and it certainly appeared that God was working His will in Joseph's life through the dreams.

Joseph was 17 when he went to Egypt (see Gen. 37:2) and 30 when he was delivered from prison (see Gen. 41:46). He spent 13 years as a servant and a prisoner. Joseph eventually became the second in command over Egypt, but he first experienced 13 years of discipline, training, and preparation. His path to a position of great authority and leadership was a path of humble service to others.



What are some little things that allow us to demonstrate God's concern to others?

QUESTION #3

*When have you
felt forgotten?*

QUESTION #4

Genesis 40:20-23

Joseph showed compassion in helping the baker and cupbearer, and he faithfully shared what God had revealed to him regarding their dreams. Joseph made only one request in return: “But when all goes well for you, remember that I was with you. Please show kindness to me by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this prison” (see Gen. 40:14).

What came of that request? “Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him” (v. 23). Joseph was forgotten. Worse, he was forgotten by someone he had helped!

Let me return to the time I forgot my daughter. I must have driven 100 mph back to the restaurant. When I pulled up, a bus load of senior adults had gathered on the front porch. Apparently they had been standing there when I drove off—they’d watched Katherine run behind my car screaming, “Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!” They were *not* happy with me.

Kind folks at the restaurant had taken my daughter to the kitchen while they waited, hoping for her parents to return. Katherine had given them my cell phone number, of course, but my daughter wasn’t the only thing I forgot in that restaurant. I also left my phone on the table. (It was a long trip.) So, when they tried to call me, my phone began to ring in a waitress’s apron.

Here’s the point: it’s true that I unintentionally left my daughter in a strange place, but that didn’t mean I loved her any less. I didn’t forget her because she wasn’t valuable to me. It was just a mistake.

Thankfully, God never forgets us. Unlike imperfect humans, He never makes mistakes. Therefore, we can remain confident in His plan even when it seems like we’ve been left out of that plan. We may *feel* like God is absent, but we can *know* He is still there, always loving us and watching over us.



Joseph surely felt forgotten, but he didn't quit. Tragedy is not terminal. Disappointment is not the final chapter. Pain is not the ultimate end for a child of God. He gets the final word. Always! When we allow this truth to be hidden in our hearts, quitting isn't an option—even when we feel forgotten.

How do we support one another to keep doing what God has gifted us to do?

QUESTION #5

YOUR GIFT

What's one of the primary ways God has gifted you to do His work?

Record ideas for using that gift in the following spheres of life:

Church

Family

Community

Work

LIVE IT OUT

You have options for remaining engaged even when you feel forgotten in life. Consider the following:

- ▶ **Discover your gifts.** Use a spiritual-gifts assessment to identify the ways God has equipped you to serve.
- ▶ **Sharpen your skills.** Use a tool like the Ministry Grid (*MinistryGrid.com*) to gain training for different areas of ministry that connect with your natural gifts.
- ▶ **Make a difference.** Jump in with both feet to serve God and others. Find an area of need in your church or community, and use your gifts to serve with excellence.



God loves you and values you deeply as His child. But that doesn't mean you'll avoid feeling forgotten at different moments in your life. The good news is that you can choose to make a positive impact during those moments, as Joseph did.

Four Simple Words



During the Korean War, I was a gunner on a B-29 bomber. My most memorable experience occurred when two engines went out and we landed amid a brilliant ball of fire. It was an exciting day, but it was not the one that changed my life forever.



To continue reading "Four Simple Words" from *Mature Living* magazine, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



My group's prayer requests

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My thoughts