

Bible Studies for Life: February 13

The Pitfall of Hard Times • Genesis 41:28-32, 47-54

By Paula Smith



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The call to international missions came to my life, firmly and clearly, when I was 12 years old. I immediately connected with the International Mission Board (IMB) and started the preparation needed to be trained and sent to another country to tell others of God's Good News for everyone.

I was guided to finish high school, college, and seminary, and (at that time in the process) have two consecutive years of ministry in a similar role I would have in another culture.

There were roadblocks along the way, but I knew what I had to do and continued toward that goal. I was close to completing the requirements and suddenly my Daddy died. This rocked my world. Whenever I had questions or doubts, I could ask Daddy and he would talk it through with me using God's Word as guidance.

About four months after his death, I received a letter from IMB. I was so excited! I ran home and tore open the letter to read, in total disbelief, that they were suggesting that I... wait. WAIT! Why, I had been waiting 13 years! I had completed the requirements. In my confused brain I took this to mean

“no” when they meant it to mean “wait.”

I ran to Daddy’s grave and just sat there and thought, “If I could just talk to Daddy! If only I could talk to Daddy!” Then, strangely, a memory came to me.

Daddy and I were at home. He was sitting at his little desk preparing his sermon and I was playing on the floor close to him. (I was around nine years of age.) I remember suddenly looking at Daddy and asking, “Daddy, how can people not know that God loves them?”

I do not know from whence that question came. Instead of just agreeing with me or brushing me off so he could finish his sermon, he stopped, turned toward me, and said, “Someday you might doubt...”

Good grief! I thought my Daddy had lost his mind! Of course, I knew God loved me, so much so that He died for me. How could I doubt God? Daddy continued, “... and when you do, don’t doubt in the dark what God has told you in the light.”

The Lord answered my prayer. I was able to “talk” with Daddy, and through that memory the Lord directed me to continue doing what I had been doing and He would take care of the timing.

I wish I could tell you that I got a letter the next week saying there had been a mistake and I was going to be able to go that year, but it took over seven years and two extremely difficult situations before I finally received the confirmation to go.

Now that I have lived long enough, I realize if I had not gone through those extremely difficult things during those seven years, I would not have been prepared to do what was necessary once I was on the field. I had experience, compassion, and most importantly, confidence that our Lord will never leave us nor forsake us.

I am so grateful Joseph was faithful during those terrible and extremely unfair situations in his life. As Joseph Davis expressed in his book, *Surviving in Egypt: The Life of Joseph*, "Joseph had to be in this place of waiting so God would use him to save not only his own family (the ones who had betrayed him) but also Egypt (the ones who had enslaved him).

"In fact, our salvation is tied directly to Joseph being called to wait in a prison for two years. Right now, we are reaping the benefits of his faithful waiting!"

There was a great purpose behind the Lord placing Joseph at that place and time, even though on the surface it might appear to only be survival.

Things are tough in our world today, but survival is not the purpose of our salvation. We are to be salt and light to the world. Without Joseph, the known world at that time would have starved to death. Without each of us being salt and light, people in our world will not know abundant life.

Things look so comfortable when the crops are great (as in Egypt) and when there is abundant sunshine (while Noah built the ark), but the Lord has told us to prepare for when that is not the case. We are confident in God's plan, and confident in Him.

Smith is a member of Ridgecrest Church, Madison. She may be contacted at pgrace56@hotmail.com.