

Delivered!

Finding Hope in the Storms of Life

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Introduction

Well, here I am, writing a book on how to fight your battles and face your struggles head-on when I feel like my life is a constant whirlwind. The funny thing is how God spoke to me while writing His thoughts on paper.

For example, I never realized there were so many verses about deliverance in the Bible. Whenever I opened my Bible, another verse would pop out at me. I am thankful knowing even the Bible's heroes needed God to deliver them.

God quickly showed me how this book would work to heal me. Let me share a personal storm I encountered and tell you of God's deliverance.

Our new pastor began hosting renewal weekends. I asked him if I could bring a devotional on deliverance to share with our ladies. Little did I know God would deliver me from a difficult situation that same weekend.

The week before, I asked someone a few simple questions regarding their career. The person I thought I *affirmed* took these questions to mean I was discounting her career choice. Once my statement was taken out of context and brought to the attention of others, including my boss, I was so upset at the thought I had done something wrong. I dwelt on the situation and found preparing for the upcoming devotional a difficult task to complete.

Our pastor's wife asked if I would pick up sandwiches on the Saturday morning of renewal weekend. On my way to the restaurant, a miracle happened. I received a phone call from my boss, who allowed me the opportunity to share how my intentions came from a heart of love and not from a heart of contempt. God delivered me thirty minutes before I gave a devotional on this same topic.

While reading *Delivered!*, I encourage you to lay everything else aside. I want you to pour into these scriptures and pray like never before. I want you to fall in love with Jesus and feel assured that deliverance is waiting for you right around the corner. It may come in thirty minutes, or it may happen in fifteen years, but it's coming! Then, I want you to take the deliverance you have experienced to a dark world and tell others about Jesus.

I want you to share your story. People need to see our brokenness. After a friend once read my Facebook page, she commented, "You have the perfect life." Let me tell you, sister, this girl is far from perfect! I am broken, just like you. God has created in me a desire to show other women my broken pieces. At this point in my life, I am completely transparent. Imagine what our world would be like if everyone knew the person next to them was in the midst of a storm just like them. People would continue to face hardships but be healed by witnessing God's deliverance.

Then who knows! Maybe you'll be the next one writing a book about your struggles and helping to change the lives of others.

Whit

Storms

“But God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt...”



Acts 7:9-10

Have you ever been at the bottom of the sea with nowhere to turn? You felt all alone and wondered how to pray. One of my life's most memorable low points came in November 2009.

I pulled into the driveway after working part-time at a boys' home. With both kids in tow, I noticed my husband was home in the middle of the day. I looked at him without smiling and said, "You're home early." I had a hunch as to why he beat us home but secretly prayed this wouldn't happen again.

Unfortunately, Greg and I had traveled down this path before. Greg's job loss was not his fault. The company where he worked was moving its headquarters out of state.

The first time Greg lost his job was right before we were married. This job loss would carry over until we returned from our honeymoon.

But this time was different, because we had two small children. At the end of the 2008 school year, I felt called to leave my full-time teaching job to stay home, having just given birth to our second child two months prior.

Questions swirled around in my head while I cried myself to sleep.

I wondered how our children were going to eat. Even though the money stopped, their growth spurts continued. How would I provide our kids with the clothes they would need? Christmas was coming. How were we going to buy Christmas presents? What if a kid were to get sick, and we needed to take him to the doctor?

My storm was closing in. It was dark and clammy, and I was fearful. I wondered how we would ever climb out of this pit.

I wonder if Joseph felt the same way. Joseph was cast in a literal pit.

The story of Joseph began with kids just being kids. Joseph was feeding the family's flock of sheep. He noticed some problems taking place out in the field with his half-brothers and reported these wrongdoings to their father. "And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father" (Genesis 37:2).

The Bible does not give details about Joseph's report to Jacob regarding his half-brothers. Maybe they were feeding the sheep junk food. Perhaps they were playing football instead of tending to the sheep. Or maybe they were bullying Joseph because Jacob favored him. Whatever the case, Joseph would be seen here as a snitch.

To exacerbate tensions, Jacob decided to try his hand at becoming a tailor and made Joseph a colorful coat.

Joseph's brothers hated him because "[H]e made him a tunic of many colors" (Genesis 37:3). Genesis 37:4 tells us the brothers could not speak peaceably with Joseph. Their hearts were enraged because of the love Jacob showed toward Joseph. Jacob loved Joseph because of his love for Joseph's mother, Rachel.

The hatred continued to grow because of a dream Joseph shared with his brothers.

Joseph, the eleventh of the twelve sons, told his brothers about a dream involving wheat stalks. These were not your average wheat stalks, though. The stalks represented his brothers. One stalk would rise higher than the rest, and the other stalks would bow down to this one. Guess whose stalk rose above the rest. You guessed it! Joseph's. (Genesis 37:7).

His brothers were appalled to discover their little brother dared to inform them he would

reign over their family. Joseph should have stopped talking at this point, but he continued. He told his brothers he had yet another dream where all of creation would bow down to him (Genesis 37:9). Their hatred toward Joseph slowly turned to envy.

Genesis 37:11 tells us, “[H]is brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.” While Jacob let this one mull over in his mind, Joseph’s half-brothers were stewing.

Like any parent, Jacob must have thought this would be a suitable time to send the brothers “to feed their father’s flock in Shechem” (Genesis 37:12). Jacob asked his favored son to visit his eleven brothers in Shechem.

I want to mention how this story began with one word: obedience. Joseph did not argue with his father; he made no excuses and readily made himself available to do his will. When Jacob asked where Joseph was, he answered his father, saying, “Here I am” (Genesis 37:13). I wonder if Joseph knew how this single act would change his life forever.

On his way to Shechem, Joseph encountered a man who informed him that his brothers left the area and were now feeding flocks in Dothan. Joseph began to walk that way, and “[T]hey saw him afar off, even before he came near to them” thanks to that colorful coat (Genesis 37:18).

Now, the Bible makes it clear the envy Joseph’s brothers once felt began to turn more aggressive, to the point where they were ready to kill him. They planned to throw Joseph into a pit, kill him, and tell their father a “wild beast has devoured him” (Genesis 37:20).

His brother, Reuben, stood up to the angry mob and told his brothers there would be no bloodshed. I believe Reuben desired to be the one to rescue Joseph from the pit in time and deliver him into the hands of their father (Genesis 37:22). Reuben may have considered himself the savior on site, but God delivered Joseph before beginning a mighty work in him.

Tossing Joseph into an empty pit was Joseph’s first time to become delivered, but it would not be his last.

Throughout his life, Joseph faced imprisonment, accusations of adultery, and famine across the land of Egypt, yet God delivered Joseph from every trial. He provided for Joseph and blessed an entire nation. During each storm, God blessed Joseph. What a prime example of God’s mercy.

I am reminded of Genesis 50:20 after Joseph reunited with his brothers, ‘But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.’

So, what about our trial? After several months, God delivered us from the layoff pit. Greg would find a job the following May, and I accepted a full-time teaching position. God did not just provide; He gave us abundantly more than ever imagined.

During the layoff period, God showed us how He can work through inconvenient situations. We may have been in a difficult place, but God was not. The time spent in a trial molded and shaped us into the people we are today.

His loving arms surrounded us in so many ways. My fearfulness slowly turned into gratefulness.

Here are some ways God showed us He never left our side.

The director at the boys’ home where I worked gave us free cans of baby formula, diapers, and fresh foods.

Greg was handed a check at church. We were able to deposit this check into our savings account. He drew unemployment, which was just enough to pay our bills. We never missed a payment and always paid our bills on time.

Greg had a co-worker who would give us clothes, shoes, socks, and even a car seat after her children outgrew these items. Several women at church gave me clothes, many of which I still wear.

On Christmas Eve, a family we came to love sang Christmas carols and gifted us with groceries, a home cooked meal, new clothes for the kids, and even toys. It was the best Christmas ever!

Being cast into the depths of unemployment was not pleasurable, but God used this time to grow Greg and me as a couple. We learned to rely on Him and stopped relying on ourselves to make ends meet. We finally realized our finances belonged to God, and we should spend His money the way He intended. We learned to pray over our finances. He also used this time to show us how to be thankful for everything, even the little things, while taking nothing for granted.

Honestly, there are times I miss those humble beginnings. Greg and I were able to spend more time with the kids. We saw firsthand how God would provide all our needs. We became thankful for the little things. We were able to sit back and watch His beauty unfold. We had everything we needed.

Reminiscing on those early days brought the following verse to mind: “And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Praise be to God our Father.

*Reflect and meditate on the following chapters.
I pray you find comfort in these scriptures.*

Genesis 39

Genesis 40

Genesis 41

*Reflect and meditate on the following chapters.
I pray you find comfort in these scriptures.*

Genesis 43

Genesis 44

Genesis 45

Questions

1. What struggles are you currently facing?
2. After reading chapters 39-45 in Genesis, were you able to identify similarities between your life and the life of Joseph?

Prayer

My God,

Thank You for loving me and meeting me right where I am. Thank You for showing mercy during my times of struggle. Forgive me for taking so much for granted and being blinded to the fact that I was delivered when Jesus shed His blood for me. Sometimes, Lord, I feel there is no way out of these situations, which has caused me to cry out to You. At times, all hope seems lost. I don't always know where to turn, but I trust You are listening. You know all things and understand the trials I am facing. You saw it coming before I did. In many ways, You prepared me for the battle. Lord, show me those ways today. Give me time to meditate and reflect on Your Word. Don't leave me. In Your loving name, I pray, Amen.

Birth

“But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them but saved the male children alive.”



Exodus 1:17

I should have never been born. No, seriously.

For months, my mom's OBGYN informed her she needed to lose weight. He often called her fat and reminded her to lay off the chocolate. If you knew my mom, you would laugh at this statement because my mom does not eat a lot of sweets (except for Blue Bell ice cream). She often reiterated to the doctor how she followed a healthy diet.

What she didn't know, and neither did her doctor, was that my mom was not carrying one baby; she was carrying two.

Back then, women did not have sonograms as frequently as we do today. Three weeks before my mom was to give birth, the doctor ordered a sonogram where they would finally hear my heartbeat. I was shoved behind my mom's ribcage, making it difficult for the doctors to locate me.

To make matters worse, I was also breech. I was trying to show off my best side first.

Have you ever wondered if Satan was trying to prevent you from even being born?

Fortunately, God had other plans for your life. God had different plans for a man named Moses as well.

If you think back to the story of Joseph, everything seemed peachy during his time in Egypt. But there was a new sheriff (or king) in town, and things would have been quite different in Egypt when Moses entered the scene.

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was afraid the children of Israel were beginning to multiply. He feared the Israelites would become mightier than himself and take over the land.

To ensure he had the situation under control, Pharaoh decided to "set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens" (Exodus 1:11). In other words, they would become slaves to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh's plan failed because the children of Israel "multiplied and grew" (Exodus 1:12).

The growing number of Israelites infuriated Pharaoh. Exodus 1:13 tells us, "[T]he Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor." The Israelites worked in the fields while building with brick and mortar.

To ensure the children of Israel would stop multiplying, Pharaoh planned to speak with the Hebrew midwives. He said, "When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live" (Exodus 1:16).

So, Pharaoh's plot to stop the Israelites from growing was to create a genocide where the midwives would kill all the male children. Can you imagine what the midwives were thinking after listening to Pharaoh?

Here was the highest man in the land telling them to kill the children they would help to deliver. I know very little about the job of a midwife. However, I assume they bond closely with these pregnant ladies. It's one thing to take the life of a child from a woman you barely know, but the midwives walked and talked with these women for nine months.

Fortunately, "[T]he midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them but saved the male children alive" (Exodus 1:17). Pharaoh was furious!

He wondered why they did not do as they were told (to kill all the Hebrew male children). I love the response from the midwives, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian

women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them" (Exodus 1:19).

Don't you love it when God instills in us the wisdom to continue in His will while helping us avoid sin? The midwives told Pharaoh those lively Hebrew women gave birth so quickly they were unable to help during the birthing process, making it difficult for them to kill the babies. They claimed not to have seen the child until they had entered the world.

Because of these God-fearing midwives, the nation of Israel would continue to grow, and God's people would multiply. Praise God!

Since Pharaoh's idea was not working, he devised a new plan. He instructed all his people to toss the newly born Hebrew boys into the Nile River.

In the world's view, a Hebrew child entering the world during this time of slaughter may seem illogical. Still, one thing we know about God is He loves to create possibilities out of what appears to be an impossible situation. These miracles allow us the opportunity to see Him and understand His ways while allowing us the opportunity to praise Him for His good works.

Moses's mother, Jochebed, knew the law Pharaoh had enforced upon his people. So, she took Moses and "hid him for three months" (Exodus 2:2). After these three months, she realized "[S]he could no longer hide him. So, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank" (Exodus 2:3).

If you are reading this for the first time, you might think Jochebed intended to kill Moses. She was trying to save him.

Let me stop here and say we can make all the plans we want amid a trial. We can devise all these ways to save ourselves or rely entirely on God like Jochebed.

Do you think she woke up one morning and thought, "Hmm...today I'll make a basket, lay Moses in it, and float him down the river?" Doubtful. God implanted this idea into her heart while reassuring her everything would be okay. God cared for Moses without the assistance of Jochebed. Remember, Moses was God's child first.

Like a mother, Jochebed sent Moses's teenage sister, Miriam, to watch the ark float down the river to ensure he would safely reach his destination. An incredible destination lay ahead. The "daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, saw the ark among the reeds, sent her maid to get it, and saw the child" (Exodus 2:5).

Moses did what most babies do; he cried. She thought he was adorable and took him home to show him off to the royal family like a newborn puppy. There was only one problem. Pharaoh's daughter would need a nurse to care for Moses. Miriam, who apparently never left Moses's side, asked if she would like her to find a Hebrew nurse.

Pharaoh's daughter thought this was a grand idea. Guess who she chose for the job. Jochebed.

Not only did God deliver Moses from Pharaoh's persecution, but He also allowed Jochebed to receive payment as a handmaid while caring for her son.

If you don't believe God wants to help deliver you from your situation, I want you to look again. Maybe God is choosing to provide for you differently than you had planned. Who would have thought this family would live together again in the palace of a Pharaoh, amongst the very man who wanted Moses killed?

Throughout the book of Exodus, you will see God deliver Moses many times. Not only was Moses delivered, but he would also help rescue God's people, the Israelites, from the hands of the Egyptians.

My mom delivered me, along with my twin brother, on January 14, 1980. Amazingly, she gave birth to us without needing a C-Section. The doctor was able to turn me with his hand and bring me safely into the world.

Just like Moses, God rescued me many times throughout my time on this earth. He used my brother and me to educate kids and help coach them through difficult situations in and out of school.

I pray He is also using me as a tool to help deliver you today through this book.

*Reflect and meditate on the following chapters.
I pray you find comfort in these scriptures.*

Job 10:8

Psalm 119:73-80

Psalm 71:1-6

Questions

1. Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill all the male children, but they chose to follow God. Who will you choose to follow when facing a difficult challenge in life?
2. Have you ever considered how much God treasures you? Do you believe He has a plan for your life like He did with Moses?

Prayer

Savior,

Thank You for giving me life and seeing something good in me. You delivered me the day I was born. You genuinely care for and love me. I know you have a plan for me, like Moses. Please reveal to me Your plan. Help me to rely on You and trust You know how to rescue me. Show me how to lean on You and have faith like Jochebed. Deliver my children as well in times of trouble. Remind me that my children are not my own; they belong to You. Help them to seek You first. May my children see You working in my life. Help me continue praising You even in tough times. Remind me that everything You do is for my good. You love me. You gave me life for a reason. Thank You! Amen.