

First Light

Seems like every day brings a new dilemma of some kind. And as you've thought about it, you ask yourself how did you get here? This new mess was completely undeserved and is really frustrating because it was none of your own doing. In fact, it was totally from someone else's poor decision or choice and now it seems to be in your lap. Maybe this problem has created a lot of turmoil in your life or it's taking more energy and time than you think you should have to spend on it, after all – it wasn't your deal! You're not sure what to do, but one thing is clear – you didn't create it and it's not fair!

You may be familiar with a guy who had a lot of this undeserved strife thrust upon him, of no fault of his own. As he was growing up, he had a pretty good life. But turns out his dysfunctional family members were not on the same page as him, because he was trying to make something of himself. Weary of his arrogant and dreamy aspirations of political success, his vengeful brothers decided to do the unthinkable and they kidnapped him. They originally wanted to kill him, but profit being a potent motivator, they decided to do a dark web deal and he became a victim of human trafficking. He was smuggled over national borders against his will and made to become a slave to a foreign leader. Still holding in his heart the desire to make something of himself, he managed to become somewhat of a manager of duties amongst the other slave workers. Things were looking up, but trouble seemed to have a strange way of following him and he found himself being framed in a sex scandal with the wife of the foreign leader. Though not guilty of any wrongdoing, he was sent to where rebellious slaves learn their lesson, and most are never seen again. Somehow, he managed to skirt death but he also never lost the integrity and spirit that something better was coming. Over time, he once again moved up the slave ladder and after demonstrating some pretty impressive intellectual and management skills, he was tapped to work on a very unusual problem for the leader that nobody had been able to solve. Turns out, he had a special gift to be able to tell the future – and that's what he did. He stood in front of the most powerful man in the empire and told him exactly what was about to happen to his world. But he didn't take credit for being able to do this. He gave credit to God. When he single-handedly averted a national crisis, he was promoted and moved up to a special never-before-held position which gave him pretty much free reign of the commodities and material assets of the empire, even though at one time, he was in the darkest corner of the lowest dungeon cell, left to die.

This slave-turned leader was named Zaphenath-Paneah. His amazing story is found in Genesis 37-45 and reads like a suspense thriller. He had a lifetime of facing problems he didn't create. But he always kept his integrity and his faith in God's plan, even in the midst of dilemmas. You might know him better by his familiar name – Joseph.

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SGenesis 45:4-7 NIV

[4] Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me .” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! [5] And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. [6] For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. [7] But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance...

When we face problems that we didn't create and we don't feel like we should have to work them out, it might be that it's a special opportunity for us to demonstrate unusual patience, integrity, and faith in a God who works out his amazing will in the very midst of our problems, frustrations, pain, and anxiety. It's impossible for us to know what lies on the other side of every dilemma, but God does. He can and will work through us if we give him a little time, a little trust, and a little credit to do so as Joseph did on so many occasions.