

Lesson 1 - Developing a Divine Viewpoint Strategy

Have you ever noticed that with every area of life there is a type of training designed to help you get the most out of your work? For example, if you want to build houses you have got to start with an apprenticeship and work your way up to being a contractor. Or if you wanted to be a farmer, you would begin as a hired hand and slowly learn the ropes. With military personnel there are years of training and ranks that must be climbed before you can command any leadership. Finally, if you desired to be an athlete, you must train your body to perform a certain way so that in the thick of competition you can respond without having to constantly refer back to the very basics.

So if training is so crucial to every other area of life, how is that when we get to our Christian walk there seems to be an exception to the norm. Often when it comes to spiritual things the general feeling is that no focused training is needed. Everyone just approaches it from his or her own direction. More often than not this approach leads to little or NO spiritual training and preparation. It's like a soldier who is thrown into battle without any training except what was given at the recruiter's desk, they just have to figure it out from there.

In other cases there is training provided, but the focus ends up in the wrong place. It starts with our actions and begins to identify the things you "should" and "shouldn't" do as a Christian. This is like teaching a soldier how to use a weapon but not helping him understand the strategy of battle. He operates in one dimension not having the skills to see his situation and adapt to it. To be sure there are going to be changes in our behavior, but is that where it starts?

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom. 12:2)

The Bible offers us a strategy for walking by faith that starts in our minds. A training that challenges us to begin seeing the world through the eyes of the Lord (DVP) rather than looking at things from our own perspective (HVP). A way of continually shaping our minds to prepare for the battle of life. A way of starting with the correct thinking strategy and ending up with a proper behavioral response.

As we study through the Bible, you will notice that we are constantly looking at each teaching through two different perspectives. We first and foremost want to train our minds to

understand how the Lord sees a situation (DVP), but in order to sharpen our vision we will also look at how man alters and manipulates God's word to meet his own needs (HVP).

Today's lesson offers you a strategy for dealing with the situations you face in life. A mental approach to thinking through a circumstance in life from a Divine Viewpoint (DVP). As your understanding of God's word expands and as you learn how it better fits together, you will become stronger in your ability to perform this strategy. However, I want you to see how you can apply your biblical worldview to your real life issues. This isn't pie in the sky stuff. It has real implications, and it must be applied.

Hebrews 11

We are going to turn to the book of Hebrews chapter 11 to develop our thinking strategy. Here we have the privilege of seeing great men who walked by faith. Men who had a Divine Viewpoint (DVP) and used it to enjoy spiritual success in their lives.

That brings up the real point of these next few lessons. It's the area of thinking and application! Just learning the teachings of the Bible in a way that makes sense is not enough, we still need to transform our minds so that we can apply them in the difficulties of life.

In today's lesson we want to look specifically at the person of Joseph and see how he models a Christian's walk by faith. We also want to take this lesson and develop a strategy for thinking that will help us in our own walk. This will be one way we apply what we learn.

BACKGROUND

Let's jump into the shoes of this man Joseph so we can really identify with his situation.

For some reason we have a hard time connecting with the characters out of the Bible, as if they are some sort of professional religious icons. But this is not what we see when we look at Joseph's life.

Joseph wasn't a pastor; he wasn't a priest; he wasn't a professional religious person. Joseph was actually in politics; in government. He was the number two man in Egypt - the super power of that day. There's no question about it, Egypt dominated the human race at that point in time, and Joseph was second only to Pharaoh. He was second in line to the king of Egypt.

Imagine the difficulty Joseph must have faced. He was in a high profile position among people that believed totally different than he did. Its like one of us being thrown into an entirely different culture and nation with all its respective challenges. It would have been a

tough walk of faith to say the least. Out of your element, out of everything you knew growing up.

But Joseph's problems were real! Everyday, he faced management problems and a lot of "red tape" bureaucracy. Everyday he dealt with the largest areas of Egyptian government including economic and agricultural issues.

Looking back it was actually Joseph who saved the nation during one of its greatest crisis. One of the greatest disasters of all time was the famine of Egypt.

There is no doubt this man faced many challenges in his walk with the Lord. You can't live this life without facing difficulty. But it's what you do in the face of that difficulty that matters most to the Lord.

Joseph faced some very difficult circumstances in his life, but then so do we. Let's see how Joseph applied a biblical thinking strategy to his situations in order to give him direction in his walk of faith. Then we will try to implement the same kind of training in our walk.

Joseph's SITUATION

We will begin with the a situation from Scripture found in Hebrews 11:22. This text speaks about one particular event in Joseph's life.

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the Exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

Now that may seem like an obscure text but let's dig a little deeper and see what treasures are actually in there. Interestingly enough, this text is going to tell us how Joseph thought through a very difficult circumstance in life - his death.

The first thing it tells us,

...when he was dying he made mention of the Exodus.

If you look up that word "make mention" in the Greek this is bit of an odd translation of the word. In almost every other case in word mnemenuo doesn't mean to "make mention" but it means "to recall something from the past". We get the English word "mnemonic device" from this word.

Joseph was recalling something from his memory that he knew but needed reminding of. What did he need to recall or need to mention? He

...made mention of the Exodus of the sons of Israel.

Now we need to think about this. When did the Exodus happen? When was Joseph living? How can Joseph recall the Exodus event if it was still in the future? What is going on here?

Actually this is completely deliberate! The author of Hebrews wanted us to see precisely what Joseph was seeing in his head, that is the "Exodus of the sons of Israel." But what does this mean?

We need to go back to Genesis 50:24 and see the context of what was going on in Joseph's mind. We pick up in the story after Joseph had been sold off by his brothers into slavery, after he had become the second in charge in Egypt, after he had been re-united with his family, and now his at the end of his life. He says in verse 24,

I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

So Joseph is dealing with his death, but he is thinking ahead to what God had promised.

Joseph RECALLS Scripture

In dealing with his situation Joseph's **first step** in his thinking strategy is to **recall** scripture. In order for Joseph to give directions about his death he first goes back to a specific event recorded in history, the Abrahamic Covenant.

If we go to Genesis 15, we can see the exact text that Joseph must have recalled. In Genesis 15:12-14 God announces the Abrahamic Covenant,

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. 13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out

See the word "come out?" That's the Exodus. Joseph knew about the Exodus before it occurred because God had told them it would happen. That his people would be enslaved and after 400 years they would come out.

So Joseph is dying and in order to deal with his situation he first recalls a promise of the Lord that had not actually occurred in history yet. Joseph was building his thinking around God's faithfulness. He was recalling the very words of God as a **final authority** on the matter.

We must begin with grabbing hold of something that we know from the word of God. And we have to recognize it as coming from God; it doesn't come from men, this is not our word, it's not the elder's words, it's not the church's word, it's God's word.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. 10:17)

But Joseph doesn't just stop with recalling a promise he goes on to the next step in developing his DVP strategy. Now if we return to Hebrews we can see what Joseph did with the scripture he recalled.

Joseph CONNECTS Scripture

After recalling the promise of the future Exodus event Joseph then goes to the **second step** in his thinking strategy; he **connects** the Scripture with his present situation. Hebrews 11:22 says,

...and gave orders concerning his bones.

Now what does mean? Well lets think though this for a minute. What is it that the Egyptians were most known for aside from the pyramids? Their tombs, right!

If there is one people group on the face of this planet that were totally preoccupied with death and the afterlife...it was the Egyptians. They entombed everything, themselves, food, their dogs, their cats, they've even found mummified crocodile. These people went crazy with mummification.

With this in mind we can better see that Joseph was saying "I want to get out of Egypt. The plan of God is to move out; this is not all there is, this is not the culture that has the final word, history is progressing toward a goal, God is leading history somewhere outside of Egypt, and I want to be identified with the plan of God."

No doubt Joseph thought about what he doesn't want to happen, that is to be thrown into a tomb and mummified. But its is obvious that he moved on from the negative and begin to think about the positive. That is what he did want.

Joseph put the pieces of Scripture together in his mind and then connects it to his situation. If you were to draw out this statement concerning his bones it might read something like this:

"I want you to take my bones out with you when you go because I have perfect confidence that in 400 years my nation is going to have an Exodus, the nation of Israel is going to be born and she's going to become the care taker of the Scriptures. Scripture is now going to be protected by the Jewish people and the Messiah is going to come from my people; we are going to go out of Egypt. Pharaoh and his people are not going to get in the way."

How do you think Joseph's Egyptian buddies might have responded to his wishes? You can imagine them saying something like "our nation made you second in command, and you reject it to go out with those wandering people in the desert? Why would you want to do that? We have the grandeur of Egypt here, all the science and technology of our culture, what more could you want?"

Joseph would have likely said "What more could I want? Well...I want God! And your science and technology doesn't have God. It uses the principles that God has given you but God isn't there, God isn't in those things. God is where God says He's going to be and God says He's going to form a culture and a meeting place called a temple in Jerusalem; I want my body to be there to identify with His plan."

Joseph TRUSTS Scripture

After Joseph connects the Scripture to his situation he moves to the third step in his DVP strategy. He rests his mind in the faithfulness of God's Word, he places his **trust** in the Lord.

Take a look back in Hebrews 11:22 how the author classifies what Joseph did. He says it was

By faith...

Joseph recalled a portion of God's word, connected it to his situation, then placed his faith in the Lord. It's important to realize that placing your faith in God's Word does not mean freedom from pressure physically; faith here is the idea that you know your foundation, you have perfect assurance.

Faith is not a guess, it's assurance in a fact. However, the word "faith" has come to have a different meaning in our society today. If you say to the average person on the street that you have "faith" in something what is the connotation? It's a weak one, meaning you are kinda just jumping out there with a heartfelt guess.

However, if you were to say that you “know” something the connotation is much stronger. This is because the average person does not see the link in these two words. Rather, faith is seen as a weak form of knowledge. But is this true? Let’s think about it for a moment using the greater context of Hebrews 11.

In this chapter the words “by faith” are mentioned 18 times. In order to make sure we understand what was meant by these words, the author was very careful to define them. By looking back to the beginning of the chapter we can see clearly what these words mean. Hebrews 11:1 says,

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Faith is assurance. There is no half-hearted guessing in faith. Also notice the word “conviction”. This means a fixed or strong belief. You don’t come to assurance and conviction through a form of weak guessing. Faith thinks through the facts; it is logically convinced. Faith and knowledge work together in the Scripture. Don’t ever accept the idea that faith is weak knowledge.

Review

Joseph’s faith was firmly planted in what God had said was going to happen in history, and as a result his walk with the Lord was stabilized. He was able to see his situation through the Divine Viewpoint (DVP) of Scripture. His thinking strategy remained biblical, and he was ultimately able to enjoy spiritual victory. Let’s review our biblical thinking strategy:

Recall

First, when a stressful situation arises you **recall** a Scriptural text, fragment, promise, story, to quiet down and focus on the Lord. There’s not enough time to do an in-depth Bible study. All you have time to do is grab something in your memory, some story, that’s why the Joseph story is so good, a chunk of a verse, anything that’s circulating in your mind, grab hold of that because “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” It doesn’t come from book reviews, it doesn’t come from having a PhD in something, it comes from the content of the text of Scripture. So you have to grab and hold on to that.

Connect

The second step is to **connect** God’s word with your situation. This often happens as a quick prayer meeting in your own soul about the Scripture you recalled. You have to do something with the promise. So how do you bring your situation together with the text? I suggest this takes two steps, a positive and a negative. Because walking by faith requires a choice you need to be clear on what you are choosing to do.

To encompass the situation and walk by faith you will want to do two things. First, you should destroy the other side, the HVP lie. You have to identify the false view in your mind and label it as such. See it for what it is, man's way of solving the problem. Acknowledge it as an approach to the situation that will fail. Second, we have to be certain of the DVP answer. We have to be convinced in the word of God. This is the positive side. The goal, of course, is to walk by faith by destroying the HVP lies and being convinced in the DVP answer.

Trust

And number three, we keep at it until we can truly **trust** the Lord. And when we do this we enjoy rest, inner peace, tranquility. I didn't say the stress goes away. I just said you are able to handle the stress properly.

Conclusion

Realize that it takes time to apply this strategy to our thinking. It won't work to try and apply this when you're emotionally upset and under high stress, there is not enough time to go searching around the Scriptures for a fragment to recall. The time to get the Scripture in your mind is when you're not under stress and have the peace, the time and opportunity to hear the Word of God. You want to read it, digest it, and think about it. You do this before the storms of life come, because you can't predict them.

As it is with other disciplines of life, we must train our minds to think through our response before we actually get there. In part that is what this course is all about. A time to think through the issues, and being taking the small trials of life that occur every day and practice using the word of God, practice thinking them through over and over and over so when the big thing hits, it's automatic and you RECALL, CONNECT, and TRUST!