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MORE THAN TOIL

A 5 PART DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY FOLLOWING
THE LIFE OF JOSEPH; UNPACKING THE LESIONS
FOR EVERYDAY DISCIPLES IN BUSINESS
LEADERSHIP

WEEK FOUR: Stewardship

Read:

Genesis 41:46 – 57 (For context read whole chapter)

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and travelled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷ During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. ⁴⁸ Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. ⁴⁹ Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰ Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. ⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵² The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

⁵³ The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. ⁵⁵ When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."

⁵⁶ When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. ⁵⁷ And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

Psalm 24

¹ The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,

the world, and all who live in it;

² for he founded it on the seas

and established it on the waters.

³ Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?

Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴ The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,

who does not trust in an idol

or swear by a false god.

⁵ They will receive blessing from the LORD

and vindication from God their Saviour.

⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.

⁷ Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory.

Read more:

Genesis 41 – 46

Reflect:

In 2018 the World Health Organization stated that world hunger is increasing with over 821 million people going hungry and over 20 million at risk of the most severe famine. Those working in the sector will often say that there is 'always *disease* between starvation and death'. What these health and development workers are referring to is that famine and starvation have multifaceted outcomes, the last of which is death. Famine is one of the most pressing global issues facing the world today, exacerbated significantly by the impacts of climate change which has made food production unprecedentedly precarious with unpredictable and extreme weather patterns.

As a result, there is a growing call to reshape our understanding of the natural world and our place within it. With the growth of benchmarks for better business such as BCorp, Future Fit and the UN Global Compact, business leaders and increasingly looking to move more towards a vision of business and humanity 'in communion' with creation, not dominating or exploiting it for our own direct gains.

Stewardship has long been the term used within the Christian community to describe this relationship with creation. Coupled with a prophetic vision, Joseph illustrates the far reaching impact of God-centered leadership that operates from a position of trust in what God calls him to do. In the midst of a famine so severe that "all the other lands" were without food, Joseph had ensured that Egypt, of which he was in charge had enough to feed both Egyptians and those from surrounding counties.

The statistics will be familiar, that between 70% - 90% of businesses fail to survive beyond 10 years. With as many as 60% failing to make it past 3 years. The reasons behind these company's collapse are many and varied, however a repeated issue is, 'We overreached'. Expenditure exceeding income and failing to build in financial safeguards, as well as misunderstanding the market remains the most common reasons why companies fail.

Our Psalm calls us to keep the main thing the main thing, remembering that everything is the Lords and we are called to steward what he entrusted us with. Successful stewardship requires a listening ear to the Holy Spirit so that our energy and resources are directed in a way that cannot only deliver a return for the business but go beyond, and from our excess serve those most in need. God cares deeply about your day to day and will guide, instruct and equip your leadership, vision and strategy; we are simply called to listen and act on what we hear.

Pray:

Simply opening yourself up to the possibility that God wants to use you in your business and workplace will transform the impact you can have. Ask God for a fresh and prophetic vision for your leadership so that your success enables the health and wellbeing of God's creation.