

## **Biblical Examples of Perseverance in Marriage**

The pressure on families today is almost unbearable at times. Despite the enormous challenges of modern society, it has always been difficult for families to live together happily and peacefully. This article explores parallels in the lives of the families in the book of Genesis and today. What we will see is that although the culture and society's attitude about marriage may have changed, the challenges and solutions are essentially the same. The family that thrives together is one that places others needs before their own (Phil. 2:3), and that submits to each other and to God's plan and purpose for their marriage and family (Eph. 5:21).

### **Adam and Eve: Enduring Through the Pain of Sin**

Adam and Eve met each other in the Garden of Eden. They lived in a perfect, sinless world. Every need was met before they had to ask. They both chose to sin and were forced to leave the Garden of Eden.

At the moment Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden they had to make a choice: blame each other for their current situation or work together to rebuild their lives. In a very real sense, the fate of mankind depended upon their decision. Fortunately, they realized they needed each other to survive outside the Garden of Eden and chose to stay together.

In this world, couples are often told they would be better off by themselves than married to their spouse. Given the hardships and difficulties of marriage, this often appears to be a true statement. However, you will never know what awesome miracles God plans for your marriage unless you choose to stay together and trust God.

### **Cain and Abel: Enduring Through Outbursts of Pride and Anger**

How is it possible that God's first family had to deal with the worst possible sin: murder of a brother? Was there some secret sin that was not dealt with early on in Cain's life that led to this terrible sin?

When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil they violated God's law. God told them that death was the consequence for sin. (Genesis 2:17.) The consequences were almost more than they could bear: death of their one son, Abel, and banishment of their other son, Cain.

Yet, Adam and Eve persevered by having another son, Seth. (Genesis 4:25.) Seth became the godly line from which Jesus Christ later was born. Fortunately, Adam and Eve did not give up on God or each other. Adam and Eve could have

responded to the tragedy by allowing themselves to feel anger, bitterness and resentment. This would not have solved the problem and likely resulted in further loss in their lives. They overcame the tragedy by trusting God and loving each other.

### **Noah: Enduring Through Obedience**

God gave Noah an impossible task: build an enormous ark that would take more than one hundred years to complete. (Genesis 6:8.) Not only was the task seemingly insurmountable, Noah had to do it in the face of ridicule and unbelief of those around him.

His daily obedience and perseverance over a long period of time saved both himself and his family. If he had chosen any other course of action than obedience, he would have perished with all the other unbelievers and naysayers.

We, too, are saved by obedience to God's word and belief in his promises. Our obedience not only affects us but those around us. Many friends and family members will be saved by your faith in Jesus Christ. Many marriages will be saved by your love and devotion to your spouse.

### **Abraham: Enduring While Waiting for God to Fulfill His Promise in His Timing**

Abraham and Sarah suffered many years without a child. Even after God told Abraham he would have an heir from "his own body" (Genesis 15:4), it took another 25 years before the promise was fulfilled in Isaac.

Waiting for God to fulfill his promises in his timing is very difficult for us. Abraham and Sarah became impatient and conceived a child out of wedlock. The result has been perpetual conflict between the descendents of Ishmael and the descendents of Isaac. Failure to wait upon God to fulfill his promise in his timing leads to painful consequences.

In our lives, God gives us many promises from the Bible. One promise God gives is in Jeremiah 29:11: "I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you to give you a future and a hope." Often the circumstances of life seem just the opposite of this verse. When life does not match up to God's promise, then we must continue to believe God and wait for him to bring about his promise in his perfect timing. Failure to wait for God's timing always produces less than God's best for our lives.

### **Isaac: Enduring With Peace that Passes Understanding**

Isaac is an example of grace under pressure. His submission to his father's authority and will for his life led to tremendous blessings for him.

Isaac never hesitated to follow his father up the mountain where he would be offered as a sacrifice. Once he realized his father's plans, he willingly lay down his life. (Genesis 22:9-10.) Later on, Isaac submitted to his father's will for a wife and allowed his father's servant to choose a wife for him. Both of these acts took great faith and trust in his father. If Isaac had rebelled and refused his father's will, he would have missed the miracles God wanted to do in this life.

Frequently, God leads us into places that require him to do a miracle for us. If you find yourself caught in a difficult marriage with no hope, then you need God to do a miracle. The first step to experiencing a miracle is faith in God's ability to do the impossible. Enduring the trials of life with God's peace is a supernatural act that requires total submission to the will of the Father. Trusting God to do a miracle requires great faith which can produce a miraculous outcome.

### **Jacob: Enduring the Consequences of Sin and Separation**

Jacob was the second born son of Isaac and Rebekah. Before Jacob was born, God spoke to Rebekah and revealed the "older will serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23.) Jacob's name means "heel catcher" (or figuratively, "he deceives").

Jacob lived up to his name when he tricked his older brother, Esau, to give up his birthright for a bowl of red stew. Then, Jacob tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the birthright and blessing due Esau as the first born. Due to Esau's anger over the deception, Jacob was forced to leave his family and did not return for over 20 years. Jacob learned a difficult lesson that whatever a man sows this he will also reap. (Galatians 6:7.) Ultimately, Jacob learned to trust God and stop relying upon his own scheming to get his way. (God later changed Jacob's name to "Israel" which means "governed by God".)

Sometimes families are divided by jealousy over unequal treatment or blessings given to one family member but not to another. What families need to remember is that all wealth comes from God. (See Deut. 8:18; and Prov. 10:22.) God is much more concerned about reconciling families than material possessions. Therefore, as believers we must be quick to forgive each other and trust God to provide for our material needs.

### **Judah: Enduring Through Repentance**

Judah was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Judah participated in the plot to sell his brother Joseph into slavery and lie to Jacob about Joseph's death. Judah also failed by having sexual relations with his daughter-in-law Tamar.

Despite these failures, Judah had a miraculous transformation of character. When standing before the king of Egypt (who unbeknownst to him was his long lost brother Joseph) he confessed his sins and offered to take full responsibility

(and punishment) to save his brothers and father from further pain. As a result, Judah received a tremendous blessing from his father (Genesis 49:8) and his descendants included King David and the King of Kings, Jesus Christ.

Judah is a wonderful example of God's love and forgiveness. The Bible tells us that love covers a multitude of sins. (Proverbs 10:12.) Because each one of us has been forgiven so much by God, we must forgive each other (especially those who are members of our own family). (See Colossians 3:13.)

## **Joseph: Enduring Through Faith**

Joseph was born with a special gift: the ability to interpret dreams and prophecy the future. Guided by his youth and arrogance, Joseph misused this gift and caused his brothers to become jealous of him.

Joseph was forced to endure difficult trials at the hands of his brothers. First, he was thrown into a pit and left to die. Then, he was sold into slavery. Later, he was falsely accused by this master's wife and made to go to prison.

Joseph could easily have become angry and bitter at both God and his brothers for this harsh treatment. Instead, Joseph's character was developed during the trials and he learned to trust God and faithfully performed his daily duties while waiting for God to deliver him.

God had a wonderful plan for Joseph's life. God used these trials to mold and make Joseph into a man capable of accomplishing a God-sized project: saving the whole world from famine. If you are currently in a situation that is beyond your ability to endure or comprehend what God is doing, then take heart that God will deliver you and use your trials for a purpose beyond what you can imagine.