



Letters to the Next President #3 :: Once Upon a Time in the Middle East **{Andy Stanley}**

INTRODUCTION

Does the government exist to serve the demands of the majority? Or does the government exist to protect the rights of the minority? Either way, a leader that succumbs solely to the voices of public opinion becomes imprisoned to *pleasing* the people instead of *leading* the people. The story of Pharaoh and Joseph illustrates the values of a leader who had the courage to ignore the complaints of the overindulged and do what was right. Granted, political leaders have issues that come across their desks every day. But how much more effective would their leadership be if they led with the future in mind, rather than responding to the demands of public opinion? In other words: *lead us, don't try to please us.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Complaints about rising fuel prices and health care issues are *rich nation* problems - problems that surface as a result of excess resources. What other rich nation (or rich people) problems can you think of?
2. Do you tend to be more disciplined or less disciplined when you have an excess of resources? (e.g., discretionary income, free time)
3. Read Genesis 41. What are some exemplary leadership decisions that Pharaoh made that you could adopt in your positions of leadership?
4. Although the Egyptians showed little respect for the Hebrews, Pharaoh did not let personal prejudice blind him from good advice. He chose to listen to a wide variety of voices, including outsiders. Where do you turn for advice?
5. Genesis 47 records that Joseph and Pharaoh benefited from the decision to be disciplined during their years of excess so they could survive during their years of famine. What decisions are you facing right now that may not be popular or well received, but will yield better results for the future?

THINK ABOUT IT

Many of our problems as a country have resulted from a lack of discipline during periods of excess. The same is true for our personal lives. When we have more discretionary income, we're less likely to be disciplined about our spending habits. When we have more free time, we're less likely to budget our time wisely. While there is nothing wrong with enjoying our excess resources, the principles behind Joseph and Pharaoh's leadership emphasize an ability to lead proactively, looking at what may lie ahead, instead of responding reactively, constrained by current demands. How can you be more proactive in your areas of leadership?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, identify an area in your life where you may be trying to *please* the people around you instead of *leading* them.



CHANGING YOUR MIND

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. And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

Genesis 41:56-57