

Celebrating Educational Adversity

By Vernard T. Gant

It is relatively easy and natural to celebrate successes and victories whether in education or life accomplishments. It is more challenging, on the other hand, to celebrate the path that God often chooses for His people to get to those accomplishments and successes. Consider Joseph whose brothers sold him into slavery landing him in the house of a government official and finally in the government's prison. Joseph did not understand why things happened the way they did. It was not the path that he would have chosen for his life in his desire to follow God's leading. On the contrary, there were unwelcomed "assignments." While he had had some successes that were celebratory in nature, the circumstances and people along the way certainly were not.

Unbeknownst to Joseph at the time, however, was that the path God chose was a vital part of ultimately equipping him for his life assignment. It was a time of incubation; a time of preparing him for something much bigger than the immediate surrounding people or working conditions. God was prepping him to do what he would be the best in the world at—God's instrument to address a national crisis. Even when he was "reassigned" from Potiphar's house to Pharaoh's prison, Joseph was still being prepared by God to address a greater cause.

Like Joseph, those in public education have been serving faithfully in the government's house (public schools) but often under difficult circumstances and challenging people. They have been placed there by God to do what they are uniquely qualified to offer—a kingdom-class education. What the Lord has been doing in their lives at their assigned schools is much greater than just the school, or classroom, or the courses they teach. As in Joseph's case, the challenges, opposition, and difficulties are designed to prepare and position them to address a national crisis—the educational plight of the nation's vulnerable children.

Throughout the nation children are being threatened by an educational drought that has been rendering them *thin, gaunt, and blighted* like the cows and grain of Pharaoh's dream. God's educators are His Josephs whose paths are being orchestrated by the Lord to equip and use them as His instruments to alter their students' life trajectories.

Joseph learned to celebrate the adverse experiences he once bemoaned. Note his overall assessment of his journey:

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. (Genesis 50:20)

God-ordained journeys all follow a similar path and land at a similar place. The Lord orchestrates educations, placements, life experiences and even difficulties and challenges to bring you to where you are for such a time as this—to *save many children alive*. There are millions of children in this nation who are on a collision course with failure because they are socially and academically at risk. They face imminent academic death and the resulting social consequences. God's educators are His response to this national threat. They are His

compassionate response to their schools, their students, and their parents so that the blighted years give way to the years of plenty.

With this perspective, God's educators can celebrate their journeys, even the unwelcomed aspects. They can follow the biblical admonition to:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that... (James 1:2 NIV)

God's educators celebrate the outcomes. They celebrate the successes. They celebrate the accomplishments. God's educators equally celebrate the paths to getting there.