

# The Dispatch

## The August 2022: Adversity – Adapting, Overcoming, and Transforming

Twenty years ago, a [Harvard Business Review article by Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas](#) identified “intense, often traumatic, always unplanned experiences” as leadership “crucibles.” Their point was that how we respond to adversity greatly informs our leadership path and skills. Adversity in some form is often present among participants in a family business, and in this issue of the *Dispatch*, Davon, Bill, and Ethan each present a particular way of dealing with adversity. Whether one adapts to, and changes from, an ever-present adversity (Davon); whether one overcomes adversity the way Joseph did in the Bible (Bill); or whether one transforms adversity into opportunity (Ethan), it is important recognize how adversity builds character, fosters resilience, and contributes to wisdom. Thanks for reading and feel free to reply. -- [Lance](#)

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### Do we overcome, or adapt to, adversity?

[Davon Cook](#)

When reflecting on the topic of overcoming adversity, my mind skittered through examples among family, friends, and business clients. But then I found myself asking, “What counts as adversity?”

Is it a painful death of those too young? A middle schooler losing both parents to Covid in 2020? Chronic illness that impacts your life every single day? Not being able to put food on the table? I have examples in each of those categories. Some of those folks would not characterize their response as having “overcome.” They’ve survived and adapted but have not conquered in the sense of the adversity being *over*.

There’s another tier of adversities, from floods obliterating your farm or home to having a learning disability to many other challenging situations. I realized the only value in a rating scale of adversity is to gain perspective and appreciate the blessings we *do* have. Maybe the “overcoming” part isn’t any specific point in time of having *beat* the adversity. Rather, it’s being open to the molding and shaping that adversity brings. It’s recognizing change will be needed and having the fortitude to embrace that change. It’s having the persistence to keep plodding along even though it feels like you’re a long way from overcoming.

This reminds me of a quote from Anne Lamott’s [Help, Thanks, Wow](#), “Grace can be the experience of a second wind, when even though what you want is clarity and resolution, what you get is stamina and poignancy and the strength to hang on.” Substitute the words “overcoming adversity” for “grace.”

I ask you, how is your adversity--large or small--molding and changing you?

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### Joseph in Prison: A Biblical Story of Overcoming Adversity

[Bill Long](#)

Davon’s quotation of Anne Lamott, and especially the words “stamina” and “strength,” are particularly apt in describing the way that the biblical character of Joseph faced, and overcame, adversity. Recall that Joseph’s brothers had sold him into servitude in Egypt, but that he won respect in his employer’s eyes because of his competence in all aspects of household management.

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But another setback came his way when he was falsely accused of having designs on his employer's wife. Prison was Joseph's next stop.

In prison Joseph met two former employees of Pharaoh. He accurately interpreted their dreams for them. Even though one was restored to his former position and promised to "put in a good word" for Joseph, Joseph was conveniently "forgotten" by the man, and languished two more years in prison. Finally, a disquieting dream by Pharaoh led to Joseph's release, successful interpretations of Pharaoh's dream, and advancement in Pharaoh's administration.

Though the story has layers of engaging complexity, three lessons on adversity are apparent to me. First, Joseph *just kept working* even when things looked terribly bleak for him. He was unwilling to see his current situation as the final word of his life. Second, he knew *he needed help from others* to reverse his situation. He had to rely on others despite having no leverage with them. Finally, he never abandoned his sense that *God was at work for good* in his life. Those three things are key to overcoming, or adapting to, adversity, both then and now.

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## **From Adversity to Opportunity—A Personal Story**

[Ethan Smith](#)

Moving from my hometown, where my roots and family comforts lie, to a city where I knew no one, created complications for me. The career and personal growth benefits for me were clear, but I couldn't predict the emotional toll the move would take. Being alone presented me with a struggle I had not yet felt.

One phone call would change all of that.

The call I made was to a potential client, an experienced rancher, who lived about an hour outside of the city. This older gentleman combined a love for agriculture with a welcoming personality. I quickly found myself seated at the dinner table with his kids and grandkids. In just a short time we progressed from acquaintances to business partners and, ultimately, to family. He would introduce me as his "boy" to people we met. Through his stories and hospitable style, he provided me real comfort in this unknown land.

The adversity I was experiencing with the move, though rather minor in the grand scheme of things, changed with one phone call. I was able to take that adversity and see it as an opportunity. Now, instead of seeing myself as alone, I saw the opportunity to have new experiences with a family that was not my own. I know it isn't always this simple to overcome adversity. Yet I am thankful that a moment of adversity developed into a relationship full of opportunity.