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The Power of a Calling (A): Insights from Joseph's Journey

Truly what is here preached is not simply a means of making one's way in the world, but a peculiar ethic. The infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty. That is the essence of the matter. It is not mere business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an ethos. This is the quality which interests us.

—Max Weber on Calling

“The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.” 1904/1992, p. 51

At the height of his career, with a wife, two children, and symbols of success, Joseph could hardly believe his life—and neither could his siblings. While separated from his family and working abroad, Joseph's many accomplishments catapulted him into a position of political and economic leadership. Years of dirty work, gang violence, and a fragmented family after his mother died were all a distant memory. Joseph was no longer just the big-mouth little brother. He was a highly capable, respected, and internationally renowned leader with real power. His counter-cyclical economic policies steered a nation through economic surplus, crisis, and recovery. So much had changed since they were kids—or had it?

When the family reunited after 22 years, past hurts and deceptions seemed to disappear. In reality, they just never mentioned old offenses, for the sake of peace and harmony. But family secrets, schisms, and drama are often amplified in the midst of a crisis, which is what happened when their elderly father got sick. As Joseph's father uttered his last words, smoldering sibling rivalries reignited. After the funeral, Joseph's siblings started conspiring once again.

In the prime of his career, it seemed that Joseph had it all—except healthy relationships with his family of origin. His extraordinary power and wealth further widened the gap between them. How could people from the same family be so different? When Joseph's siblings saw the fulfillment of his seemingly impossible childhood dream, they looked at him with awe and incredulity. When his nieces and nephews looked at him,

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