

Lesson 3: Life of Joseph, God's Man--Temptation (Genesis 37-39)

Introduction:

Joseph was sold to a slave trader headed for market in Egypt. There according to Genesis 39:1, ". . . Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the **captain of the bodyguard**, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there."

I. JOSEPH'S HOPES ON THE FAST TRACK

A. Joseph, the slave

1. Joseph was so effective in whatever menial jobs Potiphar gave him to do that he soon became a house servant. This was no coincidence. Genesis 39:2 says, "**And the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.**"

In Matthew 25:21 Jesus taught this principle in a parable about a master and his servant. "*His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'*"

2. Before long he was promoted to the position of personal servant to Potiphar himself. Why? Genesis 39:3 tells us, "*Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and {how} the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.*" Notice that Joseph must have given glory to God to cause his boss to recognize God as the source.

B. Joseph, the steward

1. Verses 4 and 5 continue, "*So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.*"

"And it came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field."

It was a win, win situation. God blessed Joseph, Joseph did his job, and Potiphar got richer and richer. Since Potiphar was a polytheist he just added Joseph's God to his list of deities.

2. In fact, verse 6 goes on to say, "*So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him {there} he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. . . ."*

So, things were so good with Joseph as his Executive Assistant that Potiphar didn't have to do anything except plan his daily menu.

II. JOSEPH'S HOPES HIT A SNAG

A. Joseph, the hunk

1. Or, as the Bible puts it, *"Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.*
2. Potiphar's wife came on to Joseph. Actually she mounted a concerted campaign to seduce him.

Genesis 39:7 *And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."*

Then in verses 10-12, *"And it came about as she spoke to Joseph day after day, that he did not listen to her to lie beside her, {or} be with her. Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. And she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!"*

B. Joseph, the man of God

1. Genesis 39: 8, 9 and the end of verse 12 record Joseph's reaction,

But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me {here,} my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. "There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

2. But she was not so easily rebuffed. Verses 13-15 record her reaction. *When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had fled outside, she called to the men of her household, and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. "And it came about when he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled, and went outside."*

III. JOSEPH'S HOPES DASHED

A. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

1. How dare this mere slave refuse her desires. Potiphar's wife follows through when her husband gets home.

"So she left his garment beside her until his master came home." (v 16)

2. She blames him for what happened.

*Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, **whom you brought to us**, came in to me to make sport of me; and it happened as I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled outside." (vv 17-18)*

B. "Nothing is deadlier than a jealous husband."

1. She knew what button to push because it worked. *Now it came about when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," that his anger burned. (v 19)*
3. He took it as a personal insult and acted accordingly. *So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. (v 20)*

IV. JOSEPH'S CHARACTER EMERGES

Joseph's hopes are shattered but this actually presents a perfect opportunity to prove his character. A man of God will react like a man of God. First let's see why and how he stood firm under this great temptation.

A. Why?

1. Because of who he was

Although Joseph was raised in a questionable atmosphere he realized his true heritage. He was a child of the covenant and a follower of the "one true God." Even with all the problems he had witnessed he also saw and heard of great acts of faith and obedience. [Note: They all made it into the Hebrews 11 "Hall of Fame.]

2. Because he would not betray a trust

There is no doubt in my mind that there were plenty of examples of people taking advantage of their positions of privilege in Egypt. We see two, the baker and cupbearer in following chapters.

But Joseph was righteous and could not take advantage of one who trusted him so fully.

Remember verses 8 and 9, *But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me {here,} my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. **There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife.**"*

3. Because he recognized sin is sin

In a society of loose morals as a single, attractive, and healthy young man he was a sitting duck. But he recognized that he was being tempted not only to sin against Potiphar but, more importantly, his sin would be against his Lord.

"How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God". (v 9)

B. How?

1. He did not even begin to compromise.

He didn't try to sneak as close to sin as possible. He didn't glory in the fact that he was wanted. He did his best to avoid situations that put him at risk.

2. He practiced his belief.

He knew that all sin is sin against God and God knows what we do and rewards the righteous and punishes the guilty.

3. He got out of there.

In fact, he finally physically ran from it. *"And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside" (v 12)*

Now what did it get him to be faithful to God and his boss? He went directly to jail, did not collect \$200 dollars, didn't get a medal. Next week we'll pick the story up in the king's special prison. For now let's see what we might have learned so far.

Lessons:

Three things about temptation:

1. It is often complex and very appealing.

In whatever form temptation comes it can present a dilemma with much riding on our final decision. [Example from Silver Assocs.]

In order to recognize sin as sin we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and immersed in the Word of God.

2. It often comes at the time of our greatest success.

In the above case, it seemed like an ideal job. [Explain]

1Cor. 10:12--13 *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee . . ."*

3. It often comes from unexpected sources.

Satan uses people or things that are close to us or seemingly innocent. In the above circumstance it was a little old lady. [Explain]

Three ways to defeat temptation.

1. Remember who we are.

We are God's chosen ones, bought at a terrible price. We shouldn't try to live as close as you can get to the edge of sin and if we find ourselves there we should flee.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20--*"Flee immorality. Every {other} sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."*

2. Recognize all sin as sin against God.

There are no small sins so we need to allow the Spirit of God to sensitize us to recognize it for what it is. God does know everything and we get away with nothing.

Job 34:21--*"For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps."*

Psalms 139:7-8*"Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there."*

3. Remain faithful by not betraying a trust.

We need to learn to be ultimately loyal to family, friends, employers, especially other members of the body, and above all to God. There are people trusting in us not to yield and following our examples.

John 13:34--"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

4. Realize you become what you dwell on.

Little in media is pure therefore we need to read, listen, and watch critically. Perhaps it would be wise balance our time spent with media with our time spent in the Word of God.

Philippians 4:8—"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."