

Midweek Study

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TRUSTING GOD IN THE DARKNESS

Genesis 37-50

Integrity: Who You Are When Nobody's Watching

(Genesis 39:1-23)

1. The Successful **Accomplishments** (Genesis 37:36; 39:1-6)

- Psalm 1:1-3 describes the success of the righteous person.

2. The Seductive **Advances** (Genesis 39:6b-7, 10-13)

- V.6b - "Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance." The Jewish Publication Society translates this as "Now Joseph was well built and handsome."
- She "lifted up her eyes" at him (v.7, NASB margin). That ancient phrase meant "to look with desire or lust," as our context demonstrates and as Section 25 of Hammurabi's (1792-1750 BC) famous code of laws shows.¹
- Wiersbe writes, "Potiphar's wife treated Joseph in a humiliating way by inviting him into her bed. She may have reasoned, 'After all, isn't he a Jew and a slave at that? And doesn't he work for my husband and therefore also work for me? Since my husband isn't here, I'm in charge; and Joseph is my employee. It's his job to take orders.' She treated Joseph like a thing, not like a person; and when her advances were rejected, she turned against him."²

3. The Secure **Answer** (Genesis 39:8-9)

Learning From Joseph's Example:

- Be aware of God's presence** (v.9b - How can I sin against God?)
 - David and Bathsheba (Psalm 51:4, "Against You and You only have I sinned...")
 - Psalm 139:7-8 - "Where can I go from Your presence?"
- Remember the goodness of God** (v.8-9)
- Call sin, sin** (v.9b - "How can I do this great wickedness and sin?")
- Don't play with fire** (v.10 - "He would not lie with her or be with her.")
 - He who would not fall ought not to walk in slippery places.
 - Proverbs 7:6-27 and Proverbs 5 - stay away from the adulterous woman.

¹ Ronald Youngblood, *Faith of Our Fathers* (Glendale, CA: G/L Publications, 1976), 114.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Authentic, "Be" Commentary Series* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1997), 95-96.

- E. **Realize what is at stake.** God brought Jesus through the line of the Jewish people. The Jewish people only survived because Joseph was put in charge in Egypt. Joseph was put in charge of Egypt because he interpreted dreams while in prison and the chief butler told Pharaoh about him. Joseph was in prison because he was falsely accused of immorality, which was only done because he was a man of integrity. Humanly speaking, our salvation came about, in part because Joseph refused to cave to sexual temptation.³

Joseph lost his coat, but he kept his character.⁴ 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee youthful lusts.”

4. The Slanderous **Accusation** (Genesis 39:14-20)

William Congreve once said, “Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.”⁵

- These two stories are similar but have differences. In the first account to the servants, she implies Potiphar is the cause of the mocking – “**he has brought into us a Hebrew to mock us**” (v.14), and everyone was mocked. In the second account to Potiphar, she only accuses Joseph of mocking her (not the others), and Potiphar is only seen as bringing him.
- It is significant that for this accusation of attempted rape, Potiphar only places him in prison (and does not put him to death). Thomas writes, “For appearance’ sake Potiphar must take some action, but the precise action taken tells its own tale. He evidently did not credit her story.”⁶

5. The Sovereign **Approval** (Genesis 39:21-23)

Genesis 39 displays this chiasm: (a literary device in which words or concepts are repeated in reverse order)

- A – **Joseph is low, but God is with him** (39:1-5)
- B – Potiphar **trusts** Joseph (39:6)
- C – Potiphar’s wife wants to **lie** with Joseph (39:7)
- D – Joseph Refuses (39:8-10)
- C – Potiphar’s wife chooses to **lie** about Joseph (39:11-19)
- B – Potiphar **trusts** Joseph (39:19b) (note: he doesn’t execute him, but only puts him in prison!)
- A – **Joseph is low, but God is with him** (39:20-23)

Applications:

- 1) **Bloom where you are planted.** Sold as a slave, Bob Russell writes, “Instead of becoming bitter, Joseph bloomed where he was planted. He became the administrator of Potiphar’s household.” Thrown into prison, he writes, “Instead of wallowing in self-pity and anger, Joseph again bloomed where he was planted. He gained favor with the prison warden.”⁷
- 2) **Suffering may be for someone else’s benefit.** Joseph is suffering for the entire Jewish Nation and the world (since his actions will save the lineage of Christ, and thus provide salvation to the world!). **Galatians 6:9 says, “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”**
- 3) **God can help you stand against temptation.** See **1 Corinthians 10:13**. Bob Russell gives these principles:⁸
 - God’s standards are permanent, even in Egypt.
 - Temptation is normal, even for the godly.
 - Yielding is disastrous, especially for the influential.
 - Victory is possible, but only for the determined.
 - The rewards for faithfulness, but not immediate.

³ This idea is adapted from D. A. Carson, “The Temptation of Joseph”, at Champion Forest Baptist Church, May 1, 2013, www.youtube.com.

⁴ Bob Russell, *Good from Evil* (Louisville, KY: Bob Russell Ministries, 2007), 17.

⁵ William Congreve, as quoted by Charles R. Swindoll, *Joseph: A Man of Integrity and Forgiveness* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 31.

⁶ W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), 373.

⁷ Russell, 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.