

Genesis

Chapter 39:1-23

This week we get back to Joseph.

✚ **Gen 39:1-6** ¹ *Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.* ² *The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.* ³ *And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand.* ⁴ *So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority.* ⁵ *So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field.* ⁶ *Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.*

Two weeks ago we read of how Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers to the Ishmaelites. Well, the Ishmaelites found a buyer who was Potiphar. Potiphar was a captain of the guards of Pharaoh. As we learned in past studies, the name Pharaoh was a title and not the man's name. This is also not the same Pharaoh that Moses met with in the book of Exodus.

Reading the bible and God's words to Abraham in Genesis, we learned that God told Abraham that the children of Israel would be held in captivity for 400 years in Egypt, which they were not in at this time, although Joseph was in a sense, but God was speaking of all of the children of Israel, not just one.

So who was this Potiphar that bought Joseph?

His name means: *bull of Africa; a fat bull*. When you think of bulls you think of someone huge and strong. Being the captain of the guards, it would be safe to say that this was a very big man, someone you wouldn't want to mess with.

His name also signifies one "*devoted to the sun*" the local deity of On, Heliopolis, or Ra a sun god. In Egypt they had all kinds of different gods, and one of them was the sun god, who this man probably worshipped.

He was the Captain of the guard or chief of the executioners. This would be like the chief of police or the one who would throw the switch at an execution.

The Naves topical bible also implies that he was a eunuch even though he was married. Meaning he was unable to have sexual relations with a woman. This may help explain the actions of his wife, as we will see.

Reading on, we see that Joseph was a hard worker and the Lord had blessed him in this. Notice it doesn't say that Joseph cried out, "*Why me Lord, what did I do wrong? Have you left me or forgot about me?*" No Joseph took what was given to him and made the

best of it. Kind of like, “*When you are given lemons, make lemonade*”. Or “*Looking past the thorns and seeing the beautiful rose.*”

Also in verse 3 it says something very interesting “***And his master saw that the LORD was with him.***” Did you catch that? Potiphar, who was a worshipper of a sun god, noticed that the Lord was with Joseph. Potiphar didn’t say that this sun god was with Joseph but acknowledged the Lord, our God in his life.

Think about that for a minute. You may not like the job that you currently have. You may not like where you live or maybe you are even unhappy in your marriage. But as the Lord was with Joseph, He’s with you too.

You can whine and complain all you want, but then that only makes others look down on you and you don’t have favor with your boss. Who would want to become a Christian if all they did was whine all the time. By doing so, it’s saying to others that God isn’t taking care of you. But if you would acknowledge that the Lord is with you and has allowed you to be where you are, and you are enjoying what God has given you, then you will be blessed. Maybe not right away, in fact things may seem to be getting worse as we will see happens with Joseph. But Joseph took those extra lemons (so to speak) that were given to him and made more lemonade.

Potiphar had so much trust in Joseph that he didn’t have to worry about a thing and left everything to Joseph to take care of. I like the way the NLT puts this.

☞ **Gen 39:6 (NLT)** *So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't have a worry in the world, except to decide what he wanted to eat! Now Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man.*

Potiphar’s only worry was what he wanted for dinner. Are you trusted like this at work? What about at school or even your home?

☞ **Gen 39:7-9** *⁷ And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." ⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. ⁹ "There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*

Note two things here; first at the end of verse 6 it says that Joseph was a hunk of a man, then at the beginning of verse 7 it says, “***after these things.***” After what things? This would be after the Lord had blessed Joseph in all that he did and was trusted with all that Potiphar had.

This is one of Satan's ploys to get to you; he will attack when things are going great. We see this with another man in the bible, Job.

† **Job 1:1-3 & 8-11 (NLT)** *There was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless, a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters. 3 He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred teams of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys, and he employed many servants. He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area.*

8 Then the LORD asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and will have nothing to do with evil." 9 Satan replied to the LORD, "Yes, Job fears God, but not without good reason! 10 You have always protected him and his home and his property from harm. You have made him prosperous in everything he does. Look how rich he is! 11 But take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!"

But God knew what Job could handle, just as He knows what you can handle.

† **1 Cor 10:13** *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

God knows you can handle what you are going through this very moment. If God has faith in you, shouldn't you have faith in yourself also? But we can't rely on our own strength, but must acknowledge the Lord's strength in our lives. How do we do this? By taking the way of escape that the Lord has given you.

† **Psalms 18:1-2** *¹ I will love You, O LORD, my strength. ² The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

Trust that the Lord's way is the best way and don't try to battle Satan on your own. You will lose every time if you do!

So Joseph had it made here, he was a slave but he pretty much had the run of the house. He ate well and had a nice place to live. Things were just going as good as they could under the circumstances (of being a slave). But then Satan comes along and tries to destroy Joseph's blessings that were from God, by tempting him with a woman. I also noticed that it only says that Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph, not his wife. If Potiphar's wife had known this, she may not have messed with Joseph, because if she did and he was taken away (as he will be) then the blessings would also be gone from Potiphar's house.

Notice that God didn't stop this either, but God even allowed it. Why, to strengthen and build Joseph for what was to come, as well as to teach him of what he was to become.

Think about it, as we read on, we read that Joseph was made Pharaoh's right hand man, just as he was with Potiphar. As Potiphar trusted Joseph with all that he had, Pharaoh will also trust Joseph with his entire kingdom. Joseph couldn't go from being a slave in Egypt to being second in command to Pharaoh. No, he had to learn and grow. Even Moses who thought he was the deliverer of the children of Israel had to wait 80 years for the Lord to prepare him. You see, Moses tried when he was 40 to be the deliverer of Israel, but failed.

† **Ex 2:11-14** ¹¹ *Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.* ¹² *So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.* ¹³ *And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?"* ¹⁴ *Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" So Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!"*

But 40 years later God called Moses when He knew Moses was ready.

† **Ex 3:10** *"Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."*

So it is with Joseph, and so it is with you too. We see these great Pastors or Christian musicians and think we want to be just like them, right now. But they had to go through years of preparation by the Lord to be in the position they are in now. The same is true of you also. The Lord may very well want to use in a great way, but He also has to prepare you. It's sad to read about Christian musicians who leave the ministry to now sing songs to please the world instead of the Lord or even of those who left the ministry.

What happens to people like this? The Lord has not finished preparing them for their ministry and they go full bore into it, and fail just like we just read with Moses. When we try to do things of our own strength, or abilities, we always fall flat on our faces. But when the Lord works through us, He will carry us through anything that comes our way, just as He did with Joseph.

So Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph, but his response is that Potiphar has trusted him with everything in his house, but the key response of Joseph is, ***"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"***

When you try to make excuses for not sinning, that's when you will most likely fall into sin. But when you acknowledge God and realize that you are not only sinning, but the sin you commit is against God, and then you are on the right track to keeping away from that sin. Just as Joseph here was not making excuses, but was saying that God's ways are not

the ways of their gods or their ways. God has a better way, and that way is to say no. One simple word. We tell our children to just say no, but do we practice what we preach to our kids?

Today we know by reading the bible that the way to battle temptation is with the word of God. But back here in Joseph's time there was no bible. Remember that Moses was the one who wrote the first five books of the bible, and he wasn't born for at least 400 years from this time. So how did Joseph battle against Satan if he didn't have the bible? Notice we always say "*the word of God*", not "*the bible*." We know today the bible is the word of God revealed to man through the Holy Spirit. But Joseph didn't have the bible, but he did have his father and grandfather's and great-grandfather's teaching of God's word.

When we think of God's word and using it to battle against Satan, we think of quoting the book of the bible, the chapter and verse (like John 3:16). If you read the original writings, there are no chapters or verses. Man put in chapters and verses to help people remember the bible, because it's now broken up into smaller parts, which could more easily be remembered instead of trying to remember a whole book of the bible at once.

But for some people this can be a hindrance or they think, "*I can't remember all these chapters along with the verses.*" But don't be discouraged, I have a very bad memory, but when I need God's word to come back to remembrance, the Holy Spirit brings it back to me. I may not remember the chapter or verse number, but I do remember God's word, which is the important part.

If you just yell out John 4:24, it means nothing to Satan, but if you yell out: "***God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***" (Which is John 4:24) then Satan takes notice, because you are speaking and quoting God's word. And when you do this you are remembering and most likely living God's word.

In order to use God's word to battle Satan, you can't just yell it out, but you must also believe it and live it, just like Jesus did when He was tempted.

So, does Potiphar's wife listen to Joseph and stop badgering him?

☞ **Gen 39:10** *So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.*

Potiphar's wife just doesn't give up on Joseph. She hounds him day after day. Do you feel like this sometimes? Like this sin just keeps after you, day after day and you wonder when will it ever stop? I know there are sins in my life that Satan tempts me with everyday, he seems to never let up. But as we learned last week, just because a thought comes into your head doesn't make it a sin, only when you follow through with that thought does it become sin.

The same thing was happening with Joseph here, everyday he was confronted with Potiphar's wife, who was probably very beautiful. But this doesn't mean that Joseph was sinning because he was tempted, and the fact that he would say no everyday means he did not give into the sin.

So just hang in there, even if you are tempted everyday like Joseph was. Keep saying no!

✂ **Gen 39:11-18** ¹¹ *But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside,* ¹² *that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.* ¹³ *And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside,* ¹⁴ *that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.* ¹⁵ *"And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside."* ¹⁶ *So she kept his garment with her until his master came home.* ¹⁷ *Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me;* ¹⁸ *"so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."*

Talk about temptation, you have a beautiful woman ripping your clothes off wanting to have sex with you. Also remember Joseph was probably 18-20 years old at this time, and at this young age that's exactly what Joseph was facing here.

When temptation gets to tough there is only one thing to do, RUN!

Sin causes others to do some strange things, one is it causes people to blame others. When others wont sin with you or wont condone your sin, you become angry with them and start trying to get back at them just like Potiphar's wife was doing when *she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.*

Notice Potiphar's wife blames her husband for what had happened *"The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us"*

Or as it would probably said today, *"You brought this guy here and he tried to rape me"* she even had evidence of this which was Joseph's clothes. But the evidence she had was of her own sin and not Joseph's.

You also mix the truth with lies.

"The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; "so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."

The mocking was not Joseph's but her own even against her own husband. She lifted her voice all right, but it was to Joseph to lie with her, and Joseph did run leaving his garment with her, not because he was about to be caught, but because he was fleeing from sin.

See how ugly sin makes a person? Even though this was a very beautiful woman, it had turned her into an ugly monster.

✧ **Gen 39:19-20** ¹⁹ *So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused. ²⁰ Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.*

You may read this and think, "See, what good does it do to resist sin, you still get into trouble and you are punished by God just for being tempted."

If you feel that way then you haven't read the entire story. Hang in there until we finish the book of Genesis. I'm sure you'll feel different. Plus God was never punishing Joseph.

So Potiphar's wife tells him a lie about what happens and Potiphar gets angry. What does he do? He has Joseph thrown in jail.

This tells me two things.

First, remember who Potiphar was? He was the captain of the guards or chief executioner, if he felt that Joseph was at fault then he would have had Joseph killed, probably right on the spot. But I think Potiphar knew his wife too well, and it's possible that she had sinned with other men before this time.

Potiphar also knew that Joseph was a Godly man and I don't think he really thought that Joseph would do such a thing. But having such a high standing in Egypt, he couldn't accuse his wife, who was an Egyptian, and find a Hebrew innocent, so he just had Joseph thrown in jail instead of killing him, since he knew he was innocent. Scripture is not clear, but that's just my thoughts.

Second, God knew of Joseph's innocence and even though it may not seem like it, God was still with Joseph and protected him. This is another reason, and actually the main reason that Joseph wasn't executed. We see this as we finish off this week's study.

✧ **Gen 39:21-23** ²¹ *But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²² And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. ²³ The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.*

Notice once again that the Lord was with Joseph, and also notice that Joseph once again has the same type of job and same trust.

This is the second time that God was with Joseph and had put him into the same position. Just more evidence that God was preparing Joseph for his big job. Which would save hundreds of thousands of lives.

Closing this week's study, is there a temptation that you are facing, possibly at work or somewhere else that keeps attacking you everyday? Do you wonder if you will make it? Are you at the point that you feel like it's become too hard and you are about to give in?

Maybe it's another man or woman at work that has caught your eye or is trying to. This person seems to be in your face everyday tempting you with his or her words or they dress to impress you coming as close to you as they can physically. Maybe they suggest harmless things like going to lunch or have a drink after work. They will add that others are going too and he or she would like it if you came along. You continually say "no", but it seems to be getting harder to say that little word. What should you do?

Take Joseph's example and RUN. I don't mean just get up and leave (unless you are at the point that you really need to). But maybe it's time to leave your job for something else. It may be comfortable there and you are in good standing with your co-workers and your boss. Why should you have to leave because of some man or woman? How about to honor God and taking the way of escape that He has given you! Joseph fled even though he knew what the consequences could be. He could have stayed there and given in to this woman and continued on with his great job. But he chose to honor God instead, and not give into his fleshly desires.

This week pray about it and ask God what He wants you to do, maybe He is preparing you for a even bigger job like He did with Joseph, or maybe God is just building you as a Christian. Either way, allow God to be in control of your life, and not your flesh. God IS with you just as He was with Joseph, acknowledge this with the way you live your life!

Next week we will read of Joseph in jail and how God uses him to interpret dreams.

May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy!