

Heal a Family / Build a Nation
Lesson #6 – Based on Genesis 39:7-19
Adapted from the sermons of Jim Johnson
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Joseph's captivity had turned into prosperous leadership over the household of his master. He'd risen to the top of his small but significant world when temptation raised its ugly head. Fortunately, he was prepared and responded well.

Potiphar was the master of his house but wasn't acting with wisdom when he allowed Joseph to take the leadership role in his home. Joseph was young, gifted, and looked like your basic GQ-Hebrew slave kind of guy. Mrs. Potiphar, the original "desperate housewife," found Joseph irresistible and made a pass at him. Joseph refused.

Questions:

What were some of Potiphar's basic mistakes?

What can happen (to us, and to those around us) when we begin to acquire authority?

What can happen to us when God has gifted us with any attractive skill or physical beauty?

First principle: When temptation comes, we have prepared for it or we are wounded by it.

Mrs. Potiphar had too much time on her hands and not enough to occupy her mind. Joseph was a fixture in her home and in close proximity with her while her husband was often absent. She let her lust run away with her and she propositioned Joseph: "Lie with me." This had nothing to do with entering into a conspiracy to conceal the truth! It had everything to do with young Joseph and her perception that he was available for sex. On one hand, the situation called for immediate gratification, yielding to a quick thoughtless burst of passion, and to giving no thought to the consequences. On the other hand, the situation called for a response reflecting preparation beforehand.

First response to temptation: REFUSE. vs. 6-8

The text says, "But he (Joseph) refused (v8)."

In this case, "Just say NO to sex" was the required response. Joseph didn't reason with the temptress, didn't compromise, delay, or negotiate. He "fled" even while Miss Egypt 1500 B.C. ripped off part of his clothing. The man removed himself from the scene altogether...he booked it out of the house!

Questions:

Do you see value in ordering your world to avoid compromising situations?

To what extent is it possible to order our world to avoid temptation?

What situation are you in right now that may cause future problems?

Joseph had been through a rough ordeal in the recent past. He probably enjoyed his new status but possibly bore resentment over his treatment by his brothers. He had every reason to be angry, resentful, manipulative, and thinking himself deserving of a break.

Second response to temptation: Remember. vs. 8-9

“But Joseph refused and said to his master’s wife, ‘Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has put all he owns in my charge. There is no one greater than I am in this house, 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?’”

Joseph remembered his responsibility.

Joseph remembered the kindness and trust Potiphar had bestowed on him.

Joseph remembered the offence this action would be toward God.

Joseph remembered the rules.

Joseph remembered that Mrs. Potiphar belonged to Mr. Potiphar.

Joseph remembered he was ultimately accountable to God.

Joseph remembered the consequences.

In Egypt, adultery was an act of treachery.

To betray Potiphar was to betray a man who had legal authority over him.

Joseph remembered his God.

To betray God was to betray One who holds eternity in His hands.

To betray God was to lose the only friend he had in a lonely place.

The truth became like a cold shower to Joseph when he was tempted to lust.

Questions:

Someone has said, “There is a very quick and painful way to discover the truth: believe a lie and act on it.”

Our God is a God of grace and forgiveness. We all learn to some extent how to deal with temptation after we’ve yielded to it. God is patient and we can learn from our mistakes, yet it is possible to prepare ahead of time for the more blatant temptations Satan will send our way.

Do you have a list of “good, bad, and worst” sins?

How do you think God views your list?

How does remembering our responsibility to others assist us in resisting temptation?

How does reflecting on the consequences of our actions assist us in resisting temptation?

Third Response to temptation: Run. vs. 10-12.

“He did not listen to her to lie beside her, or be with her...and she caught his garment... and he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.”

Potiphar’s wife had plotted and waited for the right moment and circumstance to approach Joseph. I suspect Joseph sensed this was coming? When she made her move, he bolted and fled. He didn’t discuss it, think about it, or worry about his belongings...Elvis left the building!

1 Corinthians 6:18 says, “Flee immortality.”

2 Timothy 2:22 says “Flee from youthful lusts.”

1 Corinthians 10:14 says, “Flee from idolatry, which is like immorality.”

Questions:

Do you have an “exit strategy” when you attend a company party?

Do you have an “evasion policy” when attending a company sales meeting?

Do you have a “no attendance” policy for required gatherings with career implications?

What’s the problem with a career strategy that includes compromise?

What’s the problem with a life strategy that includes compromise?

Fourth Response to Temptation: Re-evaluate. vs. 13-19

“When she saw that he’d left his garment...she called the men of the household and said... the Hebrew slave has made sport of us, he came in to lie with me and I screamed...so he left his garment and fled.”

Potiphar’s wife reframed the whole incident to protect herself and to frame Joseph. She fabricated a lie, recruited others to support the lie and presented her evidence as proof. Potiphar’s response: “When his master heard the words of his wife, his anger burned.”

He listened to his wife’s inflammatory accusations and his anger burned. But the text doesn’t say that his anger was directed toward Joseph. It just said he was angry. Potiphar no doubt knew his wife, knew his servants, and by now knew Joseph. He trusted Joseph but his wife put him in a bad place. Potiphar had to protect his own reputation. So Joseph took the hit on his reputation instead.

Questions:

What are some of the strategies you have devised to deal with the following:

Cable TV with R rated movies? The internet? Your Ipod? Text messaging? Chat rooms?

Does putting filters and safeguards on electronic devices solve the problem of temptation?

What is another vital component to successfully winning out over temptation?