

### Joseph Ran from Temptation

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain from the life of Tamar that the Lord will show great mercy to all who will come to Him in repentance and faith. In this topic, we will see that Joseph shows us what it means to flee from temptation.

In Genesis 39:1-6, we read, “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. The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. 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. 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. 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.” The Ishmaelites did not keep Joseph as their slave. Instead, they sold him to Potiphar when they got to Egypt. As a result, Joseph became a slave in Egypt at the age of seventeen. Potiphar was an Egyptian and an officer of Pharaoh. He was the captain of the guard of Pharaoh, so he had a very influential position.

Although Joseph was just a young slave, we see that the Lord was with him and caused his life to be successful. The Lord had also placed him in the household of Potiphar the Egyptian. The master saw the way the Lord was with him. In fact, the Lord caused everything Joseph did to be blessed. This caused Joseph to find favor in the sight of his master. Potiphar made Joseph the overseer of his house and placed everything he had under the authority of Joseph. Even though Joseph was a very young man, the Lord was working in and through his life.

Joseph was faithful to the Lord, and he was also faithful to his master. After Potiphar placed Joseph over everything in his house, the Lord also blessed Potiphar for the sake of Joseph. In fact, this blessing extended to everything that Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. This makes it clear that the Lord may choose to bless people who have not repented of their sin of unbelief but have shown kindness and trust to those who are followers of the Lord. Potiphar had such a trust in Joseph that he gave Joseph total responsibility for the care of everything that belonged to him. He ate the food that Joseph made certain was there every day; but other than his daily food, Joseph was in charge of everything that belonged to Potiphar. We also see that Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. The word translated “handsome” is translated “beautiful” when it talks of

Rachel in Genesis 29:17. That verse says, “Leah’s eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.” This shows that Joseph was a very handsome young man. Together, these verses show us that Joseph probably gained all of the beauty that his mother had when Jacob first met his mother. The fact that he was a slave just meant he was a very handsome slave.

Genesis 39:7-9 says, “And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, ‘Lie with me.’ 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. *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?’” In these verses, we see that the wife of Potiphar became interested in an adulterous relationship with Joseph. At first, she just looked at him. However, the day came when she asked Joseph to begin a relationship with her. This meant that Joseph now had to deal with sexual temptation. In a previous topic, we saw that his older brother, Judah, became guilty of sexual sin.

In contrast, we see that Joseph made a very different choice. We see how Joseph answered the wife of his master the first time she tried to seduce him. First, Joseph talked about the trust that her husband had in him. He said that Potiphar had placed everything he owned under the supervision of Joseph. This trust was so great that Potiphar did not even know all he possessed. Joseph realized that his master trusted him more than any of his other slaves. Second, Joseph explained to the wife her position in the sight of her husband. Joseph said that of everything Potiphar had, his wife was the only person or thing that Potiphar had withheld from Joseph. Joseph reminded her that the reason he would not touch her was due to the fact that she was the wife of Potiphar. It would not be right for him to do anything with her.

However, the third reason Joseph gave was the most important reason why Joseph would not lie with her. Joseph asked how he could do this great wickedness. The word translated “wickedness” is usually given as the opposite of good. It usually speaks of moral evil or ethical evil against other people or against God. This can involve either words or actions against other people. In addition, it can involve words, actions or evil sacrifices when it talks about God. Malachi 1:8 says, “‘And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, *is it* not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?’ says the LORD of hosts.” In this case, the word is used in relation to the sacrifices Israel made to God. Joseph chose to do what was pleasing to the Lord and not to follow the desires of sinful flesh.

Joseph also pointed out one other lesson about that wickedness. Joseph told the wife of Potiphar that for him to do such wickedness would be to sin against God. Here, we learn a key lesson. Sins that we commit are sins against God, not just sins against another person. David realized this after he was confronted with his sin by Nathan, the prophet.

In his prayer to the Lord, David said, in Psalm 51:4, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight — that You may be found just when You speak, *and* blameless when You judge.” However, the wife of Potiphar did not stop trying to tempt Joseph. It is important for us to realize that we live in a sinful world and those who have no relationship to God are dead in trespasses and sins. They reach a point where their conscience does not bother them because their conscience is seared. It is important for every follower of the Lord to depend on the Lord for victory over temptation.

In Genesis 39:10-12, we go on to read, “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. 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, that she caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me.’ But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.” Here, we see that the wife of Potiphar was very persistent. She continued to try to seduce him day after day. This is a reminder that Satan will continue to try to tempt followers of the Lord. However, Joseph had made a choice in his heart to please the Lord in all he did and refused to listen to her. Psalm 19:14 says, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.” Joseph had made a commitment in his heart that he would not sin against the Lord. In fact, we see that Joseph chose to avoid being around the wife of Potiphar when he was in the house.

However, one day, the wife of Potiphar saw the opportunity for which she had been waiting. She knew that none of the other men were in the house. Joseph went into the house to do his work just as he did every day. This time, she did not come to him and try to seduce him. Instead, she tried a different approach while he was busy working. The word translated “caught” means to *seize or lay hold of*. This meant that she probably slipped up from behind him and seized the garment or outer robe he was wearing. Then, she demanded again, “Lie with me.” She was very determined to get what she wanted. She had asked Joseph many times in the past and he had refused. However, this time, she had a firm hold on his outer garment. She was either going to get what she wanted or she was going to get even with Joseph.

Joseph had determined that he was going to please God regardless of what happened. He immediately left her with his robe or outer garment and fled from her. He ran outside so that he was completely away from the house and the wife of Potiphar. In the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 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*.” Then, 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Joseph knew that the best way to escape temptation was to flee and escape out of the house. This is a very important example of what those verses teach. The choice Joseph made that day was due to the fact that his greatest desire was to please God. He took the way of escape that the

Lord had provided for him.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that Joseph provides an example for their own lives. We also want to help our children learn to explain to others the choice that Joseph made that day and why he made that choice, even though he would later be falsely accused for making the godly choice. The choice that Joseph made was a very important key in his preparation to be used greatly by the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to follow this example.