

**LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text - Part four - Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
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**JOSEPH - How to Resist Temptation - Genesis 39:7-21** - “And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." [8] But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. [9] He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" [10] And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. [11] But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, [12] she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. [13] And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, [14] she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. [15] And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house." [16] Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, [17] and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. [18] But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house." [19] As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. [20] And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. [21] But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

1) **THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CAN BREED TEMPTATION**

- a) ***Rapid promotion or social power - 39:4-6*** - “So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. [5] From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. [6] So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.”

Joseph handles this very well, but it has been a source of trial for many others in the Scriptures. Even David, the man after God's own heart, was corrupted to a degree. In **2 Samuel 12:1-17** Nathan confronts David with the fact that David had used his ***wealth and influence*** to take something that was not rightly his. His power made certain sins available that were less accessible before.

This is always the case. Power and wealth don't make a person ungodly. But they certainly ***reveal*** the genuineness of our character for God because they remove many of the natural restraints to ungodly ambitions and appetites. How we listen to the Holy Spirit when other options are more easily within reach is revealed. In Joseph's case too, his position would have made certain sins easier for him to commit than they may have been for others. That he didn't compromise is commendable.

- b) ***Lack of visible supervision - 39:11*** - “But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house,

In His grace, God uses human supervision and external authority to keep us guarded from our own weaknesses. But Joseph had incredible freedom to do as he pleased much of the time. This presents a key test of character. ***Who you are when you are alone is the real test of your character.*** How you act when there are no external constraints on your behavior shows how much you control your own character. Only the person who can function well when nobody else is around to keep him in line has real Godliness at heart.

Jesus outlined the way sin worked in John 3:19-20 - **“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. [20] For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”**

I used to think loving darkness was just a poetic metaphor for loving sin. It isn't. People love darkness because it allows us to sin undetected. Sin under the radar. Darkness provides a cover for evil deeds. ***Sin thrives in anonymity.*** People hate Jesus because He comes as the ***"light"***. People avoid Jesus because in Him they are forced to face their own wilfulness and sin.

- c) ***Persistent exposure to the same temptation - 39:10 - “And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.”***

Notice the words "**day after day**". This was not a one shot battle that Joseph faced. He probably had to constantly remind himself that each day would bring a renewed call for carefulness and alertness to potential dangers and compromises. Joseph's solid character is appreciated more when we remember other men who failed under the pressure of **repeated temptations**. See the downfall of Samson in **Judges 14:12-17 and 16:5-17**.

This is why the New Testament is constantly urging us to be "**watchful in prayer**". Anyone can be careful **for a little while**. We all have our share of strong seasons against sin. The bigger issue is to be so in the Word and prayer with fellow Christians that we are never **caught off guard** in our Christian walk. This is what Jesus had in mind when He said we should pray that we won't be lead **into** temptation. Not that we won't be **tempted**, but that we won't **enter into it**.

## 2) **WHAT MADE JOSEPH SUCCESSFUL?**

- a) ***He immediately gave the temptation its proper name and nature - 39:9 - "He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"***

This is the first step to victory. You have to deal in **absolutes** not **“competing value systems.”** He calls it what it is (**“wickedness”** and **“sin”**). Immediately he puts himself on the side of solid Biblical principle and truth. He brings **God** into the picture. He refuses to make this situation merely **cultural** or **social**. And **notice how quickly he does this**. He refuses to allow time for rationalization or excuses for any compromise of conviction. He doesn’t **talk himself out of his accountability before God**.

Paul teaches that our fallen natures tend to incline us to **bend the rules when we really want to sin**. Others will always encourage our fallen indulgence - **Romans 1:32** - **“Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”** And, if you haven’t noticed, the way our fallen culture applauds sin is **first of all** by renaming it. Joseph refuses to allow this to take place.

- b) **He relates every decision back to God - 39:9b** - **“How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”**

We’ve already talked about this, but it bears another look. If you are more concerned about hurting others than about hurting God you will never live a holy life. Your life will constantly be the victim of **people you want to impress**. But Joseph has higher aspirations than merely pleasing Potiphar (see **39:8-9**). He remains pure because he keeps **God** as the audience of his actions.

The logic is clear. ***God will see the sin and be grieved even if nobody else ever finds out.*** That must always be the dominating motive in anyone who would consistently live a Godly life in a dirty world. See also **Psalm 51:3-4** - ***“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. [4] Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.”***

- c) ***He takes whatever steps are necessary to flee the scene of temptation - 39:12 - “.... she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.”***

The lesson for the hour is found in **verse 10** - ***“And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.”*** Notice the words ***“he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.”*** As the danger became greater he became more resolved to remain uncontaminated.

Learn this lesson well. A big part of overcoming temptation is recognizing where the downward path into compromise ***begins***. If you start the fight too late, you greatly reduce your chances of success. Joseph is bright enough to know ***big*** sins are planted in ***small*** compromises.

Joseph's actions would seem unreasonable to those less mature. ***“Sure, so you don't want to sleep with the girl. But what's wrong with just seeing her for a harmless cup of coffee?”*** Joseph understands the subtlety of the way sin makes gradual inroads into our lives.

Paul spells out the very same advice in **1 Timothy 6:11-12** -  
“**But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. [12] Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**”

Notice the ***two parts of the battle in those two verbs: Flee, and fight.*** Strength of character is never revealed by exposing oneself to temptation. Matthew Henry said it well long ago when, speaking of Joseph, he said this: ***"It's better to lose a good coat than a good conscience."*** Only the naive and spiritually weak overestimate their moral strength.