

Joseph and Esther

Lesson 3 (Joseph) Genesis 37, 39

Joseph—A Slave Bound for Egypt

Joseph's brothers sold him for twenty pieces of silver (Genesis 37:18). This was the average price for a young slave. See Leviticus 27:5 (a male between ages 5 and 20), Exodus 21:32 (the price of an adult slave). See also Matthew 26:15 (the price paid to Judas for betraying the Lord Jesus Christ).

The Ishamaelites and the Midianites were the descendants (probably the grandchildren) of Ishmael (Genesis 16:1-2,11) and Midian (Genesis 25:1-2), who were both the sons of A_____. [Compare Judges 8:22,24 where the two terms are used interchangeably. These people were probably lived together and intermarried.]

Joseph's brothers sold Joseph into Egypt so that his dreams would never come true (Genesis 37:20). As it turned out, they did the very thing that led to the fulfillment of his dreams! The children of Israel succeeded in getting rid of Joseph—they sold him into Egypt—but this was the very thing that resulted in their salvation (Genesis 50:20).

Likewise the children of Israel succeeded in getting rid of Christ—They nailed Him to a cross—but this was the very thing that led to their salvation (Acts 2:22-24,40; 3:13-15,19,26; 4:11-12)!

Joseph, a teenager, did not understand what was happening to him. While in the pit he suffered much anguish of soul (intense mental pain, sorrow and distress). He urgently pleaded with his older brothers and begged for their mercy and favor, but they would not hear (see Genesis 42:21).

Joseph's dreams of being exalted over his brothers seemed all but smashed! He failed to realize, as we sometimes do ourselves, that the way up is often the way down (Luke 18:14; 1 Peter 5:6). Before Joseph could ever reach the palace, he first must go into the pit and then into the prison! As Joseph headed for Egypt, confined and confused, one thing was certain:

G _____ **W** _____ **W** _____ **H** _____
 (Acts 7:9)

*Dreams and Dress May Disturb the Rest (of the family),
 But Don't Be Depressed, All is At Rest!
 Down you may go (whether into a pit or into Egypt),
 But This You will Know,
 God Purposes Nothing Less
 Than to Give you His Very Best!*

Joseph and Potiphar (Genesis 39:1-6)

Joseph was brought down to Egypt and was bought by Potiphar as a slave (Genesis 39:1). As a slave he began serving his new master and lord (Potiphar).

What is a slave? What would it be like to have a slave master? As a slave, could you do whatever you want, or would you need to do whatever your master wanted you to do? Could you plan your own activities for the day or would your master plan them for you? Would you be the boss of your own life, or would someone else be the boss? Some slave owners (masters) were very cruel and made life miserable for their slaves. Other slave owners were very kind and made life wonderful for their slaves. Some slaves did not even want to be free from their masters. Why not? (See Exodus 21:5.)

The Bible tells us that believers are slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a "M _____ [who is] in heaven" (Ephesians 6:9). Have you been bought (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19)? What does this mean? Whom

do you now belong to? To Whom does your body belong? Who is your Lord and Master? What kind of Master is He? Is this a terrible slavery or a wonderful slavery? Do you want to do whatever you want, or do you want to please your Master? Do you start each day by saying, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Psalm 116:16)

Here are some things which we should remember about slaves:

1. A slave was owned by his master. He belonged totally to his master. The master could say, "You are mine! I own you!"
2. A slave was not free to do what he wanted. He could only do what his master wanted him to do. He must serve and obey his master. He had to do the master's will no matter what it was.
3. A slave was in full-time service to his master. He did not work just eight hours a day. He belonged to his master twenty-four hours a day. The slave must be ready to serve his master at any time.

The Bible says that we were once slaves of sin (Romans 6:20) but we are now slaves of God (Romans 6:22; 1:1). **Everyone** is a slave! A person is either a slave of sin or a slave of God. How does sin show its power over people?

What does it mean to be a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ? What kind of a Master is He? Is He cruel or unfair, or is He loving and just? Does He own you? Do you belong to Him? Are you free to do what you want? How many hours every day should a Christian serve Christ?

May God help us to enjoy this wonderful slavery and to be faithful servants of our blessed Master!

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Joseph was seventeen years old, in a strange, foreign country, and far away from his family and friends. He was away from home, away from any who believed in his God. Joseph was in a different land with a different language and a different culture. He was alone, but not alone—**God was already there!**

Regardless of where we find ourselves we can know that God is already there. He is never far away from helping us if

we call to Him in truth (Psalm 145:18). When we are trusting in Him we can know that whatever our trial or problem, He is right there to help: "For this situation we have the Lord Jesus; and for this situation He has us!"

Pharaoh was the mighty king of Egypt. Potiphar was one of Pharaoh's most important officers. He was captain of Pharaoh's guardsmen. He was in charge of Pharaoh's bodyguards, the men who were responsible for protecting the king of Egypt (Genesis 39:1).

Who was responsible for protecting Joseph (39:2)? _____
The Lord was with him (Acts 7:9). Joseph went down to Egypt and His God was already there (compare John 10:4)!

Would you rather be with Joseph in Egypt with God or with his brothers in the promised land with a bloodstained robe in their hands and deep guilt on their souls? "Anywhere with Jesus I can safely go" (Jessie Pounds). Compare Joshua 1:9.

Joseph had an excellent testimony and witness before his master Potiphar. Potiphar could see that the LORD was W _____
H _____ (Genesis 39:3)! Potiphar could not see God (1 John 4:12), but he could see the evidence of God's presence in Joseph's life.

People are watching you. Is God with you? Can your friends see it? Do your teachers and classmates know it? Can your parents and brothers and sisters see this? What is the evidence that God is with you if indeed He is?

Joseph was faithful to the Lord and to his master (Genesis 39:4). He was not overly worried about the future, but he was concerned about doing his work well each day. Our Lord said, "But seek ye F _____ the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow [don't worry about tomorrow]: for the tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:33–34).

Joseph may have thought, "If God **sent me** (see Genesis 45:7) to Egypt to be a slave, then I am going to be the best slave I can possibly be for the glory of God!"

If it is God's plan for you to be a student at your school right now, then you can say, "With God's help, I'm going to be the best student I can be for the glory of God!" If God has put you in your family to be a son and a brother, or a daughter and a sister, then you can seek to be the best family member you can be for God's glory. Knowing that we are part of God's plan makes a huge difference in how we see our situation.

Potiphar could trust Joseph for everything. He could completely depend on his faithful slave. If all that he had was in Joseph's hand (Genesis 39:4,6), then Potiphar did not need to worry about all that he had! As long as Joseph was responsible, Potiphar could relax. Potiphar could always count on dependable Joseph and Joseph never let him down. Even under great personal temptation Joseph remained loyal and true to his master (Genesis 39:8–9).

Can your parents trust you completely? When they put things into your hands (such as jobs or chores, or the care of your younger brother or sister), do they worry or do they relax? Do you let them down or do you prove to them again and again that they can depend on you? When your parents put their faith in you, are they ever disappointed? Remember, you earn freedom and privileges by being trustworthy in little things. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much..." Luke 16:10.

Suppose your parents ask you to walk down to the store to pick up some items for them. They tell you that they want you back in an hour. After you pick up the items, you decide to go over to your friend's house and spend time with him. You stay with your friend for two hours. When you finally arrive home, you are very late. Would your parents be eager to let you run errands for them the next time? If we want our parents to give us freedom and privileges, then we need to show them that they can count on us and that we will not let them down. If your parents give you a gift of money and find out that you wasted it all on candy and junk food, then they may be very slow to give you a gift of money the next time. On the other hand, if they know that you used the money wisely, and even put some of it into savings, then they will feel better about putting more money into your hands.

Not only was Joseph a slave, but he was a steward. A steward is a

man who manages and cares for another's property and goods (Genesis 39:4-6). What is the number one requirement for a steward (1 Corinthians 4:2; Luke 16:10)?

a. Good looks

c. A pleasant personality

b. Intelligence

d. Faithfulness
(trustworthiness)

Did Joseph meet this requirement?

As a Christian (if you are really saved) you are a steward. What has God given to you to manage and care for (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)? Do you meet the number one requirement for stewards?

The Lord graciously caused Joseph to prosper. God made him successful (Genesis 39:2-3). The Lord gave Joseph a "Midas touch"--everything he touched turned to blessing! God's blessing upon Joseph was so great that it spilled over to Potiphar and to all that was his (Genesis 39:5). Compare the Lord's blessing upon Jacob as seen in Genesis 30:27. The Lord advanced and prospered Joseph so that apart from his master there was no one greater than he in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:9).

*Can the Lord make you prosper and give you success in your schoolwork? Can God's blessing upon your life spill over onto others? What is God's **secret for success** (Joshua 1:7-8; Psalm 1:1-3)?*

From a human point of view, some terrible things happened to Joseph. He was hated by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery. He found himself in a strange land far from home, without family or friends. These were very difficult circumstances for a teenage boy, **but God was with Him!**

Make sure circumstances do not master or control you. Fear the Lord and keep Him at the controls so that you are at peace no matter what is happening around you. Persons, places and things change around you, but the God who is in you is always the same. Hot or cold, rain or sun, you can be the same regardless of the weather. The "Son" can always be shining in your heart!