

# Joseph and Esther

## Lesson 4 (Joseph)

### Genesis 39

#### Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (Genesis 39:16-18)

Joseph was a "goodly person" (Genesis 39:6) which means he was "beautiful of form" (having an attractive physical form, well-built, manly, muscular). He was also described as "well favored" (Genesis 39:6) which means he was "beautiful of appearance" (handsome, having an attractive physical appearance). Potiphar's wife became greatly attracted to him and desired him and said—"lie with me" (Genesis 39:7). She did not just speak to him once, but she spoke to him "\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ (continually)" (Genesis 39:10).

Potiphar's wife was married. She was not to lie with any other man except for her husband. She was not to have physical contact or closeness with any other man except for her husband. Her body was for her husband, not for any other man. It is good and right for a husband and a wife to lie together and sleep together in the same bed because "**marriage is honorable** in all, and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4). The marriage bed is holy and the physical relationship between a husband and wife is good and right. It was God's plan from the very beginning that there should be a wonderful oneness between the husband and the wife. The husband should "cleave unto his wife; and they shall be \_\_\_\_\_" (Genesis 2:24).

The seventh of the Ten Commandments says, "Thou shalt not commit A \_\_\_\_\_" (Exodus 20:14). This commandment means that a person is to be faithful and loyal to his or her marriage partner. The following explanation of the seventh commandment is found in Luther's Shorter Catechism:

From Luther's Shorter Catechism

**THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: MARRIAGE AND PURITY**

*What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we may lead a chaste (pure) and decent life in word and deed, and each love and honor his spouse (marriage partner).

**What is marriage?**

Marriage is the *lifelong union of one man and one woman unto one flesh*. Marriage was *instituted by God* and is entered into by *rightful betrothal*, or engagement.

**What does God require of married people especially?**

God requires married people to *love and honor each other*, the husband his wife as *his God-given helpmeet* and the wife her husband as *her God-given head*.

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Husbands, \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:24-25).

The tenth commandment (the last of the Ten Commandments) says, "Thou shalt not covet." To covet means to have a strong desire for something that does not belong to you. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; **thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife**, nor his manservant (male slave), nor his maidservant (female slave), nor his ox, nor his ass (donkey), nor anything that is thy neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17). A man should be content with the wife God has given to him; the woman should be content with the husband God has given to her.

Potiphar's wife was not content with the husband that she had. She coveted another man, even Joseph. She wanted him, and she tried to get him. Joseph, even though he was a very young man, knew that this was wrong. Joseph was tempted to do wrong, but God was with him. Joseph did what was right, even though it resulted in spending time in prison.

## **Joseph's Fine Example on How to Overcome Temptation**

### **1. Don't even yield one inch!**

Joseph refused to sin against God (Genesis 39:8). He firmly said, "NO!" and he meant it. He would not accept the invitation from this wicked woman. He refused to get close to her. He refused to lie with her. He kept his distance from her. She may have been a very beautiful woman, but Joseph knew that she belonged with her husband and she did not belong to him.

Being tempted to do wrong is not a sin. Sin comes when we yield to temptation. David once was tempted when he saw a beautiful woman (2 Samuel 11:2-4). He yielded to this temptation and decided he would be with this woman, even though he knew that she was married to another man. This was adultery, a terrible sin.

### **2. Realize that even though sin might be fun, it will not be fun for long.**

Be sure to see where sin will bring you in the end. Sin often results in harm to yourself and others. It results in misery, regret, guilt and finally the judgment of God.

Joseph knew that a few moments of sinful pleasure was not worth the trouble that would follow. Spending a little time with a wicked woman would not be worth it. Joseph knew he would get into serious trouble with his master. He would be breaking his master's trust and showing himself to be unfaithful. Joseph's master knew that he could trust Joseph with whatever he put into his hand. How terrible it would be if Potiphar learned that he could not trust Joseph with his own wife!

Most of all Joseph knew that if he were to do the wrong thing he would get into serious trouble with God. The Lord was his heavenly Master, and Joseph wanted to please Him most of all.

Moses refused to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25). "Season" means "short-lived, lasting for only a short time, temporary." The pleasure of sin is soon over and then there is a letdown followed by guilt. A glutton (a person who eats too much) may enjoy ten pounds of chocolate for a short time, but he will soon suffer a terrible stomach ache! A drunkard may enjoy drinking a lot

of beer, but later he may not feel good at all, and may even vomit. A person may enjoy smoking cigarettes, but when he ends up in the hospital with deadly lung cancer, he will realize that all the pleasures of the cigarettes were not worth it. Sin always has consequences and the wise man will consider the consequences beforehand. Joseph considered the consequences and he knew that sin was not worth the terrible results it would bring.

### 3. Recognize sin for what it really is!

Joseph knew that to do what this wicked woman wanted him to do would be an act of "G\_\_\_\_\_"  
W\_\_\_\_\_ " (Genesis 39:9). To yield to this woman's evil suggestion would destroy the good relationship he had with his master. Most of all it would be a terrible **sin against** \_\_\_\_\_ (Genesis 39:9). Joseph's fear of God was greater than his love for the temporary "pleasures of sin." See Hebrews 11:24-25. Joseph was afraid to do anything that would displease his God. He feared God and believed that God was SO GREAT that to disobey Him was unthinkable!

We need to see sin as God sees it. We need to see how terrible sin is and how dangerous sin is. We need to always remember that sin will never **help** us; it can only **hurt** us. ***It never pays to disobey God.***

Joseph knew that sin was AGAINST GOD and he wanted to avoid anything that would be against God. After David committed adultery, he recognized that his sin was primarily against God: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this \_\_\_\_\_ in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:4).

Sin tries to deceive us and trick us, but Joseph refused to be fooled. Joseph kept things clear and simple. He said to this wicked woman, "**Thou art his wife**" (Genesis 39:9). His meaning was this: "You are Potiphar's wife! You belong to him. For me to be with another man's wife would be great wickedness. It would be a terrible sin."

Often we think about sin in the wrong way and we deceive ourselves. We might think in the following ways:

"It's not really that bad. My friends don't think it is wrong at all."

"Everyone else is doing it; why shouldn't I do it?"

"I'll just do it this one time."

"It's all right for me to do this, as long as no one else sees me do it."

Think carefully about the statements given above. What is wrong with thinking in these ways?

#### **4. Don't even get near the temptation!**

This wicked woman tempted Joseph continually, but day by day Joseph refused to even be "W\_\_\_\_\_ H\_\_\_\_\_" (Genesis 39:10). He would not even get near or close to her! Joseph knew that if he were to play with fire he would probably get burned (see Proverbs 6:27-28). He kept his distance. He stayed away from this woman.

Sin is very serious. It is not something to joke about. It is something to avoid at all costs. Suppose you are hiking through the woods and suddenly you see a very poisonous snake right on the path in front of you. You would shrink back in horror and you would try to get away from that snake as fast as possible. You certainly would not pick it up and play with it. Sin is like that snake. The Bible says that we must "Abhor that which is \_\_\_\_\_" (Romans 12:9). "Abhor" means to hate, to shrink back in fear (just as you would shrink back from that deadly snake).

*What should a young person do with magazines, books, pictures, television programs or movies which tend to stir up impure thoughts? We need to be very careful what we let our mind dwell upon. What we think about will determine what kind of person we are. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). What kinds of things does God want us to fill our mind with (Philippians 4:8)?*

#### **5. If the temptation becomes too strong, FLEE!**

This wicked woman did not give up on Joseph, even though he repeatedly refused her advances. One day she actually grabbed him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." Joseph immediately ran (39:12), leaving the garment in her hand! He knew that he would be in great danger if he stayed near her, so he ran.

What does God tell us to do (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20)? F\_\_\_\_\_. The word "flee" means to run away from something.

Joseph successfully overcame this strong temptation and won the victory! This encourages us and assures us that it is possible to resist temptation, to gain the victory and to be pure and clean. If Joseph did it (by God's grace and with God's help), we can do it also! (See 1 Corinthians 10:13; Psalm 119:9,11).

### Joseph and Potiphar's Prison (Genesis 39:19–23)

Potiphar's wicked wife framed Joseph for a crime which he did not do. She falsely accused him. She was the one who did what was wrong and she was the one who deserved to go to prison, but instead she put all the blame on innocent Joseph. What lies did she tell about Joseph (Genesis 39:14-18)?

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Did Potiphar believe his wife (Genesis 39:19-20)? \_\_\_\_\_

The royal prison was apparently under Potiphar's supervision. Joseph had to suffer for a crime he had never done (Genesis 40:15). Joseph's decision to remain pure and faithful to the Lord cost him dearly, but he was willing to pay the price. Are you willing to remain pure and morally clean regardless of the cost? Joseph was falsely accused and wrongly punished. He suffered because he feared God and did what was right. Joseph fully realized his innocence (Genesis 40:15) and for years he patiently endured the prison "pit." The word "dungeon" in Genesis 40:15 is the same as the word "pit" in Genesis 37:24. Joseph was becoming accustomed to pits!

Sometimes a believer might suffer for actually doing wrong. If a believer exceeds the speed limit while driving on the highway, he may be stopped by the police and he may have to pay a large fine. If a believer breaks the law, he will have to suffer the consequences.

However, sometimes believers suffer for doing that which is right. Joseph did what was right and he suffered for it and went to prison. The following verses show us how a believer should react if he must suffer for doing right--see 1 Peter 2:19–23; 3:12–18; 4:12–16. We need to trust God and do what is right. Then if we get in trouble for doing what is right, we need to trust God even more! In the end we will be glad that we did what was right, and we will be glad that we trusted God. "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed [happy] is the man that \_\_\_\_\_ in him" (Psalm 34:8).

Who was in prison with Joseph (39:21)? \_\_\_\_\_. Joseph was not really alone; God never left him. See God's precious promise for us in Hebrews 13:5–6. God does not promise to keep the believer out of trouble, but He does promise to be with the believer in the trouble! See also Daniel 3:23–25, Isaiah 43:2 and John 16:33.