



Studies for families in Belonging, Becoming, and going Beyond

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MAKING LEMONADE

"THE RISK AND REWARD OF RIGHT LIVING"
GENESIS 39:1-23

This Week's Core Competency

Self-control – I have the power, through Christ, to control myself. Titus 2:11-13, For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

"There is not a person who has cast his shadow across this earth, including Jesus Christ, who has not faced temptation. And there is not a single person who has ever lived, except Christ, who has not yielded to it at one time or another and suffered the consequences. Temptation is an inevitable part of our fallen world. We cannot escape it" (Charles R. Swindoll, *Joseph*, 22). We may not be able to escape it; nevertheless the story of Joseph assures us that we can successfully resist it.

The temptation in question is the temptation to immorality. Joseph is Potiphar's personal assistant responsible for the Egyptian's entire estate. In the words of the narrator of the Joseph story, "Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So he left

No one can fulfill his or her divine destiny by disobeying God.

- Allen P. Ross

in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate" (Ge 39:4-6).

Joseph was a well-built, handsome man who had caught the eye of his master's wife, and she was determined to seduce him. He couldn't avoid her; he worked in the house where she confronted him daily. Neither could he ignore her. She was brazenly and shamelessly persistent. "Come to bed with me!" she insisted. The first time she propositioned him, he refused. "How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" he asked (v. 9).

On the young man's exercise of self-control, Swindoll writes: "If you're sitting there thinking that Joseph was some kind of spiritual giant, put it out of your mind. If you're thinking that some supernatural cloud of protection held him in check, forget it. Just look at the evidence. Here was an Egyptian woman offering her body and young Jewish servant being tempted by her bold advances. And so? 'He refused.' He said No! He resisted her alluring words; he stared her down, determined not to yield" (27).

But she was not about to take "No" for an answer—no way. Day in and day out she hounded him with the same demand, relentless in her pursuit. It was only a matter of time before he would succumb, or so she thought. One day when he entered the house to carry out his duties with no one around to see, she grabbed his garment and propositioned him once more, "Come to bed with me." Joseph had had plenty of time to ponder the possibility. Was she wearing him down? Perhaps. Was he wrestling to control the lust he felt welling up inside? Maybe, maybe not. In any case, he saw a way out of the temptation and took it. He ran out, leaving his cloak in her hand.

cont. pg. 2

Joseph's example reminds us of Paul's words to the Corinthian Christians regarding temptation. "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1Co 10:13). Commenting on this verse the Church Father Origen wrote, "Many do not bear it but are conquered by temptation. What God gives us is not the certainty that we shall bear it but the possibility that we may be able to bear it" (*On First Principles*, 3.2.3). Christians may succumb to temptation, but they need not. First, God is faithful; he can be counted on to help us. Second, when we are tempted he will provide a way out, but whether we take it or not is up to us. The apostle may even have had Joseph in mind when he wrote, "Flee from sexual immorality" (1Co 6:18).

day

ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Genesis 39:1-23

1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.

2 The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. 6 So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, 7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

8 But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. 9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" 10

And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

11 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

13 When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, 14 she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. 15 When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

16 She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. 17 Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. 18 But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

19 When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. 20 Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, 21 the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. 22 So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. 23 The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight "the LORD was with Joseph [him]" in vv. 2, 3, 21, 23.
- * Circle "attendant" in v. 4.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 5 and "so" indicating *result* in verse 6.
- * Underline the wife's proposition to Joseph in vv. 7, 12.
- * Box "but" indicating contrast in vv. 8, 12, 20.

- * Bracket the *rhetorical* question in v. 9.
- * Underline "and none of the household servants was inside" in v. 11.
- * Circle "Hebrew" in vv. 14, 17.
- * Draw a line from "make sport" in v. 14 to the same words in v. 17.
- * Circle "you" in v. 17 and "your" in v. 19.

- * Underline "burned with anger" in v. 19.
- * Bracket "where the king's prisons were confined" in v. 20.

2-4; cf., vv. 21-23). Talk about what this suggests to you.

- * Box "so" indicating result in v. 22.
- * Box "because" indicating reason in v. 23.



EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help. 1. Joseph prospered under Potiphar's roof. Explain why.
2. Potiphar prospered, too. Explain why.
3. Put Joseph's reasons for refusing the advances of Potiphar's wife in a nutshell.
4. What do the words "or even be with her" (v. 10) suggest to you?
5. His wife's accusations against Joseph are worded to incriminate Potiphar as well. How so?
6. Explain why she refers to Joseph as a "Hebrew" (vv. 14, 16) and a "slave" (v. 17).
7. Put what the phrase "make sport of us" (v. 14) and "of me" (v. 17) means in your own words.
8. After hearing from his wife, Potiphar "burned with anger" against whom?
9. What does the narrator's passing comment that Joseph was imprisoned "where the king's prisoners were confined" intimate?
10. Discussion: One of the darkest episodes in Joseph's life <i>opens</i> and <i>closes</i> with similar observations (vv.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

On Joseph's encounter with Potiphar's concupiscent wife, one commentator observes: "This story about Joseph reverses a well-known plot in the patriarchal narratives. Whereas in previous narratives the beautiful wife (12:11; 26:7) of the patriarch was sought by the foreign ruler, now the handsome patriarch himself, Joseph (39:6), is sought by the wife of the foreign official. Whereas in the earlier narratives either the Lord (12:7; 20:3) or the moral purity of the foreign ruler (26:10) rescued the wife, and thus not the patriarch himself, here Joseph's own moral courage saves the day" (John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 211).

This episode in the story of Joseph (39:1-23) belongs to a series of episodes in chapters 39-41 that document his rise to power in Egypt, a rise made possible by Yahweh's presence. First, "Potiphar put him in charge of his household" (39:4), and then, after he was unjustly incarcerated, "the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there" (v. 22). And finally, after interpreting his dreams, "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt" (41:41). This episode, as well as the one after, like the story of Joseph in general, follows the Ushaped movement of comic plots (plots with happy endings). His initial success as the manager of Potiphar's estate is followed by his wrongful imprisonment, after which he returns to prosperity as Pharaoh's administrator.

The episode begins and ends with the reassuring comment that "the LORD was with Joseph" (vv. 2, 21). In the first instance, Potiphar benefits; in the second, the warden benefits. God makes Joseph succeed and through him the others around him. As one commentator says: "God repeatedly 'is with' Joseph, a condition that clearly relates to success as cause to effect and that, spreading from the man to whatever he touches, manifests itself as blessing. The word 'all' (*kol*) is insisted upon five times, clearly exceeding the norm of biblical repetition and thus calling attention to itself as a thematic assertion: the scope of blessing or success of this man realizes is virtually unlimited; everything prospers, everything is entrusted to him" (Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 107-108).

Joseph is exalted to the highest level in his master's house, only to be humiliated again. In the midst of all God's blessings, Joseph discovers that he suffers from one endowment too many. He is "well built and handsome" (NJB), which does not go unnoticed by Potiphar's unnamed wife, who repeatedly over time attempts to seduce him. Her salacious proposition is

short and to the point, "Come to bed with me!" By way of contrast, Joseph's ardent refusal is long and drawn out. Consider the comments of one literary critic on her proposition and his refusal: "The first appearance of dialogue in the entire story is the naked directness, without preliminaries or explanation, of the wife's sexual proposition, presented almost as though these two words (in the Hebrew) were all she ever spoke to Joseph, day after day (verse 10), until finally the plain meaning of the words is translated into the physical act of grabbing the man (verse 12). By contrast, Joseph's refusal (verses 8-9) is a voluble outpouring of language, full of repetitions which are both dramatically appropriate—as a loyal servant, he is emphatically protesting the moral scandal of the deed proposed-and thematically pointed" (108-109). He lists three reasons for rejecting her advances: 1) it is an abuse of the trust placed in him (v. 8); 2) it is an offense against her husband (v. 9); and 3) it is a sin against God.

Joseph wisely steers clear of her. Not only does he refuse to go bed with her, but he also refuses to even be with her (v. 10). But one day when no one is around, she literally assaults him, grabbing him by his cloak in an effort to get him into bed with her. He makes his escape but leaves his garment behind. To protect and avenge herself, she takes matters into her own hands. Consider what might have happened: "Joseph's rapid exit could easily have compromised the woman, had he used the opportunity to explain matters to the rest of the household. So Potiphar's wife seizes the initiative and gives an account that is a travesty of the facts, but so worded as to elicit maximum sympathy among her slaves" (Gordon Wenham, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2, Genesis 16-50, 376). What's more, her masterful story incriminates Potiphar and puts him between a rock and a hard place. How could he do anything less than imprison Joseph? The literary critic above writes: "This lady who before had exhibited a speech-repertoire of two carnal words here shows herself a subtle mistress of syntactic equivocation. In her words to the servant, the husband had unambiguously brought the Hebrew 'to dally with us.' When she repeats the whole short clause in direct address to her husband, she places it so that it could be read in two ways: 'the slave came to me-the one you brought us-to dally with me'; or 'the slave came to me, the one you brought us to dally with me.' (The Hebrew text, of course, offers no clarifying punctuation.) The second reading obviously would be a sharp rebuke to the husband, suggesting that he had perversely invited trouble by introducing such a sexual menace into the household, but the wife is cunning

enough to word the accusation in such a way that he will be left the choice of taking it as a direct rebuke or as only an implicit and mild one" (Alter, 110).

When Potiphar hears his wife's account of events, he is angry—less likely with Joseph, more likely with his wife, and surely at the thought of losing Joseph's services. So he does the only thing he can do without disgracing his wife or himself. He puts Joseph in prison, but not the prison that houses everyday criminals, but the one that houses "the king's prisoners" (v. 20). Can there be any doubt that Joseph is destined to appear before Pharaoh?

The *upper story* of this episode is about God, who is working providentially in the life of Joseph and those around him to fulfill what he revealed in Joseph's two dreams. From prison the dreamer become interpreter of dreams will rise to a position next to Pharaoh. Once he is in charge of the whole land of Egypt, he will be in a position to save his family as well as many others from starvation.

The *lower story* is about wise Joseph, who resisted the advances of Potiphar's wife knowing what God had in store for him.

The Message of the Passage

Convinced of God's will for your life, just say "No" to temptation, no matter how tempting, confident he will be with you regardless of the consequences.



EMBRACE - how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

- Journal your answers to the following living questions:
 - -How is God making himself known to you?

-How does God want to change you?

-How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 1 **now** The opening verse of chapter 39 links it directly to chapter 37.
- v. 2 in the house Potiphar recognized Joseph's ability and assigned him to work indoors with higherranking servants. "An Egyptian papyrus (Brooklyn 35.14.46) from 1833-1742 B.C. details the names and occupations of nearly eighty slaves in an Egyptian household. In that list, Asian slaves were given superior status and skilled jobs over the Egyptian slaves, who were usually assigned strenuous field labor" (Bruce K. Waltke, Genesis, 519).
- v. 2 with Joseph "The clause 'the Lord was with Joseph' occurs four times in this chapter (vv. 2, 3, 21, and 23), and explains the reason for his success. The divine name 'LORD,' Yahweh, appears seven times in this chapter (vv. 2, 3 [twice], 5 [twice], 21, and 23), but only one other time in the Jacob toledot (37:2-50:26): in 49:18. God had previously promised to be with Isaac and Jacob (26:3, 24, 28; 28:15, 20; 31:3). 'Yahweh' is the name for God used in this story. The covenant-keeping God of the patriarchs 'was with' this son of Jacob far from home" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Genesis," 2016 ed., 271, www.soniclight.com). "The theological notion of the presence of the Lord, repeated so often in the Scriptures is the reason for Joseph's prosperity. The verse gives the cause (the presence of the Lord) and the effect (the prosperity)" (Allen P. Ross, Creation and Blessing, 625).
- Officials like Joseph, who are often mentioned in Egyptian texts, were in charge of v. 4 attendant all their master's assets (cf. "in the house and in the field" v. 5), not just their houses.
- v. 5 because "Joseph's sojourn in Egypt, like that of his father Jacob (30:27), has resulted in an initial fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise that 'in you all the families of the earth will be bless' (12:3) . . . This is not a story of the success of Joseph, but rather of God's faithfulness to his promises" (Sailhamer, 210). Because this man recognized the work of the Lord and honored Joseph, the Lord blessed (wabarek) his" household, so that the 'blessing of the LORD' (birkat YHWH) was upon all that he had. The text illustrates the promise that whoever blessed the seed of Abraham would be blessed (Gen.12:1-3)" (Ross, 625).
- "This may be a euphemism for 'his wife' (cf. Prov 30:20), but it seems more likely v. 6 except the food to be an idiom for 'his private affairs'" (Wenham, 374).
- v. 6 well-built "Amid Joseph's many blessings, he suffers from one endowment too many, stunning beauty" (Wenham, 374). Like mother, like son. Rachel is the only other person awarded the same twofold accolade; she, too, was "lovely in form and beautiful" (cf. 29:17).
- v. 7 come to bed "This is a mere two words in Hebrew, an expression never used of marriage (see note at 34:2). Her clipped proposition portrays brutish lust" (Waltke, 520).
- v. 10 even be with "Evidently she invited his physical familiarity, which she hoped would lead to intercourse. Joseph, realizing where this first step might lead, wisely set a boundary for himself and refused even to be alone with her ('left his garment in her hand and fled . . . outside,' vv. 10-12)" (Constable, 272).
- v. 14 **Hebrew** She appeals to xenophobia by trying to use the household servants' racist attitudes to her advantage, since they probably thought having a Hebrew boss was disgraceful (cf. 43:32). Then she played the race card again with Potiphar when he returned home (cf. v. 17).
- v. 14 make sport Cf., "mock" (NKJV); "humiliate" (NET); "make fools of" (NLT); "insult" (NRSV). The somewhat ambiguous words, "make sport," at times refer to playful sexual behavior (cf. 26:8), at other times to insulting behavior (cf. 21:9). "This Hebrew has been brought to us to disgrace us . . . that Hebrew slave you brought us tried to disgrace me" (v. 17) expresses the sense.
 - v. 15 beside She insinuated that Joseph had taken his cloak off before attempting to rape her.
- v. 19 burned with "The statement is deliberately ambiguous, not asserting whether his anger is directed at Joseph or his wife. Is he also angry at losing Joseph's good services so that he has to take responsibility of his house again?" (Waltke, 521).
- v. 20 prison Lit., "house of roundness," a fortress that served as a prison, which was apparently run by Potiphar (cf. 40:3, 7; 41:10). "Attempted rape was a capital offense. The milder punishment suggests that Potiphar does not altogether believe his wife. He probably knows her character" (Waltke, 522).
- v. 20 king's prisoners "But the narrator is not interested in this point [i.e., why Joseph escaped death], only that Joseph was 'put in prison, the prison where the royal prisoners were imprisoned,' because it was the contacts he made in prison that led to his eventual promotion" (Wenham, 377).



Connect the **FAMILY**. Kids Kindergarten thru 6th grade receive Kid Pix tokens for discipleship activities completed during the week.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Since the beginning of time, Christians have been persecuted for following the Lord and standing firm in their faith. Noah was ridiculed by the people as he built the ark. Daniel was thrown into the lion's den for praying to the Lord. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace for not bowing to the king. In our story this week, Joseph was sent to prison for something he didn't do. He resisted temptation, stood up for righteousness and was persecuted for it. If you listen to the news today, you will hear of Christians still being persecuted around the globe. Here is some good advice from Dr. Jared Pingleton, clinical psychologist and director of Focus on the Family's Counseling Services, regarding talking to your kids about Christians being persecuted. "Children can see clearly that persecution isn't fair or right. But we can all be comforted with the powerful truth that 'God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" ' (Hebrews 13:5). The message of the Gospel is that God has come, has experienced suffering himself in order to identify with us (1 Peter 2:19-24) and has said that He is with us. Confidently assure your children that Jesus and His Spirit are always with us to comfort and sustain us (John 14:18). Nothing can help them feel more safe, secure and stable!" *Read the text with your child this week.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Genesis 39

- 1. How did Joseph end up in Potiphar's house?
- 2. How did Potiphar feel about Joseph?
- 3. What lie did Potiphar's wife tell about Joseph?

What Do You Think

- 1. Why do you think God allows bad things to happen to people?
- 2. Can you think of Bible stories where God used bad things to make something good?

What R U Going To Do

Print out or buy a world map and put it up in your house somewhere. Mark places where you know there are missionaries. If you don't know any go to www.wycliffe.org. Pray for the Christians there every day this week!

Core Comp

Self-control - I can take charge of myself with Jesus' help.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:28 - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

KIDPIX COUPON
I memorized my verse, completed Scrolls, brought Bible, brought a friend
Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.
Child's name Grade Parent's signature
Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse. Questions: Kids@pantego.org

CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14 I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians* 2:8-9 I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 *Timothy* 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2 I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12 I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians* 4:15-16 I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16* I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19 I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7 I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalm* 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew* 6:33 I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6 I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts* 2:44-47 I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world. Giving Away My Time Colossians

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians 6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1 I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians* 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs* 3:3-4 I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13 I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4 I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12 I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15 I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5 I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews* 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.