

May 24th, 2020

Joseph Imprisoned

Genesis 39-40

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

April 19 1 Kings 18-20	April 23 2 Kings 6-8
April 20 1 Kings 21-22	April 24 2 Kings 9-1
April 21 2 Kings 1-3	April 25 2 Kings 12-14
April 22 2 Kings 4-5	April 26 2 Kings 15-17

Lesson Idea: Even if treated unfairly, God's people should always serve faithfully wherever they live and work.

Foundational Truths:

- *God accomplishes His purposes of grace and blessing in spite of the sinfulness and selfishness of people.*
- *God's presence is with his people no matter where they find themselves.*
- *Followers of God should be trustworthy and responsible in all of their responsibilities.*
- *Our faithfulness to our responsibilities becomes a witness to the blessings of the Lord.*
- *Others receive blessings when God's people walk in obedience to Him.*
- *We should remain morally pure and flee from temptation.*

Genesis 39:1-6 (NASB) A Successful Man

1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. **2 The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man.** And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. 3 Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. 5 It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. 6 So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.

Verses 1-6 A Successful Man

- V 1-2. Why might outsiders question that the "Lord was with Joseph" considering his circumstances?
- V 3. What did Potiphar notice about Joseph, and what did that cause him to conclude?
- V 4. What happened to Joseph because of his success?
- V 5-6. What happened to Potiphar because of his trust in Joseph?

Notes:

v. 1-2. Joseph had every right to be frustrated and resentful. He had been betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, purchased by an Egyptian, and taken far away from his homeland and family. Yet in the midst of cruel circumstances, verse 2 maintains that "The Lord was with Joseph." One of the often-repeated promises that God makes to His faithful followers is "I will be with you." (see Exodus 33:14; Deuteronomy 31:6-8; Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 28:19-20; John 14:16; Hebrews 13:5) Verse 2 indicates that God's presence was what made Joseph a "successful man."

v. 3. Potiphar saw that Joseph prospered in everything he did, and it caused him to recognize the presence of the Lord with Joseph. In fact, the text says that all of Joseph's success was because "the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand." God's presence was recognized as a cause for success and blessing in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as well (see Genesis 21:22; 26:8; 30:27). This becomes a general promise throughout the Bible -- that God prospers His people when they are faithful to Him (see Psalm 1:3; Joshua 1:7-8;) The prosperity of God does not necessarily guarantee a financial windfall for the believer—remember Joseph was still a slave with no possessions of his own. In this situation, God blessed Potiphar's household to demonstrate His favor on Joseph.

v. 4. As things prospered under Joseph's care, he found more favor with his master and gained more authority and responsibility. He became the overseer of the entire household of Potiphar. The Lord continued to bless all that Potiphar entrusted to Joseph.

v. 5-6. Because of Potiphar's recognition of the special qualities of Joseph, his whole household prospered. Everything he owned benefitted, and Potiphar was able to relax and enjoy his possessions. Followers of God should be the most trustworthy employees at any business place. Bosses and supervisors should never have to worry about whether Christians will be dependable and do the best job they can.

Application: Do we give our best effort to those for whom we work? Are we faithful and trustworthy in our responsibilities? Do others notice God's hand upon us and His blessings on them because of His presence with us? Are we being good witnesses of the Lord in our workplaces?

Consider Paul's teachings concerning slaves in Colossians 3:22-24: *Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve...*

Genesis 39:6b-18 (NASB) A Tempted Man

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. 7 It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" 10 As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her. 11 Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. 12 She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. 13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. 15 When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside." 16 So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. 17 Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; 18 and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside."

Verses 6b-18 A Tempted Man

- V 6-7. Why would the advances of Potiphar's wife have been a hard temptation to resist?
- V 8-9. What was Joseph's refusal of her requests based upon?

- V 10-12. What wisdom can we learn from Joseph's handling of the situation?
- V 13-18. What happened even though Joseph did the right thing? How would you have felt about the outcome?

Notes:

v. 6-7. As a slave, Joseph had no rights. Potiphar's wife had authority over him making his refusals even more dangerous. She also had the wealth and ability to make his life easier if he would compromise his standards to have an affair with her. But he would not succumb to her continual temptations.

v. 8-9. Joseph based his refusal on moral grounds. He expressed an appreciation for Potiphar's great trust of him and wished to do nothing that would endanger or betray that trust. He also recognized that having an affair with Potiphar's wife would be a "great evil" and a "sin against God." The word for "evil" includes the ideas of something being wicked, bad, unpleasant, malignant or causing harm or injury. Joseph said it would be a "great" wickedness, because sexual sins compound the evil by involving others (see Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; especially verse 18 that says: *Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.*)

Joseph also declared that it would be a "sin against God." Every evil we do against someone else is ultimately a sin against God as well. After King David's affair with Bathsheba, his prayer of repentance is found in Psalm 51. In verse 4 of that psalm he confesses to God: *Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.* Even though his lustful sin brought an illegitimate pregnancy to Bathsheba, caused the murder of her husband Uriah, and demonstrated an abuse of his authority, he felt that the most devastating part of the situation was that he had sinned against the Lord. (Read the rest of Psalm 51, if you want to know what a prayer of confession and contrition should sound like.)

v. 10-12. Joseph showed wisdom in how he handled the situation. Even though her temptations came daily, verse 10 says he "didn't listen to her." We need to learn to ignore the temptations that come and certainly not dwell on them. James 4:7 says: *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* Both of those actions are important for the victorious life—resisting the evil and turning our attention to the Lord by submitting to His will for every moment.

Joseph, out of no fault of his own, found himself in a compromising position. If possible, we should not allow

ourselves to be alone with someone of the opposite sex with no one else around, especially when there is a danger of inappropriate feelings. When found in that position, Joseph did the best thing he could do—he fled! We should run away from sin and temptation and pursue righteousness instead. This is a constant theme of the Bible and frequent command of God (see Psalm 119:11; Romans 6:11-12; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 5:16-17; Ephesians 6:10-11; 1 Timothy 6:11; Hebrews 2:14-18; James 1:14-15)

v. 13-18. Even though Joseph did the right thing, Potiphar’s wife lied about him and framed him as an evil doer. Unfortunately, Potiphar believed her instead of trusting the truth he should have known about Joseph. I’m sure that Joseph would have felt hurt for being unjustly treated again. If it had been us in that situation, we might have felt that God had abandoned us. But as we have frequently seen in Genesis, God accomplishes His purposes in spite of the sinful and wicked behavior of people. Although unknown to Joseph at this time, God was working behind the scenes to move Joseph closer to a position of power in Pharaoh’s court.

Application: Do we understand and mourn the depths of sinfulness, so that we desire to stay far away from it? Do we guard ourselves from compromising situations or feelings? Do we flee from sin and pursue righteousness?

Genesis 39:19-23 (NASB) An Imprisoned Man

19 Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, “This is what your slave did to me,” his anger burned. 20 So Joseph’s master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. 21 But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. 23 The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph’s charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper.

Verses 19-23 An Imprisoned Man

- V 19-21. How did Potiphar’s reaction affect Joseph’s life? How did God work even this bad situation out for good?
- V 22-23. How did Joseph prove faithful in jail, and how was he rewarded?

Notes:

v. 19-21. Even though Joseph had been trustworthy and caused his household to prosper, Potiphar took his wife’s word over his knowledge of Joseph’s character. In his anger, Potiphar had Joseph thrown into jail. But verse 20 foreshadows God’s activity in working even this towards His good purposes. The jail in which Joseph was thrown was also where “the king’s prisoners were confined.” In the next chapter, Genesis 40, two of the Pharaoh’s personal servants will be cast into the same prison, and Joseph will be put in charge of them. This ultimately will be the connection that allows Joseph to become known to Pharaoh, but not before some other delays and broken promises (read Genesis 40 where Joseph interprets the servants’ dreams and one promises to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph; yet verse 23 says that *the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him*).

In the midst of a situation that would have embittered most people, God continued to demonstrate His presence and favor in Joseph’s life. Even in the worst times of life, God extends kindness to His people. We have already received more than we deserved and should rejoice in His kindness to us. As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:4-7: *4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in **kindness** toward us in Christ Jesus.*

v. 22-23. Instead of sulking about his mistreatment, Joseph “bloomed where he was planted.” He proved faithful once again, so the jailer trusted him to oversee all of the prisoners. The jailer gave Joseph more responsibility and relied him wholeheartedly. Verse 23 says: *The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph’s charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper.*

Application: Are we willing to take setbacks in life as part of God’s plans and purposes for our lives and trust Him to bring good in them? Do you believe and trust the promise of Romans 8:28: *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose?*