

CCLEB SERMON NOTES



SUNDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2026
GENESIS 39:1-23

PASTOR DUANE MILLER

GOD'S PLAN PREVAILS - WHAT'S MY ROLE?



Ever had a day where absolutely everything clicks—no distractions, no detours—only to remember most days are nothing like that? Most days feel messy and messy is my baseline. Yet in Joseph's story, it looks like everything he touches prospers, and he stays faithful under pressure. Why does the Spirit highlight that for us today? What are we meant to see—and to do?

Let's read **Genesis 39:1-23** Now here is a musical version of what we just read. Enjoy!



Here are the main ideas of our passage today. When the Lord is with His people, His plan prevails—and our trust-driven obedience becomes a blessing to others. Today we'll trace (1) Joseph's contrast with the patriarchs, (2) how God's presence turns hardship into blessing, (3) how trust leads to obedience that withstands temptation, (4) and what the garment/identity theme is pointing to in the gospel.

So let's start. It seems Joseph did everything right! Everything!

So let's start. It seems Joseph did everything right! Everything! Even in Joseph's slavery, where he could have had a really bad attitude, he trusted God's sovereignty and obeyed God faithfully. We could wrap up this lesson with that couldn't we? How does this chapter apply to me? Trust God's sovereignty and obey him faithfully. "The Lord bless you and keep..." While trusting and Obeying is a good word, it's not the whole message of this chapter.

We also see in this chapter that Joseph succeeded and prospered in everything. On a reporting graph that would look like "up and to the right".

And it gets even better for Joseph. Not only did everything he did succeed, Joseph also stayed true and loyal to God even in the face of repeated daily temptation. The onslaught of sexual temptation hit him day in day out...and Joseph withstood!!! Joseph did everything right, he trusted God through adverse situations, Joseph obeyed him and served faithfully. And Joseph withstood the temptation of the flesh. PAUSE Joseph seems a little surreal, doesn't he? So what is happening here? What does God want us to see and learn?

Now we as the readers in Genesis up to this point have seen biblical characters with a combination of both faith / trust and failure. Noah and the ark - and then his drunkenness. Then Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... all had seasons of trust and obedience but also seasons of failure.

But in Joseph's life here in Potiphar's house he always does the right thing. Joseph accepts God's sovereignty, he trusts and obeys. Wow!

It seems that God wants us to see an intentional contrast of Joseph's trust driven obedience in contrast to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's walk with God. "Why does God want us to see that?"

In my experience, whenever God wants me to see something, it's because He wants to challenge my thinking! And in challenging my thinking, it then stretches me in my relationship with him towards more trust and therefore more obedience.

So let's talk about the relationship between trust and obedience. Trust and Obey is a well known biblical pairing of concepts - they often are seen in tandem in the bible. **Hebrews 11:8** "By faith (trust) Abraham obeyed when he was called to go...." So noting the sequence of trust then obey, trust leads to obedience.

Think about this definition of obedience... "Obedience is the action of faith". When I trust God in whatever circumstance he has me in, and that what He says I should do is best, then my obedience is the action of my faith. It is trust driven obedience. This is what we see in Joseph - Joseph obeyed and was faithful because he trusted God.



*“Obedience is the
action of faith”.*

Here is how that played out. In **verse 1 NASB** we see that Joseph is taken down to Egypt by the Ishmaelites... his cousins through his great uncle Ishmael, and his cousins then sell him as a slave to Potiphar.

And you thought your family was messed up. Selling a cousin is not cool.. tempting, but not cool.

Now Potiphar is an interesting character. In Egyptian his name means “Gift from Ra”. “Ra” being the supreme god of the Egyptian pantheon. The text tells us Potiphar was the “captain of the bodyguard” – historian Robert Alter says that is “too mild of a translation”.



Potiphar

In Egyptian his name means
“Gift from Ra”.

“Ra” being the supreme god of
the Egyptian pantheon.

Potiphar’s role was chief executioner who had oversight of all the prisoners who were enemies of the state. Part of that role was then to have oversight of elite forces that guarded the king. And yet even though Joseph had rose to the highest rank of slaves within Potiphar’s house, Joseph was nonetheless a slave.

Now the success of Joseph as a slave in Egypt is not because of his skill or gifting or self help. Rather it’s because of what we see stated twice in this chapter **verse 2** and **verse 23** “The LORD was with Joseph”. And note that the last line of the chapter repeats that **verse 23**.

If you were a slave owner and had a slave that “succeeded in everything”, you would notice that. That is what we see in **verse 3**, Potiphar noticed how exceptional Joseph his Hebrew slave was. But even more important, Potiphar knows that Joseph succeeding in everything was because “the LORD was with” Joseph. In other words, Potiphar knew that Joseph’s success was supernatural and attributed the success to Joseph’s god – the LORD – YHWH.

So let me pause here and reframe that. When “the LORD is with someone” – they “succeed”. And them “succeeding” through God’s presence is intended to be seen by outsiders as “supernatural”. God’s intention is that his presence brings “succeeding” is also for the benefit of the bystander watching.

Let me show you where this is linked to in earlier chapters in Genesis. In **Genesis 1:28** in reference to Adam & Eve it says “God blessed them...”. God’s blessing is God giving Adam & Eve his life giving, life producing, life multiplying supernatural power in all they did. The LORD blessing Adam & Eve is “the LORD’s supernatural presence and power with them” in all the LORD wanted them to do. This is like what we see with Joseph in **chapter 39**. The “LORD was with Joseph”, Everything that Joseph did succeeded, flourished, multiplied. In essence everywhere Joseph, went Joseph brought a little bit of the garden of Eden.

Here is another supporting verse. In **Genesis 12:2-3** in the calling of Abraham, the LORD’s intent was for Abraham’s descendants to be a blessing to others. Keep in mind that Joseph is the great grandson of Abraham. Because “The LORD was with Joseph”, Joseph was a blessing everywhere Joseph went...whether in Potiphar’s house, or in prison Joseph was a blessing.

So let’s look at how Joseph was able to be blessing where ever he went that was a fulfillment of the Eden blessing and the Abrahamic covenant.

We already identified that the circumstances in Joseph's life were hard, unfair, he was enslaved and then imprisoned yet he trusted God and kept doing the right thing. Trust despite hurt. Trust under pressure. That trust produces obedience that blesses others.

A verse we often use that applies here is **Proverbs 3:5-6** out loud together.

Joseph's trust driven obedience was more than just serving, it was a refusal to not "sin against God" when he was being seduced by evil.

Here's how that refusal to sin against God played out. The end of **verse 6-7** describes Joseph as "handsome and well built" who caught the eye of his master's wife – she noticed this young handsome well-built man in her house and she wanted him. So she tried to seduce him.

But in **verse 8** Joseph refused her. Refused her. Let's talk about refusal skills. One of my previous jobs was working in public schools teaching young children drug and alcohol prevention refusal skills. How to say no. I did that right here at Harding Elementary, Henry Houck, etc. Here is what I taught.

Refusal Skills

- 1 Give permission to say no.
- 2 Teach clear simple refusal language like "No", or "I don't want to", or "Stop".
- 3 It's ok to be a *broken record* when refusing.
- 4 Have an exit plan.
- 5 Role play scenarios to practice saying "no" and using the exit plan.

Teaching refusal skills also teaches one to have voice. Voice can include refusal gestures "read the hand", "wagging fingers". As parents or shepherds then we also need to teach when it's appropriate to use that voice of refusal – situations like evil trying seduce us, like Potiphar's wife's advancements in **verse 8, 10**.

Note Joseph uses some of these refusal skills. The text tells us in **verse 10** that day-after-day Joseph "refused" her seduction - that is having a voice and being broken record. And then finally when Potiphar's wife trapped him, Joseph had an exit plan – he fled.

1 Corinthians 6:18 says "run from sexual sin" – that's an exit plan. This needs to be broken down and not taken lightly. Running away from sexual sin has at least three parts. First, Running from sexual sin requires making the choice to not engage in the sin, thus saying "no" to the temptation. If it's helpful, literally saying "I'm not going to give in to this temptation", whether out loud or just in your head.

First

Running from sexual sin requires making the choice to not engage in the sin, thus saying "no" to the temptation.

Second, running from sexual sin requires having an exit plan in advance. Many people give in and stumble even after initially refusing because they don't have an exit plan. Exit plans are critical for fleeing from not just sexual sin, but also all other forms of evil.

Second

Running from sexual sin requires having an *exit plan* in advance.

Let's look at Joseph's exit plan and see what we can learn. Joseph's exit plan was to flee outside of the house, and his fleeing meant leaving his garment in Potiphar's wife's hand. Which meant that Joseph fled outside undressed – Was he naked? Perhaps – most likely he wore some sort of undergarments. Either way Joseph would have been outside and exposed in public without his garment on. Keyword “exposed”. How many of you are ok with being in public in your undies? (I don't want to know the answer to that). We don't like to be exposed figuratively because it's embarrassing – its humbling. Which means Joseph chose exposure and humiliation over giving in to temptation.

Let me say that another way. Joseph's exit plan of fleeing required that he was willing to humble himself and be exposed rather than sinning. Third, exit plans to flee from sin require humility.

Third

Exit plans to flee from sin require humility.

Let's make choosing exposure and humility over sin more concrete in application. One of the practical ways to say “no”, and “to flee” and to “choose humility and exposure over sin” is to have some safe relationships that you can flee to. Those safe relationships create a place where you can humble yourself, expose or disclose what you are struggling with, and get support. Like prayer, encouragement, or a timely bible verse. Everyone can benefit from having safe relationships that they can flee to when they are struggling.

I encourage those safe relationships that you flee to be in the form of both mature peers and mentors in the body of Christ. **1 Thessalonians 5:11 Galatians 6:2**

Paul's instruction for all of us is to be that safe confidential place for each other where we can listen to other's humble exposure, bear other's burdens, encourage each other and build each other up.

What a beautiful picture for us as a church – the church becomes a refuge where humility meets help.

Now back to our story...the last thing I want to point out is the garment/identity theme pointing to the gospel. In the whole story of Joseph there is emphasis on his garment. His special robe/garment from his father, his brothers stripping him of his robe, and here Joseph fleeing fled leaving his garment in Potiphar's wife's hand.

With Potiphar's wife this was the second time Joseph's garment was used in deception to identify Joseph. The first time the brothers took Joseph's robe, dipped it in goat blood and took it back to their father Jacob to deceive Jacob that Joseph was dead. The second time Joseph's garment was used in deception to identify Joseph's is here where Potiphar's wife uses Joseph's garment to deceive Potiphar into believing that Joseph was the sexual aggressor.

Look at the end of **verse 9**. Joseph, when he was refusing the sexual advances, says "How can I sin against God"?

Ultimately Joseph was concerned about sinning against God. Often when reading this we think about Joseph's potential sin being against Potiphar and his wife. But Joseph here is clear that his refusal is about not wanting to sin against God. To sin against an image bearer of God is to sin against God. Potiphar and his wife are image bearers of God, by design (**Genesis 1:27**) and Joseph knows to sin against them is to sin against God. Joseph



*To sin against an
image bearer of God
is to sin against God.*

Our sins are against God. When we stand before him it's going to be us and God alone, not all the people we sinned against as well. Just us and God. And what determines what will happen at that point is not whether we have sinned against God, because the bible teaches that "all have sinned". Rather what determines what happens to us next is whether we are wearing the right garment or not. This is supported in both the Old Testament and New Testament. **Isaiah 61:10**. Also **Revelation 7:14**.

Jesus came and died for us to take away our sin against God and give us his righteousness as a garment to wear. When we stand before God the only garment that matters is the one that identifies us as having the salvation and righteousness of Christ on us. And having accepted that garment therefore we are identified as his. When God sees us wearing that salvation and righteousness of Christ, God sees us as righteous. Any other garment worn is deception that it is enough.

Those who don't wear Jesus' righteousness are the ones who are deceived into thinking they can sin against God and stand before God without Jesus' garment of righteousness. They are deceived into thinking that merit or good works is enough. In Jesus parable of the wedding feast a man comes to wedding feast without wearing the right wedding clothes and gets thrown out. The one not wearing the right garment – the righteousness of Christ, using Joseph story language, are thrown into the pit.

As a sinner, and we all are, what garment are you going to wear when you stand before God? Don't be deceived by the garments of this world! There is only one garment that brings eternal life with God, the righteousness of Christ!

Let me close with this. We started by showing the contrast between Joseph and Joseph's trust and obedience compared to the people before him in Genesis who failed. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob... all had some success, and all failed to trust and obey at times. Yet God's covenant plan prevailed despite their failure. God used the failure of man in his covenant plan of redemption. But in the Joseph story, Joseph didn't fail to trust and obey, and God's plan also prevailed!

The message there is that whether we fail or not God's covenant plan is going to prevail. However, the difference in the life of Joseph in comparison to the others is that because Joseph trusted God, obeyed God and refused evil, Joseph brought the Eden blessing with him wherever he went. Look, God's plan is going to prevail regardless of your choices. But you can choose to be blessing to others on this journey of life, which is God's plan for you, or you can bring hurt. What do you choose?

*The message is that
whether we fail or not
God's covenant plan is
going to prevail.*

BONUS

CONTENT:

Genesis 39:1 Series of humiliations: if you remember from **chapter 37**... Joseph going down to Egypt as a slave was just the latest in a series of humiliations for Joseph being “brought low, humbled”. Joseph was stripped of his robe by his brothers, thrown down into a pit, sold as a slave, and taken to down Egypt and sold to Potiphar.

Genesis 39:1 Potiphar “captain of the guards”. Others in the Old Testament that had this same title were “Benaiah” under King David; and Nebuchadnezzar’s chief of guards, Nebuzaradan who burnt Jerusalem to the ground in **Jeremiah 39:11**.

Genesis 39:1 “Potiphar” vs. “master”. After **verse 1** “Potiphar” is not used in the Hebrew text the rest of the chapter. Rather “master” is used. Not only does this reinforce Joseph’s humble role as a “slave” who has a “master”, but I also wonder if there is an intentional stopping of using “Potiphar” because it contains the name “Ra”, Potiphar’s name means “gift from Ra”. “Ra” being the supreme God of the Egyptian Pantheon. A strong message of **Genesis 39** is the sovereignty and providence of Joseph’s God, the “LORD YHWH”... there is no comparison of YHWH the LORD to “Ra”... and thus not even worth listing him

Genesis 39:14 Now when Potiphar’s wife makes her accusation against Joseph in **verse 14** she uses an interesting word in Hebrew. It’s a verb form of Isaac’s name שָׂחָק ṣāḥaq – which means: to make fun of, or make sport of. This word is used in several contexts appearing several places in Genesis, Sarah’s laugh – and the naming of Isaac “he laughs”; Ishmael laughing (mocking) at Isaac; Isaac laughing (caressing) Rebekah, and now Joseph is accused of laughing (making sexual sport of Potiphar’s wife). Genesis has a lot of literary repetition, cohesion and unity to show it is all one story line.

Genesis 39:18-19 Stripped of garment leads to the pit. It is curious that in the Joseph’s story so far it is the second time Joseph was stripped of his garment and ended up in pit or dungeon. First time his brothers stripped him of his robe and through him into a pit. Here Potiphar’s wife strips him of his garment and consequently Joseph is thrown into a dungeon.