



gracefellowship

Joseph: Living Between Dreams and Reality

April 22, 2018

“Finding God in Dark Moments”

:: Genesis 39 (Don't read)

When we ended last week, Joseph had been sold into slavery and was bought by Potiphar- the Captain of the guard for Pharaoh (personal security detail- a highly trusted official). And we ended with this question: “Where is God in our darkest moments?”

- Joseph had seen hatred and anger in his brothers who wanted to kill him.
- He has been taken by force from his home.
- He has lost his place of privilege in the world.
- He becomes a slave in a foreign land.

Question: How are you feeling if you're Joseph in these moments?

- Confused - Scared - Angry - Bitter - Hurt

And what are you thinking about God? I'll bet a lot of us would be angry at God for letting this happen. Honestly, the Bible doesn't say what Joseph is thinking. But the Bible is very clear in telling us where God is in our darkest moments.

:: **Genesis 39:1-6b**

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 so that 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 Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Scripture is clear- in our darkest moments God is with us. He doesn't leave us; He asks us to trust Him.

:: Proverbs 3:25-26

**25 Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,
26 for the LORD will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared.**

:: Psalm 23:4

4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

:: Matthew 28:20

**19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

I love that the last thing Jesus told us when he left the marching orders for the church to make disciples and carry on his mission is that he will be with us!

Joseph found out very quickly when he was purchased by Potiphar that God was with him because he immediately began experiencing the blessings of God. As a slave Joseph had an incredible work ethic! He didn't whine or complain about his situation or his job. He changed his situation through his work.

This can be a life lesson for us: **Great opportunities come from faithfulness in small, difficult things.**

Quote: "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work." - Thomas A. Edison

Joseph had dreams of being in charge. He had literal dreams of people bowing down to him! But he was arrogant and prideful and before God could use him in a position of authority, he needed him to learn humility and a strong work ethic. Remember, Joseph is a type of Christ in the OT. When Jesus shows up in the NT he doesn't come with pride and arrogance, but with humility. In fact, Jesus says about himself: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."

As Joseph worked and proved himself, Potiphar gave him more and more responsibility. Look again at the text:

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 Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Things are going so well in Potiphar's house with Joseph in charge and experiencing the blessing of God that Potiphar didn't concern himself with anything except the food he ate! How would like to be able to say that?

"What do you have to do today?"

"I have to decide what I want to eat for breakfast...and lunch...then I have to start thinking about dinner!"

Joseph's character is improving as he develops a strong work ethic. Looking at the next passage we learn even more about Joseph's character.

:: Genesis 39:6b-20

6 ...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.

Joseph finds himself in a situation where, even with the blessing of God on his work, some unwanted attention comes his way.

Here’s the reality of the situation: **Sexual temptation is very powerful, but we do not have to give in.**

This is what we learn about Joseph: he’s well built and handsome. I imagine Potiphar’s wife is not ugly!

She completely bypass flirtation and goes straight to sexual immorality. “Come to bed with me!”

But I love Joseph’s response: “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? “Because” is a powerful word in that sentence. There are things in life God tells us as Christians we can’t have. Some of the most difficult ones in our culture revolve around sex. And some of us get pretty frustrated by that.

- Why can’t I live with someone I’m not married to?
- Why does God say not to have sex before I get married?
- What’s wrong with watching pornography, or reading books that glamorizes immoral sexual behavior? I’m not hurting anyone.
- What’s wrong with extramarital relationships? Why be committed to only one person?

There is always a “because” statement God wants us to see. Here’s what the church has missed out on saying to our culture over the past 60 years- sex is great, God invented it and gave it to us for our pleasure because he loves us! But it’s created by God and He gets to define the boundaries it is intended for to be enjoyed to the maximum capacity, because he wants to bless you and your spouse with a lifetime of sexual fulfillment! God doesn’t keep specific things from us because he is cruel and capricious, but because he loves us! Joseph is saying to Potiphar’s wife, “My master keeps nothing from me, except you, not because he hates us, but because he loves you!”

Potiphar’s wife doesn’t like Joseph’s answer and she doesn’t give up her pursuit of Joseph- she puts on the full court press.

:: Genesis 39:10-11

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.

It’s possible this went on as long as 11 years. Can you imagine having to resist a temptation like this for 11 years? We would love to be able to resist a temptation to sin once and then that temptation just go away. But that’s not often how things happen. More often than not we face our temptations regularly and have to discipline ourselves to say “no” over and over again.

Joseph had disciplined himself and developed a character of faithful obedience to God that was stronger than the temptation he faced. But he also had three strategies for dealing with sexual temptation.

Joseph gives us three strategies for dealing with sexual temptation:

1. Desire to honor God more than pursuing sin.

Verse 10 says, “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” It’s not that sleeping with Potiphar’s wife wasn’t a possibility, but for Joseph it wasn’t an option. We have to fall in love with God to the degree that we consistently choose obedience to Him over our sinful desires.

2. Don’t willingly submit yourself to it.

Verse 10 says, “he refused...to even be with her.” Joseph did everything possible not to even be in a room with Potiphar’s wife. We have to be wise about the environments we put ourselves in. You know the temptations you face and the areas of personal weakness you have; so don’t willingly submit yourself to those areas of temptation.

We need to resolve before God to stay away from: tempting situations (circumstances) and tempting associations (people who tempt you).

I know there are certain circumstances out of our control and times the things that tempt us find us even when we aren’t looking for them. But don’t WILLINGLY/ INTENTIONALLY subject yourself to an area of temptation.

3. Run away!

Verse 12 says, “He left his cloak and ran out of the house.”

:: 1 Corinthians 6:18

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.

Fleeing from something is only necessary if it's dangerous! You will face temptation to sin throughout your life- that's part of living in a broken, fallen world. But you don't have to bow to the temptations. Let me give you three things to develop a plan to flee from sin.

a. Know your area of weakness.

Again, don't willingly put yourself in a situation you know you will struggle in.

b. Get accountability.

Who has access to your life- knowing all your secrets and with permission to speak into your life and hold you accountable to following God?

c. Seek the power of God to help you stand firm against sin.

There is nothing more powerful to help us stand in the power of God than His Word and His Spirit.

:: Psalm 119:1-11

1 Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.

2 Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—

3 they do no wrong but follow his ways.

4 You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

5 Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

6 Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

7 I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

8 I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.

10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

:: Ephesians 1:17-23

17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,

19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength

20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

**22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,
23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**

Let's look back at the story of Joseph one more time. When Joseph ran away from Potiphar's wife she had grabbed his cloak and he left it behind. In anger she accused Joseph of trying to rape her. Potiphar has Joseph thrown into prison and his roller coaster takes another sharp dive. But through it all, Joseph remains faithful to God. And more importantly, God is faithful to him!

:: Genesis 39:20-23

**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.**

Closing: All along the path of Joseph's time in Egypt God is preparing him for a future position to save the nation. The early part of his time is spent in the home of the Captain of the guard. I imagine he heard about and learned about warfare and got an education on the power of Egypt's army, he also learned administration and organization. God is using what seems like a dark moment in Joseph's life to prepare him for a much greater future assignment.

Remember, when you are in dark moments in life, God hasn't left you- He is there with you preparing you for the future He has lined out for you. What God asks of us in the dark moments is faithful obedience and trust in His plan.

Next week we will see how Joseph handles life in prison and see how God continues to prepare Him for his dreams to come true.

Discussion Questions:

Read Genesis 39

- 1. What do you feel like God is challenging you with through this passage?**
- 2. This chapter tells us even in a dark time, God was with Joseph. Where have you felt God with you through a difficult situation?**
- 3. Temptation to sin is a daily part of life. How do you combat sin?**

- 4. Was there anything from the sermon that was helpful to you as a strategy for dealing with temptation?**
- 5. Who has permission to speak into your life and help hold you accountable to fleeing sin and pursuing Jesus?**