



JOSEPH

SESSION 3

- **Main Passage:** Genesis 39:1-21
 - **Purpose:** To stand strong in the fight against sexual temptation (or any temptation, really) in order to honor God with our bodies and our lives.
 - **Session Snapshot:** Sexual temptation is extremely prevalent in our culture, even within the church's walls. If we as Christian men want to honor God with our bodies and resist the pitfall of sexual immorality, we must be proactive and on guard against this relentless sin, as well as all other forms of temptation. Joseph faced tremendous temptation when a beautiful woman wanted to have sexual relations with him. But he was able to stand firm because he knew his sin was primarily against the God he loved. If we're going to be successful against all forms of temptation, we have to start training well before the battle begins; we have to start with a right understanding of God.
-

GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together with a quick connection time or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, remind your group that this is week 3 of their video series on Joseph and that it's part of a larger study looking at the real men of the Bible.

THEN, if you want to start with asking men for prayer requests, checking in on how their weeks have gone, or any other housekeeping tasks, do so.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

THEN, when the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **How does sexual sin (or any habitual sin) impact men in the church today? Do you think it changes how we approach God in prayer, Bible study, and fellowship? How so?**
- **Do you think part of why sexual sin is so rampant is that we think we can hide it? How would men approach this struggle differently if they *knew* their wives, friends, or families would find out about their sin?**

- **Think about how you just answered that question. Does that mean we care more about what those people think of us than what God thinks of us? Why do you think we are more concerned about our image before others than our standing before God?**
- **Joseph knew that his sin was ultimately against God, and this made all the difference. Is there a difference between sinning against God and sinning against a fellow human? How so?**
- **Why do you think Joseph felt the need to run away from Potiphar's wife? Was he "cheating" by not standing firm against temptation or wise for knowing to run?**
- **Did Joseph's decision to flee without his garment seem a little extreme? What "extreme" actions do men need to take in today's society to help fight this sin?**
- **After landing in prison, do you think Joseph regretted his decision? How would you feel toward God if this had happened to you?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **Joseph was certainly disappointed to land in prison, but he had remained faithful to what mattered most to him: a life that honored God. Let's spend a few minutes looking back at Joseph's story to see how he was able to honor the Lord in the midst of overwhelming temptation and to think about how we can do the same.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at Genesis 39:1-20. As Rick explained in the video, our ability to withstand sin has everything to do with our relationship with God and how we view Him. In this passage, Joseph stands strong against temptation because he has a high view of God.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- **Time frame:** It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible—including Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—of which Genesis is a part). Most of the material originated from Moses himself. Depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), that would make the date for the writing of Genesis sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC.
- **Purpose:** Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eve's fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Genesis 39:1-6. When the volunteer has finished, direct their attention starting back in vs. 2. Lead the group in a brief discussion about Joseph's character and relationship with God. Ask something like:

- **Why do you think the Lord was “with” Joseph? What does this suggest to us about Joseph’s character and holiness?**
 - *Answer:* God is with those who are faithful to Him, those who love Him and seek Him. Joseph was a man who sought to love and serve God.
- **Was Joseph's (and in turn, Potiphar's) success more because of what Joseph had done or what God was doing through him?**
 - *Answer:* This passage credits God with the blessing of Joseph's works and Potiphar's household. God is sovereign over human affairs and chose to bless Joseph and his work for Potiphar.
- **If Joseph had given off the appearance of obedience and holiness but was inwardly wicked and practicing secret sin, do you think these verses would read the same?**
 - Answers will vary, as we cannot predict God's actions, but Joseph's relationship with God certainly would have been different. Things would likely have played out differently with his role in Potiphar's household.

Before transitioning to the next verses, say something like:

- **We must see that Joseph’s success here in chapter 39, as well as his larger story, is due to his God-honoring character and God’s choice to bless him. However, we must also remember that even men who appear to have great character can stumble. We are all one bad decision away from ruining our marriages, families, jobs, or our lives. Next, we’ll see what happens when Joseph is confronted with tremendous temptation.**

NEXT, direct your group's attention back to Genesis 39:7-12. Then, ask:

- **What are some of the reasons that play a factor in Joseph’s decision not to lie with his master’s wife?**
 - Answers will vary. Help your group notice **each** of the following:
 - He respects his master.
 - He respects the rules and boundaries that his master has set for him.
 - He understands the blessings his master has given him and does not take them for granted.
 - He understands that all sin is ultimately against his heavenly Master, not only his earthly master.
- **What happens when we lack respect for our heavenly master (God) or the rules He has set for us? How can this be dangerous in times of sexual temptation (or general temptation)?**
 - *Answer:* We are less likely to obey those for whom we lack love and respect. When temptation comes our way, and we are faced with one sinful choice that is very appealing at that moment and another choice for obedience to a master that we do not love and respect, it's no surprise that sin wins out.
- **What happens when we don’t fully appreciate the blessings we’ve received from God? How can this be dangerous in times of temptation?**
 - *Answer:* If our hearts are not overflowing with thankfulness and appreciation for who God is and how much He loves us, we are less likely to delight in His commands. When we lose sight of how much He loves us and all He has done for us, we are inclined to mistrust His commands and warnings against sin.
- **Why does it matter that sin is ultimately against God rather than against fellow man?**
 - *Answer:* David Platt, a well-known pastor and author, has said something to the effect of, “The measure of sin is determined by the magnitude of the One who is sinned against.” It is extremely serious when we sin against a fellow human. But how much more significant is it when we sin against a holy God, the sovereign Creator of the universe? Joseph knew that it was no trivial thing to sin against God.

- **If our faithfulness in moments of temptation is determined by how we view and relate to God, how can we take steps to grow in this area?**
 - *Answer:* We must be people who know God intimately and who trust Him completely. We need to love Him so much that it hurts us when we think about hurting Him. We need to overflow with thankfulness at His many blessings so that we can joyfully obey His commands and warnings against sin. Therefore, we must be people who delight in His Word, His character, and His many promises.

THEN, re-read Genesis 39:13-21. It's important to acknowledge that full obedience to God will not always set us on the easiest path in life. Jesus Himself warned us that His people would have trouble in the world (see John 16:33). In this section, Joseph is going to face hardship because he chooses obedience to God. Remind your group that there is a cost for following Christ and submitting to the will of God. At the very least, we will have to set aside worldly pleasures and comforts. But the cost may be much, much higher. Joseph was faithful to God, and though it cost him a great career and landed him in prison, he landed right where God wanted him. After reading the section, direct your group back to verse 21. Ask:

- **Did you notice that the Lord is still described as “with” Joseph, as He was back in verses 2 and 3? How might verse 21 read differently if Joseph had lain with Potiphar’s wife?**
 - Answers will vary. We see examples in the Old Testament where the Lord withdraws from people and nations because of their sin. If we are in Christ, we are always united to God through the Holy Spirit, but our sin can certainly disrupt our relationship with Him.
- **Joseph also experienced the love of God and received favor from God (v. 21). How do those two truths help us better understand Joseph’s plight in this passage?**
 - Answers will vary. Even though Joseph was in what seemed like a negative situation, it was certainly not a consequence of the Lord's displeasure. God’s love and favor served as an affirmative “amen” for Joseph’s God-honoring actions and as a source of joy amidst his trials. He could be reassured that the Lord was still with him and had a plan for him. And God certainly did!

FINALLY, remind your group that this is not the end of Joseph’s story. God is about to use him in incredible ways to save many lives and be a blessing to the nations. Then, recap some of the main ideas by saying something like:

- **Joseph was a man who deeply loved and honored God with his life. When temptation came his way, he knew that any sin he committed would be against God first and foremost, which deterred him from sinning. Joseph knew that there was greater joy in obeying God, who had always been faithful, than there was pleasure in pursuing sexual sin, which was fleeting. He trusted that God’s way was best—even when it cost him his job and imprisonment.**

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group’s attention on the takeaways from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **Seeing Joseph acknowledge that his sin would primarily be against God, some of us need to consider why we can so easily—almost without a second thought— choose to sin against Him.**
 - Where is the disconnect? We need to ask, “How can I stir my affections for my Savior King so that I detest sinning against Him?”
- **Some of us need to evaluate how much we trust that God’s commands are best for us.**
 - We need to consider if the “no’s” from God have become burdensome to obey because we forget the joy and goodness from God's many "yes’s” and blessings. Some of us need to ask, "Am I regularly reflecting on the truth of God’s Word and remembering that His ways are life-giving and best?"
- **Some of us have regularly been giving in to sexual temptation, are distant from the Lord, and need to take extreme measures to flee from sin as Joseph did.**
 - We need to ask, "What are the sources of sexual temptation in my life? How can I eliminate those sources or prevent them from causing me to sin?"

(On that note, consider encouraging your group that many men need to have accountability software on their phones or computers to eliminate a primary source of sexual temptation. There is no shame in doing this, and it is not "cheating," but is a God-honoring decision to help protect your purity and holiness.)

If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of processing they find themselves doing.

FINALLY, encourage men to continue to marinate on these points in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.