

Facing Temptation

Gen. 39:1-12

ILLUSTRATION: When I was about 11 years old I road my bike down the street to my cousins home. Turns out my cousin's older brother had just bought a huge pit bull dog named. He was the meanest dog I have ever encountered. He came at me on my bike. I jumped off, nothing stood between me and Cisco but a Huffy bike. Eventually after I screamed a few times my uncle came out and called the dog. As soon as the dog looked the other way I bolted. I ran as if my life depended on it. I ran into my grandmothers house and slammed the door behind me.

The Irish Poet Oscar Wilde said, "I can resist anything but temptation"

INTRODUCTION: Nothing is more real to the human experience and the Christian experience than the fact that temptations are a real, consistent, and difficult part of life. It is crucial that you have a method for dealing with temptations whether they are small enough to simply knock you off balance or large enough to try your very soul.

ILLUSTRATION: They don't tell you that. It's like recruiting for the Armed Forces. Want to see the World? Learn new skills? Make new friends? Go Army! They forget to mention people are shooting at you.

It seems as though the Bible has scattered stories like this throughout God's Word as a way to make us pause, take inventory of our lives and really answer the question, "Are we ready when temptation strikes."

4 things about temptation that you must understand.

a. Temptation is not Sin - Jesus was tempted

- **Hebrews 4:15** ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.
- **Matthew 4:1 (NASB95)**
¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Someone said, "Well I thought it, I might as well say it!"
No! Temptation is NOT SIN!

b. Temptation cannot be prevented

The goal isn't to stop temptation. It's to stop sinning.

- **Martin Luther**, *You can't stop the birds from flying over your head but you can prevent them from building a nest in your hair.*

c. Temptation does not mean God is disappointed in you

God is not any more disappointed in you for being tempted than he was of Jesus when He was tempted

d. Temptation does not mean you are unspiritual

Sometimes we get the idea that we must not be very mature spiritually because we are tempted, this is not the case at all!

- Adam and Eve were tempted before they fell into sin. Jesus was tempted.

NOW with that understanding let's look at our case study in the life of Joseph.

TEXT: Genesis 39:1–6 (ESV)

¹ Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. ² The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. ⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵ From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. ⁶ So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

1. Guard your Emotions

a. Emotional Lows

¹ Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

Can you imagine the TRAUMA that Joseph had experienced? His brothers ganged up on him threw him in a pit. Then they sold him into slavery.

Did you know there is a direct correlation between the amount of trauma you experience in life and your likelihood of being victimized by people who want to use you for their personal benefit? Joseph was undoubtedly at risk.

Think about the people in your circle of influence who have experienced Trauma recently - make sure you communicate love to them. Bring them into community. Show them acceptance.

The only thing that can be as dangerous as an emotional low is...

b. Emotional Highs

² The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a **successful** man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.

Here's what happens with success:

- Over tax your body and emotions, you tend to lack sleep, proper exercise and nutrition.
- You neglect your wife and kids expecting one day to catch up.
- You begin to neglect your walk with the Lord because who has the time.
- Before long you begin to feel entitled! As if the rules don't apply to you.

2. Guard Your Eyes

6b. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

The culture of Egypt was not entirely unlike our own – beauty opens doors that nothing else can. Joseph was physically appealing. He was the Brad Pitt of Egypt.

The Bible warns against the Lust of the Eyes –

This is when temptation hijacks your normal desires and uses them against you through sight.

- Gen. 3:6 "Eve saw the fruit"
- Gen. 13:10 "Lot lifted up his eyes toward Sodom"
- 2 Samuel 11:2 "David saw Bathsheba"

It is vitally important that you guard the gate of your eyes.

To properly protect your eyes is to tie Satan's strongest arm behind his back.

ADVICE: Listen, married couples need to work as a team in this area. What if Potifer's wife had gone to Potifer and spoken frankly about her temptation toward Joseph? Potifer could have given Joseph other responsibilities and alleviated the temptation.

- Eliminate obvious dangers** – Access to porn (printed, online, television, phone)
- Learn how not to look** – you can see some guys are visually mapping out a woman's figure to think about at a later time. Some ladies make that very easy to do. Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Job understood this 31:1, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"

3. Guard Your Ears

Genesis 39:7 (ESV)

⁷ And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me."

The first affair is always an affair of words.

Solomon warned his son in Proverbs 7

³ For the lips of an adulteress drip honey And smoother than oil is her speech; ⁴ But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵ Her feet go down to death, Her steps take hold of Sheol.

ILL. One edge sword were tools like machete, the two edged sword is for combat. The adulterous words are like a two edged sword that Satan uses to wage war on your soul.

a. Guard what you hear

EXP: Beware of the man or woman who constantly compliments your person. I don't mean your performance, hopefully you get a lot of encouragements in that area, but I'm speaking of your person. For example –

- You look nice today
- That looks good on you
- You have a great personality

Watch out for –

- Your husband sure is lucky
- If I were single....

The adulterous man or woman will tell you all of the things you want to hear. They will make you feel younger than you are, more attractive than you are, smarter than you are.

The first affair is often an affair of words.

b. Guard what you say -

- Do I say things to a co-worker, friend or waitress that I would not say in front of my husband or wife?

Have a few things that you will not talk about with the opposite sex

- Problems with your spouse
- Dissatisfaction with your marriage
- Anything that you have not or will not talk about with your spouse.

Now the danger is just as real in the cyber arena:

- Beware of private chats.
- Do you ever get an email that you feel you should delete lest your wife reads it?
- Does your spouse occasionally check your text messages?
 - Does it make you angry that I would even mention such things? You are already in the grip of the enemy.

MEN if the Glory of God is not in your mind as you talk to a pretty girl, that conversation needs to end.

NOTE how Joseph ends the conversation -

Genesis 39:8–10 (ESV)

⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. ⁹ He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" ¹⁰ And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.

4. Guard Your Boundaries

Genesis 39:11–12 (ESV)

¹¹ But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house,

This was unintentional, this was unplanned, it was a chance encounter.

However this is a good opportunity to stop for a moment and talk about the danger of being alone with someone of the opposite sex, especially if that person is attractive.

- **I'm talking about setting very clear boundaries.** People tend to react negatively toward boundaries as if they are confining... but actually they are quite helpful and offer great freedom. I am free within the boundaries of my yard to do anything I want.

Have a few firm rules in place that you will not violate.

An Old Proverb said, "He who would not fall must not walk in slippery places."

- Avoid lunches alone with a coworker of the opposite sex
- Unguarded conversations that cross a line of intimacy

¹² she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me."

Like the Adulterous Woman in Pro. 7: ¹³ she seizes him and kisses him

LISTEN: What Joseph did next has been greatly misunderstood - 12b. And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

12b. But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house.

Do you read that and think: Wow, what a man. He was so spiritual, so godly. He wasn't attracted to this woman, he wasn't tempted...

No friend, I think it was quite the opposite. He was so weak, he knew his own limitations and he knew when to flee.

I believe that Joseph's heart began to race. I believe that a bead of sweat formed on his brow. I believe for a brief moment his heart was torn between two worlds – will he give into temptation? Who would know? It was mutual it was consensual. But then again what about his God? God would see. God would know.

John Piper – *Men, if you don't know the strain and the stress of your desires battling within you then you have never really stood and fought against your physical lust.*

It was there in the tension of temptation that Joseph proved his faith in the living God. He did the only thing he could do – **RUN**.

The Bible tells us at some points to resist the Devil and he will flee from you, but when it comes to sexual temptation it is important that you know your own limitations. The Bible's resounding command is – FLEE YOUTHFUL LUSTS. That is how God expects you to react when a boundary is crossed.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB95)
but with the temptation will provide the way of escape
Sometimes the way of escape is to bolt.

Mark Twain once wrote, *“There are several good protections against temptation, but the surest is cowardice.”*

CLOSING ILLUSTRATION: The Myth of the Clutch Hitter

Baseball fans will be familiar with the phrase – Clutch Hitter. This is the guy who can make a crucial hit to win the game when the score is close in the final minutes of the game.

But studies have proven that the idea of a clutch hitter is a complete myth. The stats even reveal the top hitters in baseball actually average a 13 point drop in their overall batting average when the game is on the line.

What happens on the Baseball diamond is no different from what happens in every aspect of life. When things are tough the person who come through is generally the same person who has consistently come through day in and day out when things aren't so tough. He has a plan, he executes it ruthlessly and it serves him well in the heat of temptation.