



Lesson 4

A Step Backward and a Step Closer to Pharaoh (Genesis 39:78-40:23)

OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

BIBLE STUDY: Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

Genesis 39:6b-12 Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" 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. 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?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 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.

- 1.) Potiphar's wife was persistent. How did this make the temptation Joseph faced particularly difficult?
- 2.) What are some worldly reasons that Joseph could have used to resist her advances? What reasons did Joseph use instead?
- 3.) Lust and sexual temptations come at us continually from every direction: from our own sinful hearts, from behavior of others, literature, media, internet, advertisements, etc. What practical pointers does Joseph give us in resisting these temptations?

Genesis 39:13-20 When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, 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. When he

heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.” She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. Then she told him this story: “That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.” When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, “This is how your slave treated me,” he burned with anger. Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.

4.) What do you think of Potiphar’s reaction?

5.) What did Joseph get in return for his faithfulness to the Lord? How is this a reality check for us as we strive to serve the Lord in holiness?

BIBLE STUDY: Joseph in Prison

Genesis 39:20b-23 But while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. 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. 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.

6.) What remained constant during the “see-saw” of Joseph’s life? What of our lives?

7.) The LORD continued to shape and train Joseph through this ordeal. Discuss how the following would have prepared him for being ruler of Egypt.

- Living under the power of other people
- Squalor of prison life
- Egyptian political life
- Showing love to others
- Responsibility and work ethic

BIBLE STUDY: The Cupbearer and the Baker

Genesis 40:1-8 Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them.

After they had been in custody for some time, each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had

a meaning of its own. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

8.) Why are the positions of these two men significant?

9.) To whom does Jacob ascribe the wisdom of properly interpreting dreams?

Genesis 40:9-23 So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand." "This is what it means," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head." "This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat away your flesh."

Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand, but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation. The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

10.) What interpretive "rules" was God leading Joseph to piece together in his analysis of these dreams and the aftermath of these events?

APPLICATION

1.) Joseph wore his faith on his sleeve wherever he went and whatever he did. While that would have been easier at home, he was now in a foreign country with foreign gods. He was pressured to reject God's way by someone who was much more powerful and lacked morals, and later he lived among prisoners, many of whom must not have cared less about religion. Yet through it all Joseph persisted as salt and light in God's kingdom.

Share a situation in your life where you confessed your faith or stood up for godliness in the face of hostility. How did it turn out?

CLOSING BENEDICTION