

JOSEPH, A SLAVE IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE

Genesis 39:1-23

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Joseph, Potiphar, and Potiphar's wife

Key-location: Potiphar's home in Egypt

Key-repetitions:

- The Lord was with Joseph: Gen 39:2, 3, 21, 23.
- Potiphar put Joseph in charge of everything he owned (Gen 39:4, 5, 6, 8).
- Potiphar's wife invited Joseph to lie with her (Gen 39:7, 10, 12).
- Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of trying to molest her: to the servants (Gen 39:14-15); to her husband (Gen 39:17-18).

Key-attitudes:

- Hope in the midst of despair:
 - Joseph, the slave, becomes a blessing.
 - Joseph is tempted but resists.
 - Joseph is falsely accused but prospers in prison.
- Potiphar's wife's desires for Joseph to go to bed with her.
- Joseph's fear of sinning against God.
- Potiphar's burning anger when he heard his wife's accusation against Joseph.

Initial-situation:

Israel loved Joseph more than all his other sons, but Joseph's brothers hated him. Joseph dreamed that his father, mother and brothers would bow down before him. Joseph's brothers sold him to slave merchants. Joseph was taken to Egypt.

Initial-problem:

Slave merchants took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, an Egyptian officer who was captain of Pharaoh's body guard (Gen 39:1).

Final-situation:

Potiphar put Joseph in prison, but God was with him and extended kindness to him (Gen 39:20-21).

BIBLE STORY

The Ishmaelite slave traders took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials. Kings in Egypt were called Pharaohs. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard (Gen 37:36; 39:1).

The Lord was with Joseph and things went well with him. Potiphar observed that the Lord was with Joseph and that the Lord gave Joseph success in everything he did. Potiphar made Joseph his personal servant. Potiphar entrusted everything he owned to Joseph's care. The Lord blessed Potiphar's home because of Joseph. With Joseph in charge, Potiphar did not concern himself with anything except to decide which food he wanted to eat (Gen 39:2-6).

Joseph was well-built and handsome. Potiphar's wife became infatuated with Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

Joseph refused and replied, "Look, my master put me in charge of everything he owns. My master doesn't concern himself with anything in the house. The only thing he hasn't turned over to me is you. You're his wife! How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" The woman pestered Joseph every day, but Joseph refused to go to bed with her or spend time with her.

One day Joseph went into the house to do his work and none of the household servants were inside. His master's wife grabbed him by his coat saying, "Come to bed with me!" Joseph left his coat in her hand and ran out of the house. Potiphar's wife realized that Joseph left his coat and ran outside, so she screamed for her house servants. She cried hysterically and told them, "This Hebrew came to insult us! He tried to rape me, but I screamed. My scream scared him and he ran away, but he left his coat beside me."

She kept Joseph's coat until her husband came home. Then she told Potiphar her story, "That Hebrew slave you bought us tried to use me as his plaything. But as soon as I screamed for help, he fled, leaving his coat."

Potiphar was furious; he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were confined (Gen 39:7-20).

The Lord was with Joseph in prison. The Lord caused the prison warden to like Joseph. The warden put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners and let him manage the whole prison operation. The Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in everything he did (Gen 39:21-23).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Joseph become a blessing when he was put into the undesirable situation of slavery?
2. How did Joseph resist sexual temptation?
3. Today, what kinds of temptation do people face who follow God?

4. What can we learn from Joseph that will help us resist our temptations?
5. What injustices did Joseph experience?
6. Where was God when Joseph suffered one injustice after another: when he was sold into slavery, falsely accused and imprisoned?
7. What injustices do Christians face today?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God is always present with those who are faithful to Him.** God was with Joseph (Gen 39:2, 21, 23 // Psa 46:1-2).
2. **The person who serves God is subject to strong temptation.** Seventeen year old Joseph was tempted to have sex with his master's wife (Gen 39:7, 10-12).
3. **A person may become blind to moral values.** Potiphar's wife was blind to the importance of moral values in the home (Gen 39:7).
4. **Belief in God gives one reason to resist temptation.** Joseph's belief in God gave him the conviction that betraying his master would be sin (Gen 39:9).
5. **The person who tempts others to sin may resent the person who resists temptation.** Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph to have sex with her. When he refused, she then sought revenge against him (Gen 39:13-19).
6. **God's servants live in a corrupt world and may suffer injustice as a consequence of doing what is right.** Joseph was sold into slavery (Gen 39:1). When Joseph resisted sexual temptations, he was falsely accused and jailed (Gen 39:20).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Pantomime Retelling of the Story:

The storyteller tells the story one time. Then the storyteller:

- Chooses a listener to pantomime the story as the storyteller tells it a second time.
- Invites a listener to retell the story.
- Asks listeners if the one who retold the story left out or added to the story.