

In The Beginning...God: Joseph in Egypt

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In the Gospel of Matthew

As Jesus gets closer & closer to His arrest

The religious leaders are questioning Him

More & more

They're getting frantic

Because He's developed such a following

And in Matthew 22

They ask Him for the greatest command in the Law

Of the 613 commandments

Which one is the greatest?

Jesus replies,

Matthew 22:37-39 – Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

Sometimes – people today look at the Bible

And they think it's out of date

It's an old book

Not equipped for modern times

Not equipped for modern challenges

And to be fair

It was written almost 2,000 years ago

But I want you to catch something interesting

In Jesus' reply

This first portion

Came out of Deuteronomy 6

He's quoting the Hebrew Scriptures

And the second portion

Came out of Leviticus 19

Jesus – to face the complex modern challenges of *His* day

Looked back about 1,500 years

Into the ancient Hebrew Scriptures

To find words from God

That were still relevant then

And, in fact, are still relevant now

They are – Time. Less.

Do not discard this book

Under the false premise

That we've grown beyond its wisdom
Or we've grown beyond its understanding

Nothing could be further from the truth

Today's text is real & relevant
And completely applicable to challenges
That we all face

Turn to Genesis 39

Welcome

Online welcome

Series...

Read Genesis 39:1

It says that Potiphar

Was the captain of the guard

He was the leader of the group

A captain

So, he's the leader of the "*guard*"

And "*guard*" is a fine translation

But "*bodyguard*" is probably a little closer

Potiphar is like the head of the secret service
And some translations of this Hebrew word

Actually mean
Executioner or slaughterer

Potiphar took care of things
When Pharaoh called

Verse 1 says
That Potiphar bought Joseph
From the Ishmaelites

Who are the Ishmaelites?

They're the descendants of Ishmael
Right?

And Ishmael was Joseph's
Great uncle

So that means his descendants
Who bought him from his brothers
Would have been Joseph's 2nd cousins

So, they probably knew each other

We know that Joseph's family knew *them*

Because Genesis 37:27a says, "Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites."

Read Genesis 39:2-4

So, Potiphar has some money

Several servants

It mentions Joseph lives inside Potiphar's house

Apparently, he also had servants' quarters elsewhere

But Joseph served inside his house

And because God was with him

He rose to the rank of attendant

Some have said this is like

An executive assistant today

And then Potiphar put him

In charge of his household

He's directing all of the servants

And all of the logistics

For his home

Read Genesis 39:5-6a

That's quite a statement:

“With Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.”

Read Genesis 39:6b-10

Potiphar was checked out

Joseph was well-built and handsome

His actual job was to be attentive

To Potiphar

But also, to Potiphar’s wife

As the one living there

Enter temptation

She propositioned him

Not subtly

And not once

Verse 10 says she spoke to him

“day after day”

Do you see that?

Verse 10 also says that

He refused to go to bed with her

And he refused to even be with her

Verse 11 starts - “One day”

Now – we don't know how much time passes

Between verse 10

Where she's propositioning him daily

And he's avoiding her

And verse 11, which starts, "one day"

We don't know

But you get the impression it's a bit

"day after day after day"

Read Genesis 39:11-15

There's a lot about this passage we don't know

Was anything she said here true?

They were alone in the house

Did she move and recreate a whole scene to make him look guilty?

We don't know

What I do know

Is that the people in this Book

Are real people

They're not above temptation

Scripture says even Jesus was tempted like we are

Just without the sin

So, we should probably assume that Joseph

Who was likely a lonely young man

We should probably assume he enjoyed the attention from her

Which makes a scenario

Raised by author Steven Huhn

A real possibility in my mind

Joseph was in charge of Potiphar's "household"

His property

His servants

And Potiphar's wife is propositioning him "day after day"

And yet on this day

In verse 11

On this day he finds himself

Alone in the house with her

Interesting

She says in verse 14

That Joseph "came in here to sleep with me"

Where's here?

From the context

It seems like her bedroom
And he was close enough to her
That she could get her hands on his cloak
So that when he left
It was lying beside her on the bed

That leads me to a question:

Joseph manages the household staff

We don't know how many there were

But it uses the plural

So, there were at least 2

That worked inside the house

Probably more

Plus, those that worked outside in the fields

So, Joseph comes into the house

Into the bedroom of a woman who has been propositioning him "day
after day"

Knowing that the household staff that he manages are all away

Why would he do that?

We don't know for sure

But maybe Joseph was flirting with temptation

He was a lonely young man

He enjoyed the attention she was giving him
He was playing with fire
And even though he didn't ultimately
Give into the immoral temptation
It brought a lot of pain into his life

Let's talk about that for a second

How many of us
Have seen the line of God
We know what's right
We know what's wrong
He placed those lines there
For our benefit
And we don't purpose to cross the line
But we enjoy getting pretty close

Instead of asking the question

How can I honor God?

Instead of asking the question

What's the next right choice?

We ask the question

How close can I get?

Students

Let me talk to you specifically just now

I'm not talking to you

Because adults are immune to this

I'm talking with you because we've all been there

And this temptation

Is exceedingly attractive

To younger people

We stop asking the questions:

How can I honor God?

What's the next right choice?

And we start asking:

How close can I get?

As you get older

You are still susceptible

But you have more experience

That God's ways *really* are best

You have more experience

The pain that comes from breaking His decrees

Student, can I encourage you

In dating, stop focusing on a line

Not to cross

And start focusing on

Respecting this person, you care about

And respecting the One who made her

With your parents

Stop focusing on what you can

Get away with

And start focusing on how to honor them

Focus on learning

Whatever you can from their wisdom

Joseph seems to have

Lost sight of this

Joseph seems to have been

Playing with fire

And he paid a price

I've said before

God prepares some people for leadership

Through a mentoring opportunity

Or an MBA program or something

But God prepared Joseph for leadership

Through slavery and prison

And that's true, I guess

To a point

But let's consider that:

James 1:12-13 (NLT) - God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation... And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and He never tempts anyone else.

Did God send Joseph to slavery in Egypt?

His brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites

The Ishmaelites sold him to Potiphar

All of them agreed to treat a person like property

So, did God send Joseph to Egypt?

No

Sinful behavior sent Joseph to Egypt

And God is never tempted to do wrong, and He never tempts anyone else

Did God send Joseph to prison?

Potiphar's wife seduced him

He may have played into that

Then she lied and made a false accusation

Did God send Joseph to prison?

No

Sinful behavior sent Joseph to prison

And God is never tempted to do wrong, and He never tempts anyone else

We don't know if it ever happened

Maybe Joseph is better than me

Because we never read where it happened

But if I had been Joseph

At some point

At some dark point

I would have asked the question

"God, why are You *doing this* to me?"

Or, "God, why are You *letting them* do this to me?"

But we've already established

God *didn't* do that

So, what *did* God do?

Genesis 39:2a

After he arrived in Egypt

The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered

Genesis 39:3-4a

After Potiphar bought him from the Ishmaelites

When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant.

Genesis 39:5b

As Joseph began to lead Potiphar's household

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.

Genesis 39:20b-21

After Potiphar sent him to prison

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.

Genesis 39:23

As Joseph began to lead for the warden

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.

What did God do?

God was *with* him

God never left him

Sometimes Christians teach

That God had a vision for Joseph

Gave him dreams to show him
 He's destined for leadership
And then God sends him to slavery
 And God sends him to prison
All to prepare him to lead in Egypt

I'm just not sure that lines up

I think God certainly had a vision for Joseph
 His dreams made that clear
And his brothers tried to jack that up
 With their jealous, sinful behavior

But God was still *with* him

And when Potiphar noticed
 The blessed Hand of God on his life
And God could've used Potiphar's connections
 To get him to Pharaoh
But Potiphar's wife tried to jack that up
 First by seducing him
 Then by framing him

But God was still *with* him

And then the warden noticed

The blessed Hand of God on his life

Because God was still with him

Do you see the pattern?

God has a vision for your life

Sin tries to jack that up

It leads to a lot of pain

But God still longs to be with us

And if we follow Him

He ultimately leads us where He wanted us all along

Sometimes the difficult circumstances of life feel like more than we can handle.

We get a glimpse of those painful realities in the book of Job from the Bible.

Job faced financial ruin as well

As the death of much of his family

And the betrayal of his friends.

He is someone who understands our pain today.

The book of Job has 288 questions throughout the book

Time and again

Job & his friends cry out to God for understanding

Why is this terrible reality befalling their friend?

288 questions

And yet not one answer.

In fact

When God finally does respond to the many questions

His response is

In fact

67 more questions

Questions that Job cannot answer either.

God showed up in a whirlwind with no answers.

But God has never promised answers.

I'm sure Joseph had a lot of questions

Questions that we don't read God answering

But God has never promised answers

He has always promised Himself

And sometimes that's all we have

And sometimes that has to be enough.

Let me share with you some Scriptures

That I think maybe helpful today:

Jesus told us, in Matthew 28:20 – “I will be with you always – to the very end of the age.”

Some of you

Are in the middle of it today

And when we are

We may not feel the presence of God as strongly as other days

It's especially important to remember that He IS with us.

He promised that – so we can be sure.

I often

When I pray

Ask God that I will be able to sense Him.

I don't have to pray for Him to be with me

He promised He would be.

But sometimes, in the darkness

It's hard to see His Hand

So, I just ask Him to help me see Him.

Hebrews 13:5b tells us that “God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

Not only is God's presence assured – but He promises that at NO TIME will He renege on that promise.

God is always at work – always working to redeem this broken world and make it whole again.

He has NOT left us... He has NOT left you... He never will.

1 Peter 5:6-7 – “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”

When we feel like we don’t understand – like we can’t go on – like we don’t have the strength to do what lies in front of us – we can rest assured that we don’t have to.

We don’t have to be strong enough.

We don’t have to be smart enough.

We don’t have to be together enough.

Because God has promised to be with us

Because God has promised to never leave us

We can rest

Not under the weight of the world

But under the protecting hand of God

Knowing that when I am not enough

He still is... enough.

You don’t have to rest under the weight of the world

He’ll carry that

He is still with us

He still cares.