

SESSION 2

THE PITFALL OF TEMPTATION

Leader pages on pp. 138-141

THE POINT:
REMEMBERING
WHAT IS AT STAKE
HELPS US OVERCOME
TEMPTATION.

GENESIS 39:1-12

MEMORY VERSE

¹ Joseph had been taken to Egypt. An Egyptian named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guards, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. ² **The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, serving in the household of his Egyptian master.** ³ When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful, ⁴ Joseph found favor with his master and became his personal attendant. Potiphar also put him in charge of his household and placed all that he owned under his authority. ⁵ From the time that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph. The LORD's blessing was on all that he owned, in his house and in his fields. ⁶ He left all that he owned under Joseph's authority; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome. ⁷ After some time his master's wife looked longingly at Joseph and said, "Sleep with me."

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⁸ But he refused. "Look," he said to his master's wife, "with me here my master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has put all that he owns under my authority. ⁹ No one in this house is greater than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. So how could I do this immense evil, and how could I sin against God?" ¹⁰ Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her.

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¹¹ Now one day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were there. ¹² She grabbed him by his garment and said, "Sleep with me!" But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran outside.

KEYWORDS

Blessed (v. 5)—To be favored with resources or granted good fortune because the Lord takes the initiative to make a person successful in keeping with His plan.

Garment (v. 12)—The Hebrew word served as a general term to describe any article of clothing a person would wear, but here apparently an outer garment.

WHAT HELPS US MOVE PAST TEMPTATION?

We see enticing objects, and we feel the urge to respond. A second helping of chocolate cake. An ad for an item we don't need and can't afford. A "click here to see more" online. Temptation lies around every corner.

We often resist temptation as long as someone is looking over our shoulder and says, "Don't eat that" or "You really don't need that." Someone is watching over our shoulder at all times: God!

In today's study, Joseph modeled what it means to live with that truth in mind: God is watching our every move. Joseph's aim was to keep himself clean in the midst of a dirty culture. That is our challenge as well.

You may not be tempted in the same way Joseph was, but you will face temptation. We all do. Many of us are tempted to love money; pursue a relationship that could destroy a marriage; envy a co-worker who is experiencing great success; seek the "likes" of other people more than the approval of God. Joseph's approach to temptation can help all of us.

Success Can Lead to a Slippery Slope // Genesis 39:1-7

At the last session's end, broken-hearted Joseph was being taken to Egypt. Disowned and enslaved by his own brothers, there was little hope the dreams he shared would ever come true. Instead of anger and revenge, he trusted God to see him through. With great success also came new temptations and new challenges.

Despite Joseph's circumstances, God was working out His divine plan. Joseph couldn't take credit for his continued success because God was with him.

- "The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man" (v. 2).
- "His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful" (v. 3).
- "The LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph" (v. 5).



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Joseph was also blessed with good looks. “Joseph was well-built and handsome” (v. 6). So, why is this detail about Joseph’s advantages in life included? The answer lies in the pitfalls that come with success. Joseph had God’s hand on him, and he had looks that caused all eyes to be on him! Yet these “blessings” also presented challenges and temptation.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO STAY ON GUARD AGAINST TEMPTATION WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL?

One temptation came through Potiphar’s wife. She wanted Joseph and was probably used to getting whatever she wanted. Would Joseph sacrifice his integrity for whatever momentary pleasure she offered? This moment of decision would define his life forever.

Today cheating is not an uncommon thing. There’s even a television show about people betraying relationships and trading honoring their mate over temporary pleasures. Joseph was being offered everything in Potiphar’s house, including his wife! Could this be his payback for all he had been through? What would you have done?

Joseph could have justified giving into the offer from Potiphar’s wife; after all, he had been taken from his family and country; now he was a slave whom many might think deserved getting something back for all that had happened to him. We’ll see he chose a different path.

Make Up Your Mind in Advance

// Genesis 39:8-10

Adam and Eve faced forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden, and now Joseph faced his own forbidden fruit: the wife of a powerful man! Joseph didn’t submit and tried to talk sense to the corrupt woman by reminding her of how her husband blessed him. “My master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has put all that he owns under my authority. No one in this house is greater than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you” (v. 9). Joseph knew she was off limits!

How did Joseph stand firm when many people fall into sexual temptation? He “pre-decided” before that day to pursue God



DIGGING DEEPER DEFINING “GRABBED”

Potiphar’s wife had her sights on Joseph. Despite repeated attempts to lure him into her bed, he resisted. Finally, she resorted to a more direct method. She created a situation where they were all alone, and she “grabbed” him. The Hebrew word rendered *grabbed* (Gen. 39:12) would bring to mind the idea of clutching or grasping with a cruel or evil purpose in mind. For instance, Moses used the word when he described the criminal act of sexually assaulting a young woman: “If a man encounters a young woman, a virgin who is not engaged, takes hold of her and rapes her ... “ (Deut. 22:28). The word also describes Moses’ taking hold of the stone tablets to smash them to the ground (9:17) and the capturing of a city after laying siege to it (20:19).

In hindsight what should Joseph have done to prevent being grabbed by Potiphar’s wife?



above all things. He was more concerned about how God would react than Potiphar. “How could I sin against God?”

Have you already decided what you’ll do WHEN, not if, temptation comes?

- If you’re unmarried, have you decided you won’t have sex until your wedding day?
- If you’re married, have you decided you won’t cheat on your spouse?
- In pursuit of success, have you decided to always be honest and to treat others kindly?
- When seasons of trial and temptation come, have you decided to trust God?

It’s been said, “Temptation will always follow you as long as you keep leaving a forwarding address.” It’s impossible to avoid every image of sexual temptation the world provides. But the godly person should refuse to allow such things to take root in his heart. Joseph was committed to keeping his life and his conscience pure before God which is critical to life.

Many Christians live like temptation and trials won’t come. Unrealistically, they think they’re immune to the enemy’s attacks and the world’s traps. Sadly, King David let his guard down

during a successful season and sinned against God. David gave in to temptation with another man’s wife, destroying numerous lives in the process (2 Sam. 11).

Though many have committed the same mistake, there’s grace for our failures; yet the consequences can be very painful and costly. Before temptation comes, “pre-decide” what you’ll do based on God’s Word which guides us (Psalm 119:9-11).

HOW HAS GOD’S WORD HELPED YOU RESIST TEMPTATION?

When Nothing Else Works, Run

// Genesis 39:11-12

Joseph may have been a slave, but he lived and worked in a privileged position. Yet, as Potiphar’s wife grabbed hold of Joseph, he knew his situation was over if he didn’t run. She had made advances before—in fact, “day after day” (v. 10)—but others were around. It appeared this time was different, so Joseph sensed only one option: run! In an aggressive moment, she ripped his cloak off, and he escaped to safety, “leaving his garment in her hand” (v. 12). Joseph was running from sin.

The apostle Paul probably had this story in mind centuries later as he challenged the church in Corinth: “Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18). Paul warned the Corinthian Christians that all sin brings pain upon a person, but sexual sin carries an extra burden. Joseph provides a clear picture of the Christian response to pornography, adultery, and all forms of lusts. Little sins lead to bigger sins, so run from the first hint of it.

Running from temptation is key to our survival when facing spiritual warfare. More important

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than running away from sin is the daily decision to walk closely with Jesus. Emmanuel came to earth to be with us. As He prepared to leave earth, He assured His disciples the Spirit would come—and this would prove to be far better (John 16:7). God is always with us, and His Holy Spirit always leads us into truth (16:13).

In *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer emphasized the importance of running to the presence of God. “For it is not mere words that nourish the soul, but God Himself, and unless and until the hearers find God in personal experience, they are not the better for having heard the truth. The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, and they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts.”¹⁹

In other words, we shouldn't simply focus on what we're running from, but on what we're running toward.

WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE YOU FOUND HELPFUL IN OVERCOMING TEMPTATION?

DID YOU KNOW?

The word “temptation” didn't always have the meaning it has today. According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*,²⁰ the actual Hebrew words for temptation meant the following: *macah*—a trial, test; or *nacah*—to prove or try. With these meanings in mind, we can view temptation from the perspective of putting to proof who or what you say you really are. The testing in temptations is a test of our character. Temptation itself is not a sin, it's the acting on the temptation in a way that is ungodly that makes it sin. We know this because:

- Joseph chose to run from the temptation of sin with Potiphar's wife and didn't sin (Gen. 39:10-12).
- Though Jesus was tempted, He was without sin (Heb. 4:15).
- We have the power to overcome temptation because God promises He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).

Since God promises to enable us to overcome temptation, what are reasons we fall into it?

LIVE IT

How can we win the fight against yielding to temptation?

Temptation is constantly present in our lives. Media is full of it with even household cleaner and fast food commercials having sexual overtones. If not media, we also experience temptation in the trends of our society that encourage YDY (You Do You) or YOLO (You Only Live Once), so do what feels good. How can we resist temptation, pass the test, and ultimately honor God?

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- **Fight.** Realizing we are not immune to temptation prepares us to fight with the Word of God because we aren't caught off guard and are ready to defend our character as Jesus did when tempted.
- **Flight.** Choose to remove yourself from the situation that causes spiritual harm. Don't wait around to see if you can make it through temptation. Run like Joseph did and remove yourself from it.
- **Fright.** Honor your relationship with God by making your first concern about how it will impact Him if you, His ambassador, fall into temptation. Fear defaming God's name!

DAILY READINGS

1. GOD'S ALWAYS THERE // GENESIS 39:2

God is with us whenever and wherever we are. Sometimes we feel forsaken and forgotten when things go wrong in life. When faced with temptation, it's easy to forget that God is there with us. We should be mindful that God is omnipresent. He is everywhere; there is no place where He is not. If we keep our minds and hearts focused on His promise to never leave or forsake us, we might find our strength to resist temptation by inviting Him into our circumstance. He's already there, just acknowledge His presence and press into Him to help you be victorious through it.

Let us draw strength from this reality so we can resist temptation.

2. COUNT THE COST // GENESIS 39:9B

Due to the fallen nature of humankind, there's no one who can honestly say they haven't been tempted by sin. Because temptation to sin is a part of the Christian walk, it's something every believer faces. With this in mind, we should also consider the consequences of sin. Considering the consequences of giving in to temptation can be one of the most powerful ways to avoid it. Count the cost, keeping in mind that Romans 6:23 warns "the wages of sin is death"—death of relationships, trust, or favor with God.

Because our heart's desire is to honor God, let us invite Him to remind us of what sin costs.

3. INTEGRITY IN ACTION // GENESIS 39:10

Integrity is considered an honorable characteristic. Merriam-Webster defines it as a trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is incapable of being false to a trust. Though Joseph had numerous opportunities to be untrustworthy, even when no one was apparently watching, he maintained his integrity. He didn't immediately receive a reward for his honorable character, but God saw it and

remembered him. As we are consistent in displaying godly character regardless of whether others see it, God will honor us because in doing so we honor Him.

Be intentional in your consistency to be a person of integrity regardless of who may be watching.

4. WAGES OR GIFT // ROMANS 6:23

We have a choice not only daily, but throughout the day to choose to submit or to resist sin. Have you considered each time you reject sin, you're rejecting the wages of death being applied to your life? Think about it like this, a wage is payment received for something done, but a gift is given voluntarily and freely. Sin, which is what the enemy tempts us with, actually costs us. Rejecting sin, which is what God wants, results in the free gift of eternal life that provides everything we could never earn. Which will you choose?

Pray this prayer: "Gracious God, remind me today of the gift only You can provide. Deliver me from evil. I will always be grateful for Your gift of eternal life."

5. FROM HONOR TO JOY // PSALM 105:1-3

Just as we choose to avoid giving in to temptation, we are given the choice to honor God which leads to joy. How so? These verses guide us through how honoring God brings joy. Honoring God begins with being thankful we can call on Him and know He hears us. He hears us because we belong to Him; He loves us. Therefore we should fall on our knees in thanksgiving. It should include declarations of all the things God has done as we reflect on His faithfulness to us. Then the psalmist reminds us to set our minds on seeking God and all He is, has done, and will do to experience a heart full of joy over and over again. So rejoice!

Reflect on this: God is worthy of all honor and all praise. Let your heart find joy in this!



Overcoming Common Problems

BY DARCHELLE M. GARNER

“Why?” This is often the first question that comes to mind when we encounter problems in life. Things were going great and then ... financial distress, a relationship issue, illness or injury, an injustice, a job lost, a friend’s betrayal, even boredom with life. Or maybe there has been an ongoing struggle and now a new issue unfolds. Such problems may be common across humanity, but the associated pain and disruption are personal and can trigger a host of negative reactions.

Anxiety. Worry. Sleeplessness. Fear. Guilt. Anger. Confusion. Withdrawal. Frustration. All can erode life’s peace and hope. The impact can be so great that we may wonder if overcoming storms and difficulties is even possible, if

deliverance can ever be ours. Such suffering and uncertainty can easily beg the question, “Why?”

All of our problems stem from the fallen nature of the world. Since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, humankind has been under the curse of, well, problems. So, if, as Christians, we think we can avoid them, think again. Yes, it’s true that our choices can help insulate us from certain challenges. For example, choosing to not engage in criminal activity can greatly increase our chances of avoiding prison. Nevertheless, we most likely won’t make it to heaven without first encountering some troubles here on earth. Jesus Christ Himself assured us that we would face difficulties in life (John 16:33), so problems are guaranteed.

“How?” This may be a better question to ask when contending with life’s problems. How should we, as believers, handle problems? How do we maintain or reclaim our peace and hope in the midst of our suffering? How can we experience victory? How can we overcome?

When confronted by life’s problems—and to answer the “How?” questions—there are two things to remember and five actions to take.

Always remember:

God loves you. Let that sink in. The Creator of the universe—and everyone and everything in it from the beginning of time—loves you with a forever love (Jer. 31:3), a love so deep and so wide you cannot comprehend it (Eph. 3:18), and a love from which you can never be separated (Rom. 8:38-39). God sees what you are going through and cares that you are suffering. However, God uses your problems to help shape you, mature you, and prepare you to receive the blessings He has in store. He will work out your problems for your good (Rom. 8:28).

God is in control. Your situation might seem out of control to you, but not to God. As the sovereign Ruler of the universe (Ps. 93:1), God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. That means He is with you always, He knows everything that you are experiencing, and He has all power to preserve you in the midst of your troubles and keep you from destruction (2 Cor. 4:8). God has allowed problems to enter your life for a good purpose. He will deliver you once that purpose has been achieved according to His plan (Eph. 1:11).

So, when problems arise, take these actions:

Trust God. Make the choice to trust God, for He will see you through your crisis. Hold on to your faith in Him no matter the problem or how unsolvable it might appear to be. As believers, we walk by faith and not by what we see (2 Cor. 5:7). Trust that God is fighting on your behalf (Exod. 14:14) and that He is making a way for you in the midst of your storm (Gen. 41:53-54).

Pray to God. Prayer strengthens your relationship with God. Talk to Him about your problems (1 Pet. 5:7) and request His help in

overcoming them. Seek His peace and strength, and ask for wisdom and direction for dealing with your troubles. Despite your difficulties, be sure to express gratitude for your blessings. After you pray, listen. God will tell you things He wants you to know (Jer. 33:3). God may even make personal promises to you, ones you would never know without spending time with Him.

Believe God’s promises. The Bible records countless promises from God, and they are all for those who believe: God will never leave or forsake you (Deut. 31:6b; 13:5). He hears your prayers (1 Pet. 3:12). He will meet your every need (Phil. 4:19) and will give you strength (Isa. 41:10). These are just a few of God’s promises as found in the Bible. There are many more, all assuring you that God will take care of you in the midst of your storms.

Apply God’s Word. The Bible is not just a book filled with words on pages. It is God’s love letter to the world. Scripture is not only God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16), it is God Himself (John 1:1)! These words have power to change circumstances and transform people. So, it is not enough to just read the Word; it must be absorbed in our hearts and lived (1 John 2:6). As you apply biblical principles in your life, you will begin to experience a positive shift in your thoughts, actions, and perspective on your problems.

Seek God’s ambassadors. Humans are made for fellowship and sharing with one another. So, when dealing with life’s problems, seek out your pastor or a trusted Christian friend or counselor with whom you can share what you are experiencing. Encouragement and support from a caring confidant can help you process your feelings and provide some relief (Pro. 17:17).

You will discover greater peace and hope for your future as God guides you through your storm, and you will come out better than you can ever imagine. So hold on and don’t give up. You will overcome (1 Pet. 5:10)!

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