

DEALING WITH ADVERSITY

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

I. The Pit (Well)

Gen. 37:3-4 Israel /Jacob's love for Joseph caused his brothers to hate him.

Gen. 37:5-7 First Dream: The brother's sheaves bowed to Joseph's sheaf

Gen. 37:9-11 Second Dream: The Sun, Moon, and Eleven Stars bowed to Joseph!

These events indicate that Joseph, at age 17, did not know _____!

Gen. 37:20-27 The brothers' plans for Joseph progressed from:

Plan A – to kill him

Plan B – to leave him in the pit to die

Plan C – to sell him to the Ishmaelites as a slave.

Question One: Have you ever been devastated by the actions of a close family member?

(Illustration: Chuck Madden's story)

Temptation # 1: To Have a DRA (Dirty Rotten Attitude)

II. The Penthouse

Gen. 39: 2-4 Joseph, as a slave, serves his master, Potiphar. "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.... (3) And his master saw that the Lord was with him (Joseph) and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. (4) And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he (Joseph) served him; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. (5) And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. (6) and he left all that he had in Joseph's hand;"

Temptation # 2: To give in to Potiphar's wife's repeated invitations to have sex with her.

III. The Prison

Gen. 39: 6 b "... And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored.(7) and it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, 'Lie with me'. (8) But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold my master wotteth not (doesn't know) what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. (9)There is no greater in

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this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (10) and it came to pass as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not to her, to lie with her, or to be with her. (11) and it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. (12) And she caught him by his garment, saying 'Lie with me': and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out/ (13) And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, (14) That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them saying, 'See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: (15) And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me and fled, and got him out. (16) And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. (17) And she spake unto him according to these words, saying 'The Hebrew servant which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: (18) And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me and fled out. (19) And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, 'After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. (20) And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

Question Two: Have you ever been falsely accused on a morals charge and had to suffer the consequences as though you were guilty?

(Illustration: Jerry accused of plagiarism)

The principle of ministry violated in verse 11 was _____.

The 2 Timothy 2:22 principle for dealing with temptation in verse 12 is _____.

It has been suggested that the reason Joseph was not killed for the "attempted rape" of his master's wife was that Joseph was not the first young man she had invited to have sex. What phrase in verse 19 belies this suggestion? _____.

Gen 39:21-23 "But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. (22) And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. (23) The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper."

Why do you think Joseph was promoted in the prison? _____.

Question Three: Have you ever been forgotten by someone for whom you have done a huge favor?

Temptation # 3: Expectations of Imminent Freedom Dashed as Days become Weeks, Months, Years

Gen 40:1-15 "And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the King of Egypt, and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. (2) And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. (3) And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. (4)

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And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward. (5) And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. (6) And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold they were sad. (7) And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, 'Wherefore look ye so sadly today?' (8) And they said unto him 'We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.' And Joseph said unto them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you.' (9) And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream.... (Omit verses 10-11). (12) And Joseph said unto him, 'This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days: (13) Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. (14) But think on me when it shall be well with thee and shew kindness I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: (15) for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

Gen 40:20-23 "And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler.... (21) And he restored the chief butler to his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: (22) But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. (23) Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him."

Gen. 41:1-13 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed:.... (Omit verses 2-7). (8) and it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. (9) Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day (vv 10-11 When I was in prison, I dreamed a dream); (12) And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we (the baker and I) told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dreams he did interpret. (13) And as it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored to mine office, and him he hanged.

IV. The Palace

Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream and was appointed Prime Minister of Egypt.

Gen. 41:38-41 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? (39) And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: (40) Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. (41) And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

You know the rest of the story – Joseph saved the life of his father and his brothers' families and livestock by moving them to Egypt during the seven years of drought, and died at the ripe old age of 110. What was the secret of his survival in the midst of repeated adversity? There's no questioning

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the fact that God's hand was upon him, but perhaps the key to Joseph's victory over his circumstances is summed up in Genesis chapter 50, verse 20. Jacob, their father, had died and the brothers were fearful, that with dad gone, Joseph would lower the boom on them. Joseph calmed their fears with the following words from Genesis 50:19-20 ... "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? (20)But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

THE FOUR ESSENTIALS FOR FINISHING WELL

- (1) A deep seated conviction concerning the Sovereignty of God.
(Ps. 139:16 and Gal. 1:15 cross referenced with Jer. 1:5)
- (2) A regular intake of the Word of God with an emphasis on Personal Application
(II Tim. 3: 16 and Jer. 15:16)
- (3) A God inspired understanding of the Worth of the Individual
(John 3: 16 and Isa. 43:4)
- (4) A Servant's Heart
(Mark 10:45 and John 13:3-16 capped off by verse 17)

Addendum: From *The Challenge – A Biweekly Letter from the Heart of a Man to Men* by Robert Foster dated 9/01/03. PO Box 580, Colorado Springs, CO 80901.

*"God's providence in spite of the anger and hatred of Joseph's brothers
The root of bitterness is hate;
The symptom of bitterness is sarcasm;
The result of bitterness is manipulation."*

*"God's providence even when life isn't fair.
Joseph is sold down the river to Egypt.
Joseph ran fast from Potiphar's wife and left his coat behind!
Joseph for maintaining sexual purity was again thrown into prison."*

*"God's providence when we are swallowed up by disappointments.
He was abandoned by man but not by God.
He believed that God was in control... nothing was happening by accident.
He was learning about patience during the two years of isolation."*

*"God's providence... brought Joseph from the pit to the palace.
The dream about grain and cows [which] resulted in promotion to prominence.
The prestige for Joseph [which] was due to the problems, pressures, and prison.
The Key: 'The Lord was with Joseph.' Gen 39:2-3. Here is true leadership."*

J. Oswald Sanders