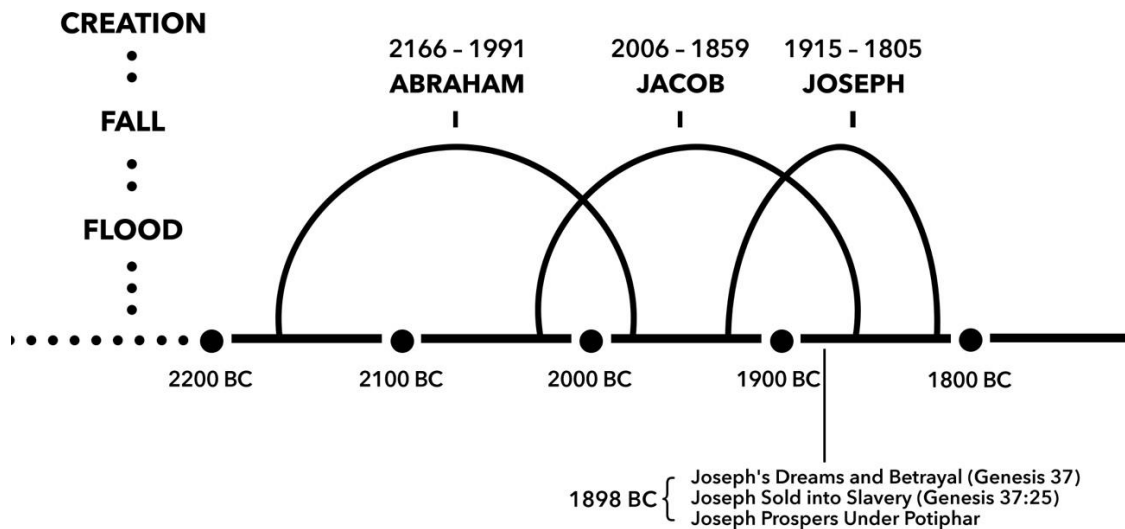


VALLEYS // Three Temptations

THE TEMPTATION OF POWER

Genesis 39:1–6, “Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.” (ESV)

Potiphar is the captain of the guard. This is the same title given to the Babylonian general who destroyed Jerusalem in 2 Kings 25. In other words, this is likely the commander in chief of the armed forces in Egypt. He’s one of the most powerful men in arguably the most powerful nations on earth. Potiphar sees something in Joseph, and for reasons that aren’t described, Potiphar decides to trust Joseph with an enormous amount of power and responsibility and makes him the overseer of all that he had. Even though Joseph was a slave, he managed the whole estate and the operational details of Potiphar’s life and work.



Important note: these timelines are approximate and based on the ESV Study Bible and BibleHub.net

This the first mention of God in Joseph’s story, and God is with Joseph. And yet, Joseph is still enslaved and his master is prospering because of God’s favor on Joseph. It would be very easy to look at Joseph’s life thus far and think if God was with Joseph, he wouldn’t be enslaved. He would rearrange the circumstances of his life.

And notice who is getting the blessing of God!? Potiphar is getting the blessing because of Joseph. Joseph is doing the heavy lifting here, and Potiphar is reaping the benefits.

Genesis 39:6–7, “Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, ‘Lie with me.’” (ESV)

Potiphar’s wife has an enormous amount of power, and she leverages that power for her own selfish means.

Genesis 39:8–10, “But he refused and said to his master’s wife, ‘Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?’ And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.”

Potiphar’s wife has power that she leverages for herself, and Joseph has equal authority to Potiphar. That’s how much Potiphar trusts him. Joseph doesn’t leverage that power for himself. He’s not walking in entitlement thinking he deserves what hasn’t been given to him. What’s amazing to see in this story is the character transformation that’s already beginning to take place in him.

His reasoning is not out of self-preservation, fear, or self-interest but from a sincere conscience. Joseph is seeking to live up to the trust and the honor that has been placed upon him, not only by Potiphar, but also by the Lord.

Genesis 39:9, “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

Joseph recognizes that the position that he’s in, that the influence he has, is not to be leveraged or manipulated for his own self-interest, but that it’s a gift to be stewarded for God’s glory and for the benefit of those around him. He recognizes that this sort of a betrayal would not only be a betrayal of Potiphar, but it would be a horrific betrayal of God and His promises to Joseph.

The temptation of power is to leverage that power out of service to yourself. For your own benefit, your own sake, your own glory, your own satisfaction, your own pride, your self-serving or self-exalting ends.

But what we see in Joseph is the leveraging of power, not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of people in a kingdom who don’t follow or believe in his God.

What influence or power has God given you? What resources has He entrusted to you? And how are you leveraging that power, that influence, stewarding that power for the sake of the people God has placed around you? See, a true leader is not someone with a title or positional authority. A leader is not at the top but the bottom. They view their position as a great

responsibility to serve and bless those around them, to serve others at their own expense, not to serve themselves at their expense. And we see that contrast so clearly in how Potiphar's wife leverages power and how Joseph leverages power.

THE TEMPTATION OF PLEASURE

Now, this is central to this part of the story. Potiphar's wife says, lie with me, and Joseph refers to it as a "wicked thing."

And it's wicked of course because she's married to someone else, but it's also wicked because she's not married to Joseph.

1 Corinthians 6:16–20, "...do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality."

When Paul says, "flee sexual immorality," he's referencing Joseph's story.

Genesis 39:11–12, "But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house." (ESV)

There are moments when you need to stand against temptation. Stand your ground, don't waiver, stand firm. But do you know what the Bible says every single time you're faced with sexual temptation? Run! Flee! Shut down that conversation and leave. Turn off your computer, throw it out. Whatever you have to do. On top of that, don't put yourself in a situation where you have to rely on your own willpower because there's a limit. Don't resist tomorrow what you can prevent today.

Paul says that the physical union between a man and a woman is a physical expression of total vulnerability, trust, and oneness. The biblical view of sex is not a regressive devaluing of sex but a cherishing of it. It is set apart; it is sacred and holy and meant held in the highest regard.

Now, unfortunately, before I knew Jesus, or understood the Biblical view of sex, I didn't have this view, and I didn't practice what I'm talking to you about right now. And God redeemed that part of my story. I share that, to say this: If you hear this and your feeling guilty or shame because you've given into sexual temptation and immorality, here's what God wants you to know. Whatever it is, whatever is coming to your mind right now, what you wish you could take back, God knows what that is, and He's telling you today, "*I can redeem that too.*"

But what is required for God's redemptive hand to move in your life is repentance and belief. Turn away from sexual immorality and believe that God's way is better. You can't continue in sin and expect God write a new story. Turn away from sin, flee from sexual immorality, and believe, trust, that God's way is better. I can promise you, it is.

Now, if you still think this is ridiculous, and regressive... if you say, "Don't preach that your religion is the right one, let's focus on what all religions have in common." Guess what, this is one of those things. Do you realize how difficult it is to get every major world religion to agree on anything? You found one. We all agree, human beings should not have sex outside of whole-hearted covenant marriage relationship, between one biological man, and one biological female.

THE TEMPTATION OF PAIN

Genesis 39:12–20, "...she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of her household and said to them, 'See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.' Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, and she told him the same story, saying, 'The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.' As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, 'This is the way your servant treated me,' his anger was kindled. And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison."

Joseph does the right thing out of love for God and respect for Potiphar. He does the right thing and still gets thrown in prison. He receives these great dreams from God, and he believes! Then all those dreams come crashing down and he finds himself betrayed, stripped down, and alone in a pit.

Then, he slowly begins to rise to a position of prominence over years of time. He has unusual favor from the Lord upon his life. He's trusted with an enormous amount of power and authority in the Egyptian empire, and he's honoring God, he's resisting temptation and sin. And just when it seems like everything is on the right path, that God is going to fulfill His promises, everything thing comes crashing down around him again.

If you're Joseph, the amount of pain—not just the pain of betrayal, not just the pain of being falsely accused—and all of the effort he's put toward resisting evil, fleeing temptation, honoring God with his life and STILL his world comes crashing down! It's not just the pain of having all of your hopes and aspirations destroyed in the worst ways imaginable, but it's the ripping away of what God has put in you. It would be nearly impossible to not fall into despair, to doubt, to be completely crushed by the weight of disappointment.

How do you not fall into despair and confusion when you feel like you're doing everything right, everything you know to do, and your world is still falls apart? What good is following a God or

believing in a God who allows His children to go to prison for doing the right thing? Here's what's fascinating. You and I have a perspective on Joseph's story that he didn't have the benefit of having. If you're familiar with Joseph's story, you know that God fulfills his promises to Joseph and through Joseph God brings a salvation to his family, and ultimately, the bloodline of the Messiah is preserved. We have a perspective on Joseph's life that you can't possibly have on your own life.

We know if Joseph hadn't been thrown into the pit, he wouldn't have been sold into slavery to the Ishmaelites and brought to Potiphar's household. We know that if God hadn't given him favor and prominence in Potiphar's house, Potiphar's wife would've left him alone. We know that if Potiphar's wife hadn't done these awful things to him, he never would have met the king's prisoners. And if he didn't meet the king's prisoners, the rest of the story, and the fulfillment of the promise never happens. Joseph might have risen to prominence in Potiphar's house, but he would've never become the prince of Egypt.

See, we only get this perspective in hindsight. We can only see the hand of God the fingerprints of God on the seasons of silence and apparent absence by looking back. In my own life, I think about all the interactions, all the diverging paths I could've walked down. If you're walking through a season of life right now where you feel like God has abandoned you, that after putting in the time and the effort and giving it everything you've got, life still falls apart, here's what you need to cling to today. Don't fall into despair. Don't give in. You'll see God in what you're walking through one day, but right now, here's what I want you to see..

Genesis 39:21, "But the Lord was with Joseph..."

Even in prison. Even in the pit. Even in betrayal and hurt and heartache and disappointment, and false accusations, even in a prison cell, God was with Joseph. But it doesn't even end there...

Genesis 39:21–23, "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed."

This chapter begins and ends with this phrase... "the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success." You know what that means? No matter what happens, no matter how great the disappointments and pain, no matter how hard the circumstances – if you don't give up on Him, absolutely nothing can derail God's plan and for your life.