

Life of Joseph

Lessons in Humility, Leadership and Forgiveness

Master Potiphar

- After being taken down to Egypt, Joseph was purchased from the Ishmaelites by Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard [Gen 39:1].
 - This Pharaoh was Sesostri II (1897-1879 B.C.)
 - In addition to his duties in protecting Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard was responsible for the security of Pharaoh's prisoners as well as for executing their sentences upon them.
- Joseph was a servant to Potiphar and he prospered [Gen 39:2].
 - The phrase "he was in the house of his master" tells us that Joseph was a household servant (not a field hand) and reminds us that he was a slave.
 - The phrase "The Lord was with Joseph" makes it perfectly clear that God was causing Joseph to prosper in Potiphar's household.
- Joseph's wide ranging accomplishments did not go unnoticed by Potiphar [Gen 39:3].
- Potiphar was so overwhelmed by the successes the Lord had given to Joseph that he decided to make him his personal attendant and place him in charge of his house and everything he owned [Gen 39:4].
- With Joseph in charge of things, Potiphar was blessed by association [Gen 39:5-6a].
 - Blessing by association occurs when God's outpouring of blessings to one individual overflows to those in his periphery.
 - These blessings can come in two forms...
 - ✦ material and temporal
 - ✦ spiritual and eternal
 - We have already seen how Laban saw that he had been blessed by his association with Jacob and Jacob recognized this as well [Gen 30:27-30].
 - Likewise, Lot had been blessed by his familial association with Abraham when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed [Gen 19:27-29].
 - There are six spheres of blessing by association
 - ✦ spiritual periphery – church, missions, Bible studies, Christian organizations, etc.
 - ✦ family periphery – spouse, parents, children, grandchildren, in-laws, cousins, etc.
 - ✦ social periphery – friends
 - ✦ geographical periphery – neighborhood, city, state, and nation
 - ✦ professional periphery – coworkers, bosses, even the business itself
 - ✦ in posterity – Proverbs 20:7

- Proverbs 31:10-31 is a great example of how a godly woman is a blessing to her family and her community.
- All believers are blessed by their association with Jesus Christ.
- There is also cursing by association [Pr 11:11].
- Potiphar's wife saw how successful Joseph had been and that he was a handsome man and she lusted after him [Gen 39:6b-7].
- Joseph responded to this temptation by recognizing how he had been blessed and rejecting her advances because he knew it would be a sin against God [Gen 39:8-9].
- Joseph's rejection did not deter Potiphar's wife who was persistent in her pursuit of Joseph [Gen 39:10].
- She took advantage of an opportunity when they were alone and put Joseph in a position where he had no choice but to flee to safety [Gen 39:11-12].
- At this point her anger at being rejected boiled over and she concocted a lie to get Joseph in trouble [Gen 39:13-18].
- This brings to mind the saying, "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" which is a paraphrase of a line in the play *The Morning Bride* by William Congreve (pub. 1697).
- Notice that Potiphar's wife placed part of the blame on Potiphar himself for bringing the "Hebrew slave" into the household (v. 17).
- Unfortunately, Potiphar believed his wife's fabricated story enough to make him doubt his once-trusted servant, so he threw Joseph into jail [Gen 39:19-20].
- Potiphar's actions indicate that he had some doubt about the veracity of his wife's story.
 - Under Egyptian law, Joseph would be facing the death penalty when found guilty.
 - Potiphar was not in charge of sentencing, but in this case he did not expose Joseph to the courts of Egypt and threw him directly into jail.
 - This likely was done to save face.
- This difficult and unfair situation did not derail Joseph's walk of faith and God's continued grace towards Joseph gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer [Gen 39:21].
- The chief jailer quickly came to trust Joseph (like Potiphar) and he put him in charge of the prison and the prisoners [Gen 39:22].
- Joseph was successful in this supervisory role because he continued to walk with God and the Lord blessed him [Gen 39:23].
- All of this was part of God's plan as Joseph's imprisonment got him out from under slavery to Potiphar and allowed him to assume the role necessary to rescue his family.
- Joseph is a type of Jesus Christ in that he suffered and was reviled, yet did not revile in return [1 Pet 2:21-23].
- Joseph is also a type of Israel in that he was imprisoned in Egypt and God enabled him to flourish while being incarcerated.