

**Joseph's Temptations Genesis 39 :1 -- 23 ; (1 Cor 6:12-20)  
Bar and Gonerby February 2011**

**Introduction**

We are continuing to look at 100 important passages in the bible and today we look at part of the story of Joseph. the subject is temptation- and I don't just mean eating too much chocolate, though maybe that's the first thing which comes to mind when we think of temptation these days.

Someone has said,

*"Don't worry about avoiding temptation -- as you get older it starts avoiding you"*

But this is not true.

We all encounter temptation - at whatever age. It's just that the temptation changes and can be many different things-sexual temptation, anger, belittling others, greed , not thinking about others.

The account of Joseph and Potiphar's wife is a classic example of how to resist temptation.

**What was Joseph's Strategy?**

how did Joseph avoid the temptation of P's Wife?

He wasn't without feelings...

It must have taken much courage and determination for Joseph to fight this battle day after day -- but he succeeded.

The refusal of Joseph to give in to the wishes of this woman is based on a combination of both prudence and faith.

Read verse 8 -- 9. From the contemporary version- *she asked him to make love to her, but he refused and said, "my master isn't worried about anything in his house, because he has placed me in charge of everything he owns. No one in my master's house is more important than I am. The only thing he hasn't given me is you and that's because you are his wife. I won't sin against God by doing such a terrible thing as this."*

**a.)** First of all, Joseph reasoned that this was another man's wife; that man was his master; he was trusted by his master and did not want to break that trust.

Joseph understood that giving in to temptation can, much of the time, hurt other people -- innocent people.

Joseph was not willing to let down and hurt his master. (Who had been good to him and recognised his ability)

**b.)** Joseph also realised that even if nobody found out about it -- God would know -- and be angry (I tried to think of another word for that because we don't like to think of God as angry- but there is no other word. God IS angry at sin.)

All Potiphar's wife wanted was a moment of pleasure -- but to Joseph this was a great wickedness against God.

Giving in to temptation also brings guilt.

We see later in the story the burden of guilt which Joseph's brothers had carried for so many years (20), because of what they did to Joseph. They felt guilty and were afraid that God was about to zap them at any moment, because they knew they had done wrong. (42:21 -- *"Joseph's brothers... said to one another "we are being punished because of Joseph. We saw the trouble he was in, but we refused to help him when he begged us. That's why these terrible things are happening"*)).

So when we give in to temptation, we certainly spoil the relationship with God, often with other people, and we harm ourselves.

Joseph thought about all this, and it enabled him to resist.

**Thinking Helps!**

Thinking, reasoning is the key in resisting temptation.

Because, although all Temptations starts off in the brain, we could say the Devil's ploy is to stop us using our brain to think too much about the consequences of the temptation.

The reason Alcohol is the source of much crime and damage to people's families is that it -- stops people thinking clearly.

Often when we are tempted, the trick of the devil is to get us to act quickly before we can think what we are doing.

When someone has an affair for example, their actions have consequences-

They may lose their family, their self-esteem, their house. But often they don't think about that before it happens.

There are other temptations-We may be tempted to treat our family badly- that leads to problems with our children later on as we see only too clearly in the first part of Joseph's story- actions have consequences. If we thought about the consequences to others and to God -- of giving in to our Temptations -- then often we wouldn't do it.

Joseph reasoned through the consequences -- and resisted.

### **Joseph took Avoiding Action**

The second thing Joseph did was to take avoiding action (verse 10 -- "*she kept begging Joseph day after day, but he refused to do what she wanted or even to go near her*")

Joseph avoided the woman as much as he could, and ultimately, when she had set up a trap and dismissed the house servants so that she could get Joseph alone, then he ran from her.

When this happened, Joseph lost his coat -- he was not very good with his coats is he? -- this is the second one he has lost. But as one Puritan preacher wrote "*Joseph lost his coat but kept his character*"

If we know the temptation will be difficult for us to resist, then we must strive to avoid putting ourselves in the situation where we will be tempted. This is not cowardice -- but courage and integrity.

Going back to our trivial example of temptation, if we don't want to eat too many chocolates, we put the box away.

If you are married and meet someone else when you go to the Gym and feel a strong mutual attraction, stop going to the Gym, or chose a time when that person is not there.

If you are tempted to say things to your family you might regret, leave the room until you can say what you mean in a better way.

So faced with temptation, Joseph reasons and Joseph runs away

There is a third defence against temptation which it is not recorded in the Joseph passage but one may assume he did this -- and that is pray.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was tempted as we are, but did not give in. (remember no sin to be tempted only to give in).

Not just referring to the official "3 Temptations" in the desert. Jesus must have had Temptations all the time. You cannot live in this world without temptation

Christians are often uncomfortable with the humanity of Jesus. Did he have sexual Temptations? Well, Were there no pretty girls in Nazareth?

Jesus did not succumb to temptation, but because he knows the power of temptation he is able to feel with us when we pray to him for strengthening.

So-  
Use your brain to think of the consequences to yourself, others and God,  
Run,  
and  
Pray for the strength not to give in and go back.

## Get It

How do you generally respond when bad things happen?

Why is it difficult to trust God when bad things happen?

How did Joseph make the most of the bad situations in which he found himself?

\*Why is sexual purity so important?

What are the consequences of sexual sin?

\*How can we resist sexual temptation?

How can we honor God in our employment?

How do you respond when you are mistreated by another person?

How should you respond the next time someone mistreats you?

What attitude do we need when our situation seems hopeless?

When have you been disappointed with God?

## Overcoming great temptation ([Gen. 39:7-20](#))

Joseph had suffered in a pit because of the hatred of his brothers, but now he would face an even greater danger because of the lust of an evil woman. "For a harlot is a deep pit, and a seductress is a narrow well" ([Prov. 23:27](#), nkjv).

Potiphar's wife treated Joseph in a humiliating way by inviting him into her bed. She may have reasoned, "After all, isn't he a Jew and a slave at that? And doesn't he work for my husband and therefore also work for me? Since my husband isn't here, I'm in charge; and Joseph is my employee. It's his job to take orders." She treated Joseph like a thing, not like a person; and when her advances were rejected, she turned against him.

No matter how much people talk about "love" and defend sex outside of marriage, the experience is wrong, cheap, and demeaning. Fornication and adultery change a pure river into a sewer and transform free people into slaves and then animals ([5:15-23](#); [7:21-23](#)). What begins as "sweetness" soon turns into poison ([5:1-14](#)). Joseph wasn't about to sacrifice either his purity or his integrity just to please his master's wife.

It took a great deal of courage and determination for Joseph to fight this battle day after day, but he succeeded. He explained to her why he wouldn't cooperate: (1) She was another man's wife, and that man was his master; (2) he was trusted by his master and didn't want to violate that trust; (3) even if nobody else found out about it, God would know it and be displeased. All she asked for was a moment of pleasure, but to Joseph, this was a great wickedness against God ([Gen. 39:9](#)).

Potiphar's wife probably arranged for the other servants to be out of the way on the day she launched her greatest attack, but at the same time she saw to it that they were near enough at hand for her to call them to see Joseph's garment. There are times when fleeing could be a mark of cowardice ([Ps. 11:1-2](#); [Neh. 6:11](#)), but there are also times when fleeing is evidence of courage and integrity. Joseph was wise enough to follow the same advice Paul gave to Timothy, "Flee the evil desires of youth" ([2 Tim. 2:22](#)).

Self-control is an important factor in building character and preparing us for leadership. "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls" ([Prov. 25:28](#), nkjv). When there are no walls, anything can get in or come out. Joseph exercised self-control, but Samson used his body to gratify his own pleasures; and Joseph ended up ruling on a throne, while Samson ended his life buried in a pile of rubble ([Judges 16:23-31](#)).

For the second time in his life, Joseph lost a garment ([Gen. 39:12](#); see also [37:23](#)); but as the Puritan preacher said, "Joseph lost his coat but he kept his character." Since Potiphar was involved in the Egyptian judicial system, we wonder why he didn't try to put Joseph on trial or even execute him. Of course, God was in control, working out His wonderful plan for Joseph, Egypt, Joseph's family, and the world.[4]—Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament

Brueggemann - Prudence and faith - This will hurt people and this will disobey God. All sin does this.