

Genesis

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 21
Joseph: Slave and Prisoner
Genesis 39–40

Be still before the LORD and wait
patiently for him; do not fret when
men succeed in their ways, when they
carry out their wicked schemes.

Psalm 37:7

Successful Servant – Genesis 39:1-6a

Day 1

1. What evidence of the presence and blessing of God in Joseph's life do you see in these verses?
2. In response to Joseph's God-given success, what responsibilities did Potiphar give him?
3. What conclusions about God can we draw from this passage?

Jeremiah 29:11

Learn the TRUTH!

There is no guarantee that virtue will be rewarded in this life. Joseph is honorable in all his actions yet still experiences injustice. Our world value system is so warped that sometimes it seems that character doesn't count. As you study this week, remember that character does count with God!

Resisting Temptation – Genesis 39:6b-10

Day 2

4. a. What new threat to Joseph surfaced in verses 7-10?

b. What new dangers did this pose for him?
5. Who was responsible for the temptation described in this passage? Did Joseph bear any of the blame?
6. What do the following verses tell you about what else was at work behind the scenes in this situation?
Genesis 4:7

1 Peter 5:8

Framed!
Genesis 39:11-20a

Day 3

7. What do you think is the difference between temptation and sin?
8. a. Potiphar's wife continued to try to entrap Joseph. Describe her final attempt to seduce him.

b. How is Joseph a good example of how to resist temptation? 1 Corinthians 6:18-20
9. What consequences did Joseph suffer because of his refusal to compromise?
10. Have you ever been unjustly penalized for refusing to compromise your principles? How did you respond?

The Dreamer Interprets **Day 4**
Genesis 39:20b-40:18

11. How did the Lord continue to bless Joseph, even in prison?
12. a. What two important people did Joseph meet while he was in prison?

b. Do you think he would have treated them differently if they were "nobodies"?
13. Why was Joseph so confident of his ability to interpret their dreams?
14. Describe each man's dream and Joseph's interpretation of their dream.
Cupbearer

Baker

Forgotten!
Genesis 40:19-23

Day 5

15. In verse 14, what one favor did Joseph ask of the cupbearer?
16. Genesis 41:1 tells us that it was two years before the cupbearer remembered Joseph. If this had happened to you, how might you have responded?
17. a. Is there something specific that you have been waiting for God to do in your life? What is it?

b. What can we do when there seems to be nothing to do but wait?

Live the TRUTH!

We live in an unfair world. Joseph was faithful, yet he was falsely accused and thrown into a dungeon. Potiphar's wife deserved to be punished, yet the Bible is silent about her punishment. Unfair! Just like our lives at times. We can count up the injustices, hold grudges and try to get even. Or we can respond with faith and integrity. The next time you are treated unfairly, remember Joseph. The Lord was with him, and He will be with you, too.

Commentary Genesis Lesson 21

Joseph begins his remarkable rise to Egyptian leadership as the property of Potiphar, “one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard” (39:1) — a man of some importance. From the beginning, God is with Joseph in whatever he does. It becomes evident to Potiphar that his new slave possesses extraordinary gifts; whatever he tries works. Although Joseph is physically confined, he is free to serve God faithfully. Potiphar makes the young man his attendant, then promotes him to household manager. The Lord makes a point of granting His favor to Potiphar because of Joseph’s presence.

Joseph’s attractive looks make him a target for the roving eyes of his master’s wife. By this time, Joseph is in his mid-20s and has been in Egypt for about eight years. He must have felt a longing for human affection. His master’s wife boldly propositions him repeatedly, but Joseph refuses. Joseph does not assume an arrogant attitude, but carefully defends himself on the grounds that he would be betraying a man who has been unusually kind to him. At the same time, such actions would be both wicked and an offense against God. The mistress of the household finds such reasoning irrelevant and continues to pursue him. Joseph wisely chooses not to stay near her for long periods of time, because he recognizes his danger.

Under such circumstances, a crisis is inevitable, and it soon comes. Joseph’s duties again place him in a vulnerable spot. The staff is away from the house and Mrs. Potiphar seizes the opportunity. Grasping Joseph’s clothes, she brazenly demands his presence in her bed, and he again refuses her. He flees from the house, leaving his cloak behind. Exasperated, she uses the garment as evidence, accusing Joseph before the staff of being sexually aggressive. She twists the account of events to her husband, using a cleverly ambiguous phrase that clearly shifts the blame to Potiphar: “That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me” (39:17).

When Potiphar hears her story, he is enraged. He may have been angry because now he would again have to take charge of the household. Appearances must be honored, however, and Potiphar determines to punish his steward. Amazingly, Potiphar spares his life and has him thrown into prison instead.

Joseph’s situation has gone from bad to worse, in spite of his righteous behavior. Instead of becoming bitter, Joseph will soon follow Peter’s advice for just such circumstances: “It is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God” (1 Peter 2:19-20). Joseph’s behavior provides an example of how to be above reproach in circumstances where temptation is unavoidable. Righteous behavior, however, may still produce painful results. Joseph will soon display what it means to bear up under such pain.

Check It Out:

The text says Joseph prospered (39:2). Some people might attribute such success to a lucky break. Being Potiphar’s slave may have given Joseph many privileges in such a wealthy home. However, his success was more than luck. Joseph was cheerful, hard-working, responsible, conscientious, and faithful in the humblest of tasks. Jesus said that those who are faithful with a few things will be put in charge of many things (Matthew 25:21-23). Joseph prospered and so did Potiphar, because Joseph chose to be a godly man. For Joseph and for us, nothing happens by chance. Joseph faithfully served; he “bloomed where he was planted.” God was pleased and gave him great success. Let our goal be to please Him as Joseph did. “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Colossians 3:23).

God's favor accompanies Joseph to prison, where the warden enlists him as an assistant. Instead of becoming despondent or bitter, Joseph shoulders his burdens and applies himself to the work. Even in such dark circumstances, Joseph experiences success from God's point of view. God will use Joseph's fine character to open doors of responsibility all the way to the very throne of Egypt.

Two men, the king's cupbearer and baker, join Joseph in prison for unspecified offenses. A cupbearer's position was more than that of a menial servant. Cupbearers drank the wine and tasted the food of the monarch in his presence to insure that it was not poisoned. Since cupbearers were always in the king's presence, their role in time became a political one, that of trusted adviser. While confined in prison, the two officials each have a dream on the same night. Their dreams trouble them, so Joseph offers to place the matter before God, hoping to gain an interpretation for the two men.

The chief cupbearer recalls that his dream involved a vine that quickly budded, blossomed, and ripened into grapes. In the dream, the cupbearer filled Pharaoh's cup with the juice from the grapes and placed the cup in the king's hand. Joseph states that the cupbearer would be restored to Pharaoh's favor and to his former task within three days. Joseph asks that, when elevated, the cupbearer would remember him and do what he could to have him released.

The baker, listening to this interchange, is encouraged. However, Joseph explains that the baker's dream indicates that he would be executed and his body placed on a tree to feed the vultures. Both dreams were fulfilled three days later at the Pharaoh's birthday feast. The cupbearer is removed from prison and restored to his former position, and the baker is hanged. In his excitement at being reinstated, however, the chief cupbearer forgets Joseph's appeal, and the young man remains in prison.



Repeatedly during his lifetime, Joseph had to make difficult adjustments. How could a man physically or emotionally adjust to so many dramatic changes? He was a man who had an amazing ability to trust God. He was a remarkably gifted man, but the key to his ability to adjust was his ability to trust.

Life is made up of changes, and most of us don't really like change. Are you facing an adjustment right now that is very difficult for you? Think of Joseph and ask God to give you the faith to handle it with grace as he did. The answer for him was to trust God. The answer is the same for you.



What do these verses teach about waiting?

Psalm 37:3-8

Romans 5:1-5