

## Homework - Week 2

### Day 1

#### **Read Genesis 39**

This week, we pick up the story of Joseph after he has been sold by his brothers to a caravan of traders. They take him to Egypt, which was a journey of approximately 300 miles or 2 weeks by camel or donkey. Once they arrive in Egypt, he is sold to one of Pharaoh's officials named Potiphar. The Bible tells us that Potiphar was a captain of the guard, which scholars believe was either chief of the state police or chief of the executioners. While his exact job function is not clear, it is apparent he was an influential and wealthy man who had power over life and death.

In Genesis 39:2, we read that *"the Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered..."*

This parallel of the Lord being with someone and them prospering is seen several times in the Old Testament. **Read the following Scriptures and make note of the main character and what happened as a result of the Lord's presence:**

**Joshua 6:27**

**I Samuel 3:19**

**I Samuel 18:14**

**II Kings 18:7**

In Joseph's story, it says the Lord was with him and he prospered. **What connection do you see between the two?**

**How does our culture define prosperous and successful?**

**How do you think this differs from God's definition of successful/prosperous?**

The Hebrew word used in this passage for “prosperous” or “successful” is *tsalach*, and one of its definitions is “to push forward.” I thought this particular definition was so fitting, because we wouldn’t typically use the words “prosperous” or “successful” to describe Joseph’s situation. He had been kidnapped by his brothers and sold to some traveling slave-traders. He was living as a slave in a country with a different language, different culture and different religion, and the hope of ever seeing his family again was probably not even on his radar. Yet the Bible tells us he was prosperous and successful.

**What do you think it looked like for Joseph “to push forward” in his situation?**

**Are you currently in a situation where it is hard to “push forward?” What does “pushing forward” look like for you right now?**

It is important to note that Joseph prospered and was successful because the Lord was with him. It was not something he accomplished in his own strength. We live in a culture that is quick to tell us that we can be or do anything we want as long as we put our mind to it. This mindset breeds a self-sufficient mentality that leaves no room for God. And in the end, it leaves us falling short of all that God has planned for us. True prosperity and success comes when we are walking closely with God, and we allow His favor and presence to go before us.

**Have you experienced a time when prosperity and/or success came as a result of God's favor and presence in your life? On the flip side, have you experienced prosperity and success that you have worked and strived for on your own? What was the difference between the two?**

**Read Genesis 39:3-4a.** It says that his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made everything he did successful. **How do you think Potiphar was able to recognize God's hand on Joseph?**

Potiphar, an Egyptian who didn't even worship God, was able to not only recognize God's hand on Joseph but credit God as the reason for Joseph's success. What made Joseph different than the other slaves in Potiphar's house? Surely there were others that worked hard and did the right things. Was it simply his actions that pointed to God? Or was it more than that? Was there an inner peace and trust that was evident to others and couldn't be explained? The Bible doesn't tell us why Potiphar made the observations he did, but Jesus does tell us how we can reflect God. In John 15:8 it says, "*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.*" The fruit that we bear in our lives brings glory to our Father and proves to the world that we are His disciples.

**Read Galatians 5:22-23. What fruit are you bearing right now and which ones do you need help with? Do you feel like the world can look at your life and see the hand of God?**

**Close out your time today by asking God to show you areas where you can better reflect Him. Ask Him to reveal anything that may be hindering a close walk with Him.**

## **Day 2**

Yesterday, we saw that the Lord was with Joseph and he prospered. We see the same phrase repeated again at the end of the chapter (Genesis 39:23). So if God's presence is what made Joseph prosper and be successful, how can we ensure God's presence in our life?

**Look up the following verses and record what you find as some keys to having God's presence in your life:**

**II Chronicles 17:3-4**

**John 14:21**

*One of the keys to God's presence being manifested, revealed and evident in our lives is obedience. Obedience to His Word and His commands.*

**Read the following verses and record what they say about obedience:**

**Deuteronomy 11:26-28**

**Job 36:11-12**

**Jeremiah 7:23**

**Luke 11:28**

There are rewards that God promises for those that obey Him. And in the same regard, there are consequences for those that disobey. If we want God's presence to be evident and revealed in our lives, then we need to obey Him. It sounds so simple! And yet, walking out a life of obedience is often far from simple, isn't it?

**Is there an area of your life where you are struggling to obey?**

Sometimes our struggle to obey is related to lies that we are believing and are straight from the pit of hell! The enemy knows the blessings that come when we obey the Lord, and he wants to do everything in his power to keep us from walking in obedience. So he will tell us lies like:

- You are too busy to obey.
- You don't have what it takes to obey
- You need to get some things prepared or in order before you obey.
- You are too old or too young to obey.
- You aren't good enough to obey.
- God didn't really tell you to do that. You must not have heard correctly.

**Are there any lies of the enemy that are keeping you from walking in obedience?**

**Spend some time praying and asking the Lord to reveal areas in your life where you aren't being obedient to Him and His commands. Confess those areas of disobedience and ask Him to give you the strength and courage to walk in obedience this week.**

## **Day 3**

### **Read Genesis 39:1-4.**

In verse 4, it says that Joseph became Potiphar's personal servant or attendant. This word in the Hebrew is *sharat* and it means "to wait on, to serve, to minister, to attend." It can be easy to skim right over this, because Joseph was a slave, so of course he was serving his master. That was his job right? However, when you look a little closer at this word, you will find something interesting. This particular Hebrew word is used 92 times in the Old Testament, but is only used twice in Genesis and both times refer to Joseph. **Read Genesis 39:4 and Genesis 40:4 and write down who Joseph was serving.**

The other 90 occurrences of this word all refer to either the priests ministering to the Lord in the temple, or close personal servants of men of God (like Joshua serving Moses), or close servants of kings and rulers.

There is another Hebrew word for serve, *abad*, that was more commonly used to describe the actions of a slave or servant. In fact, that word is used close to 300 times in the Old Testament. But I think the fact that God chose to use the word *sharat* in this story gives us a glimpse into Joseph's heart! This word conveys yieldedness, servanthood, and obedience. It is more than just doing what is required and serving out of obligation.

**How do you think Joseph was able to serve this way? Go back and read Genesis 37. What evidence do you find of this kind of servant's heart in that chapter?**

It can be easy to serve and minister to people that we love. It is even easier when we are in a good place and things are going well. But what about when it's people we aren't so fond of? What if we find ourselves in a situation that seems unfair and undeserved? What if we feel like God has abandoned us, and our dreams will never see the light of the day? Can we still serve with a pure heart in those situations?


The Bible has a lot to say about servanthood, and Jesus was our ultimate example. **Look up the following Scriptures and record what they have to say about servanthood:**


**Philippians 2:5-7**

**John 13:12-15**

**Mark 10:43-45**

When I reflect on Joseph and his situation, I find it remarkable that anger and bitterness did not overtake him. He did not deserve the treatment he had received! But instead of giving into hopelessness, he excelled and prospered in the midst of trials. We see him serving not only because it was his job, but actually taking it a step further and ministering and attending to his master.

 1 Peter 5:2 *“Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly - not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.” (NLT)*

 **Who has God placed in your life right now for you to serve? Are you doing it willingly, with a pure heart? Do you see it as an opportunity to not only serve that person but to serve God?**

I don't know about you, but when my focus is on me and what I feel I deserve, it affects my serving! I find myself grumbling, upset that my work is not being acknowledged, and bitterness begins to take root in my heart. Those are always signs that I need a heart check.

We don't serve others because of what we can get in return. We serve because Jesus was a servant, and He has called us to walk like Him.

**Spend some time asking God to do a heart check on you. How are you doing in the servant department? Are you able to serve like Jesus?**

## Day 4

**Read Genesis 39:4-10.** Here we read about the great temptation in Joseph's story. Remember, Joseph was in his late teens/early twenties at this point. It says at the end of verse 6 that he was handsome in form and appearance.


**Why do you think that description is included in the story?**

I don't know that there is a "correct" answer to that question, but one author I read suggested that his good looks brought unique temptations to Joseph, and that may be true. He obviously caught the eye of Potiphar's wife! Remember, we just read that Joseph found great favor with Potiphar, which resulted in power and authority. He was essentially in command of the entire household. So, while he was still technically a slave, he had risen up the ranks and found himself in a pretty good place considering the circumstances.

Genesis 39:7 says, *"It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph..."* It was in this place of prosperity and success that Joseph met his temptation. Don't miss that! Charles Swindoll says, "The temptations that accompany prosperity are far greater (and far more subtle) than those that accompany adversity."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, when we come out of a hard season and things finally seem to be falling in place, it can be easy to take a deep breath and let our guard down. We are battle weary, and we sometimes think it is safe to set down the shield and weapons that we have been clinging to so tightly. Yet it is often in those very moments, in the quiet after the storm, that the enemy sees his opportunity to pounce!

**Read I Peter 5:8. What does it say about our enemy the devil?**

**Have you experienced a time when temptation came in like a wave during a season of blessing and prosperity? Did you find the temptation to be subtle?**

 Notice in verse 10 that Potiphar's wife was persistent. She didn't ask one time and then leave Joseph alone after he refused her advances. She kept asking day after day. Isn't this just like the enemy? He will often hit us over and over again with the same temptation, like a battering ram on a locked door. Just waiting for us to let our guard down, or simply get weary and finally cave in.

 **Have you ever encountered a temptation that came repeatedly until you finally caved into it?**

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<sup>1</sup> *Joseph: A Man of Forgiveness and Integrity* by Charles R. Swindoll



## What tactics do you use to resist these persistent temptations?

Read verse 10 carefully and notice that it says Joseph did not listen to her or go to bed with her or even be with her. Joseph recognized temptation for what it was, and he didn't allow it anywhere near him. So many times, people play with fire thinking they can handle it and they won't get burned. But here's the thing about fire...it is unpredictable! At any moment it can flare up and catch you off guard, causing serious damage. When we recognize a temptation in our life, we need to remove it or stay away. Stop playing nice with temptation!

**Read the following Scriptures and record what they say about temptation:**

**Proverbs 4:14-15**

**Matthew 26:41**

**II Timothy 2:22-23**

**What is a temptation that you are struggling with that you need to remove all together? What steps can you take to remove the temptation?**

I know that all this talk about temptation can quickly get depressing. While we can't ignore the fact that temptation is everywhere and none of us are immune, I do want to remind you that there is hope.

**Read I Corinthians 10:13. What encouragement do you find in this Scripture?**

**Read Hebrews 4:14-16 below in the Passion version:**

*“So then, we must cling in faith to all we know to be true. For we have a magnificent King-Priest, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who rose into the heavenly realm for us, and now sympathizes with us in our frailty. <sup>15</sup>He understands humanity, for as a Man, our magnificent King-Priest was tempted in every way just as we are, and conquered sin. <sup>16</sup>So now we come freely and boldly to where Love is enthroned, to receive mercy’s kiss and discover the grace we urgently need to strengthen us in our time of weakness.”*

Whatever temptations you may be facing right now, you don’t have to fight alone! In fact, you can NOT fight them alone, so you might as well stop trying. We have a High Priest in heaven who has experienced every temptation that we will ever face. Not only can He sympathize with us, He has the power to do something about it. He has the grace and mercy that we need to fight those temptations. So, take it to Jesus and let him strengthen and empower you for the fight. He is waiting!

**Spend some time at the feet of Jesus today and let Him pour out his mercy and grace in your life. Bring those temptations that you are struggling with, and ask Him to show you the way of escape. And then do whatever you need to do this week to remove or step away from those temptations.**

## Day 5

We are on the final day of this week, so let's wrap up this temptation chapter of Joseph's story.

**Read Genesis 39:11-23.** When Potiphar's wife got him alone in verse 12, it says that no one else was around. It was just him and her. This means Joseph could have caved, and no one would have probably ever known. Isn't that when it can be the hardest to resist? Yet, Joseph was a man of integrity. He recognized the trust that his master had put in him and he was not willing to violate that trust.

**What temptation are you tempted to cave to when you think no one will see or know?**

**How do you feel after you give in to the temptation?**

Even if no one sees us or knows about our sin, we know that God always sees and He knows. **Look back at Genesis 39:9, at the end of the verse, and record what reason Joseph gives for rejecting her advances.**

Joseph's relationship with God was such that he was not willing to jeopardize it by giving into a moment of pleasure. He knew that it was wicked in God's eyes, and that was enough for him to resist.

In verses 11-12, we see that Potiphar's wife takes it beyond the verbal offers she had been continuously throwing Joseph's way and now resorts to physically grabbing him. This was one very assertive woman! It reminds me of the seductive woman in Proverbs 7. The last two verses of that chapter paint a vivid scene, "... *her victims are countless. Her house is the road to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.*" Sexual sins are not anything to mess around with, and Joseph knew this and reacted accordingly.

**Read Genesis 39:12 and record Joseph's response:**

He did not try to reason with her. He did not start quoting Scriptures. He simply RAN! We often stay in situations longer than we should because we don't want to hurt someone's feelings or we think we can handle it. The truth is when we are facing temptations, especially of a sexual nature, we need to flee and get out of there as fast as we can. In I Corinthians 6:18, it says, "*Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.*"



**Have you ever experienced a time when you had to literally get up and flee from a temptation? Has there been a time when you didn't run but should have, and you paid the consequences?**

At this point in the story, we are rejoicing with Joseph because he did the right thing and fled. He resisted temptation, even though no one was looking. He remained faithful to his master and most importantly to God. Surely, God will reward him now! After all, he did all the right things. And yet, once again, the story gets hard here, really hard. Instead of being rewarded, he is punished and thrown in prison. When I read these verses, I can immediately feel the "that's not fair!" rising up within me. This isn't how it is supposed to play out! Why did God not intervene on Joseph's behalf?

**Have you ever done the right thing and not received the reward or outcome you expected?**

**What emotions and thoughts do you think were going through Joseph's mind?**

This must have been a hard pill for Joseph to swallow. I honestly don't know that I would have handled it very well. **Yet, look at Genesis 39:21 and record what it says.**




God had not left Joseph. Please don't miss those words. Yes, things seemed very unfair. Yes, it seemed like God was silent and not standing up for Joseph. And yet, the key word here is "seemed." What we see from our perspective is never the full story. We are just a small thread in a much larger tapestry that God is weaving. Of course, when it comes to Joseph, we have the advantage of knowing how the story ends. We can see what God was doing from our perspective thousands of years later. But the challenge comes when the story is suddenly ours, and we are living in that place of unanswered questions.




**What parts of your current story are you struggling to understand?**

Next week, we are going to dive into the prison years of Joseph's life. But for now, I want to encourage you that God knows where you are. He has a plan, and even if you can't see it right now, you can trust that His plans are good.

 *Jeremiah 29:11 ...For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

Not only does He have a plan, He also assures us that we can have peace in the midst of the uncertainty.

 *Philippians 4:7 ...And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

You notice that it says the peace that surpasses understanding. This means when things don't make sense, and we can't figure out what in the world God is doing in our lives, we can still have peace. A peace that comes from God, not something we can work up on our own. I love that God goes even further, promising a peace that will guard and protect our hearts and minds. When your heart is broken, hurting, and confused, His peace surrounds and covers it. When your mind is swirling with questions and doubts, His peace comes and stands guard. **Do you need some of that peace today? Bring your request to your heavenly Father, and ask Him for that peace that only He can give.**

## Group Discussion - Week 2

*These are all the Group Discussion questions from this week's homework compiled in one place. This page is designed to help facilitate table discussion at the next session. You can record your answers again on this page, or simply look back at your homework...whatever you prefer!*

**Read Genesis 39.** In Genesis 39:2, we read that *“the Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered...”* The Hebrew word used in this passage for “prosperous” or “successful” is *tsalach*, and one of its definitions is “to push forward.” I thought this particular definition was so fitting, because we wouldn’t typically use the words “prosperous” or “successful” to describe Joseph’s current situation. **What do you think it looked like for Joseph “to push forward” in his situation?** (pg. 19)

**Are you currently in a situation where it is hard to “push forward?” What does “pushing forward” look like for you right now?** (pg. 19)

**Read Genesis 39:1-4.** In verse 4, it says that Joseph became Potiphar’s personal servant or attendant. This word in the Hebrew is *sharat*, and it means “to wait on, to serve, to minister, to attend.” When I reflect on Joseph and his situation, I find it remarkable that anger and bitterness did not overtake him. He did not deserve the treatment he had received! But instead of giving into hopelessness, he excelled and prospered in the midst of trials. We see him serving not only because it was his job, but actually taking it a step further and ministering and attending to his master. In 1 Peter 5:2, it says, *“Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly - not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.”* (NLT) **Who has God placed in your life right now for you to serve? Are you doing it willingly, with a pure heart? Do you see it as an opportunity to not only serve that person but to serve God?** (pg. 23-24)

Notice in Genesis 39:10 that Potiphar’s wife was persistent. **Have you ever encountered a temptation that came repeatedly until you finally caved into it? What tactics do you use to resist these persistent temptations?** (pg. 25-26)

**Read Genesis 39:12 and see Joseph’s response.** He did not try to reason with her. He did not start quoting Scriptures. He simply RAN! And friends, sometimes we stay in situations longer than we should because we don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings or we think we can handle it, or whatever disillusioned reasoning we have come up with. The truth is when we are facing temptations, especially of a sexual nature, we need to flee and get out of there as fast as we can. In I Corinthians 6:18, it says, *“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”* **Have you ever experienced a time when you had to literally get up and flee from a temptation? Has there been a time when you didn’t run but should have, and you paid the consequences?** (pg. 28-29)

**After being thrown in prison, notice what Genesis 39:21 says. God had not left Joseph.** Please don't miss those words. Yes, things seemed very unfair. Yes, it seemed like God was silent and not standing up for Joseph. Yet the key word here is "seemed." What we see from our perspective is never the full story. We are just a small thread in a much larger tapestry that God is weaving. Of course, when it comes to Joseph, we have the advantage of knowing how the story ends. We can see what God was doing from our perspective thousands of years later. But the challenge comes when the story is suddenly ours, and we are living in that place of unanswered questions. **What parts of your current story are you struggling to understand?** (pg. 29)

 **Read Jeremiah 29:11 and Philippians 4:7. What comfort do you find from these verses?** (pg. 30)