

SESSION 2

OVERCOME TEMPTATION



What are some warning labels you always ignore?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLtemptation

THE POINT

It's easier to resist temptation when you know what's at stake.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

It seems like everything comes with a warning label these days. These are often helpful, of course. But some warning labels are downright hilarious—including the following:

- ▶ On a hairdryer: “Do not use while sleeping.”
- ▶ On a carton of eggs: “This product may contain eggs.”
- ▶ On a scooter: “This product moves when used.”
- ▶ On a small tractor: “Avoid death.”¹

We can laugh, but we also know there are times when we need to be warned. For example, wouldn't life be easier if temptations came with warning labels? Sin promises great things up front, but it's only after we give in that we learn about the consequences.

Joseph was a man who clearly saw the harmful consequences of giving in to temptation. His example can help us heed the warning labels we encounter as we face temptation each day.

WHAT DOES **THE BIBLE** SAY?

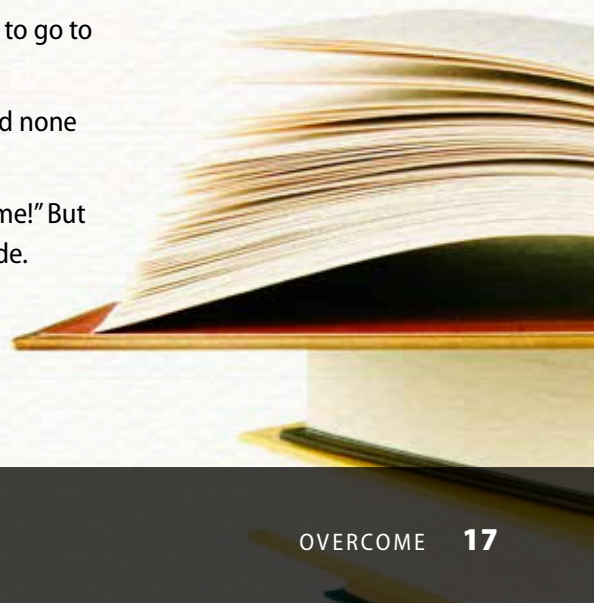
Genesis 39:3-12 (HCSB)

- 3** When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he did successful,
- 4** Joseph found favor in his master's sight and became his personal attendant. Potiphar also put him in charge of his household and placed all that he owned under his authority.
- 5** From the time that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph. The LORD's blessing was on all that he owned, in his house and in his fields.
- 6** He left all that he owned under Joseph's authority; he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome.
- 7** After some time his master's wife looked longingly at Joseph and said, "Sleep with me."
- 8** But he refused. "Look," he said to his master's wife, "with me here my master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has put all that he owns under my authority.
- 9** No one in this house is greater than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. So how could I do such a great evil and sin against God?"
- 10** Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her.
- 11** Now one day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were there.
- 12** She grabbed him by his garment and said, "Sleep with me!" But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran outside.

Key Words

Blessed (v. 5)—In the Old Testament "bless" means "imbue with power for success and prosperity." God's blessings fulfilled His promise to bless those who blessed Abraham (Gen. 12:3).

Garment (v. 12)—Could refer to either outer or inner clothing. Some argue Joseph left the inner garment, but we should not think Joseph ran from the house naked.



Genesis 39:3-6

Joseph wasn't where he wanted to be. Betrayed by his brothers, he was no longer seen as the favored son of a wealthy man. Instead, he was a slave. In Egypt, Joseph became the property of a man named Potiphar. We know little about this man, except what we're told in Genesis 39. The key thing to remember is that Potiphar saw the hand of God on Joseph:

- ▶ Joseph's master "saw that the LORD was with him" (v. 3).
- ▶ "The LORD made everything he did successful" (v. 3).
- ▶ "The LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph" (v. 5).
- ▶ "The LORD's blessing was on all that he owned, in his house and in his fields" (v. 5).

God was with Joseph, even though His presence wasn't always clear. It's true that God eventually brought Joseph full circle and blessed him in tangible ways. But even in the darkest moments, God was there.

What I find interesting is the way God's presence in Joseph's life became a blessing to others:

- ▶ Potiphar became wealthy and prospered (39:5).
- ▶ Pharaoh's kingdom was rescued from the famine (see Gen. 41).
- ▶ Joseph's family was preserved through the famine (see Gen. 42–43).

God doesn't bless us so that we can hoard His blessings. Rather, He blesses us so that we can serve as a blessing to those around us. In other words, with blessing comes responsibility.

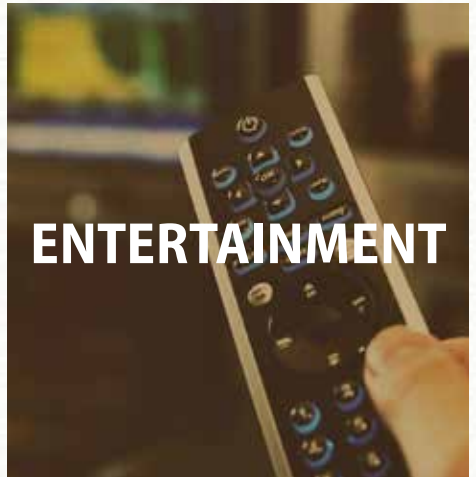
What characteristics suggest God is "with" someone?

QUESTION #2



Joseph served with great faithfulness. Verse 6 sums up Joseph’s integrity: Potiphar “did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.” The Hebrew phrase translated “did not concern himself” literally says Potiphar “did not know what was in his house.” Joseph took care of things to such a degree that Potiphar didn’t have to think about them at all!

WHAT’S AT STAKE?



Choose one of the above tools. How has that tool benefitted our culture in recent years?

What’s at stake for our culture when these tools become twisted into sources of temptation?

Genesis 39:7-10

Potiphar not only trusted Joseph with his house and his fields, but also with his wife. He believed Joseph was trustworthy. At the same time, Joseph knew his behavior needed to reflect that trust in order to remain esteemed by his master.

Sadly, because of Potiphar's wife, Joseph had to continually stand his ground in order to remain faithful. Day in and day out, she attempted to seduce Joseph. She tempted him to do wrong.

But Joseph stood firm in the face of temptation. Time after time, "he refused to go to bed with her" (39:10).

Notice that Joseph put a roadblock at the top of the mountain instead of a first aid station at the bottom. Instead of setting a plan in place to fix a problem, he set a plan in place to make sure there wasn't a problem to begin with.

Why? Because Joseph knew what was at stake.

In the early days of Billy Graham's ministry, he met with his evangelistic team to discuss the pitfalls and criticisms that had damaged the credibility of several evangelists. That meeting produced the "Modesto Manifesto." One of the standards they set in place was to avoid any appearance of sexual impropriety. Billy Graham made it a point to never travel, meet, or eat alone with any woman other than his own wife, Ruth.

Joseph obviously had similar convictions. We know from verse 9 that he valued his position in Potiphar's house—and valued even more his relationship with God. Again, he knew what was at stake.

Potiphar's wife didn't make her move once and give up. She persisted. And Joseph persisted in saying no. In fact, Joseph's perseverance may have been challenged for as long as 11 years! I doubt Joseph could have held firm without a relationship with God—and the conviction to maintain that relationship no matter what.

***What's at stake
when we give in
to temptation?***

QUESTION #3

***What's at stake when
we resist temptation?***

QUESTION #4

Genesis 39:11-12

We should avoid temptation whenever possible. But there will still be times when temptation is unavoidable and demands a response. That's what happened to Joseph.

When you think about it, verse 11 describes an ideal opportunity for Joseph to give up his principles and give in to temptation. The house was empty. Potiphar's wife literally threw herself at him in her zeal for an affair. No one else was around, which meant no one would know about any wrongdoing—that is, no one except Joseph, Potiphar's wife, and God.

Once again, Joseph didn't hesitate in making the right choice. He fled the scene in order to retain his integrity. It's important for us to remember that even when we're as careful as we can be to avoid temptation, we may still find ourselves in situations where the only option is to do what Joseph did: run!

Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife chose to lie about what happened. With Joseph's abandoned cloak as evidence, she accused him of attacking her. Despite his righteous actions, Joseph ended up in prison (see vv. 13-20). Someone might ask, "What's the benefit of resisting temptation if it still lands you in hot water?" We'll find the answer to that question as we continue exploring Joseph's story in the weeks to come. Yes, Joseph paid a price for his moral stand, but it wasn't final. In the end, God was at work even in Joseph's darkest days and ultimately brought him to a place of prominence, influence, and full restoration with his family.

What's the difference between resisting temptation and fleeing from temptation?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

We all encounter temptation from time to time. Consider the following suggestions for making the right choice:

- ▶ **Look inside.** The first step in fleeing temptation is recognizing that temptation springs from our own desires (see Jas. 1:14). Spend a few moments evaluating which inner desires often tempt you to do wrong.
- ▶ **Remember what's at stake.** When faced with temptation, we always have a choice. Choose to consider the consequences (spiritual, relational, physical, etc.) *before* you choose to sin.
- ▶ **Remember God's Word.** Memorize 1 Corinthians 10:13 as a reminder that temptation always creates a choice.



So much in our culture is designed to pull us away from God's plan and God's commands. But read the warning label whenever you face temptation. There's always more at stake than meets the eye.



Idols Away

Picture an 8-year-old boy's messy room. It's scattered with action figures, books, and games. Don't forget to watch your step for Legos® lying low like land mines. And then there's that little boy who's been playing outside. His stench fills the room, too. Whew! Now, imagine the ancient nation of Judah in a bigger mess. There were no Legos® in Judah. It was much worse—idols, false worship, and heinous activities had overtaken the nation. Judah needed spring cleaning like it had never known.



To continue reading "Idols Away" from *HomeLife* magazine, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



My group's prayer requests

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

My thoughts

1. Brett Nelson and Katy Finneran, "Dumbest Warning Labels," *www.Forbes.com*, (published February 23, 2011), (accessed March 17, 2014).