

# IS JUST SAYING 'NO' ENOUGH?

## GENESIS 39:1-20

*The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, August 29 2010, by Rev (Dr) Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.*

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### INTRODUCTION

God works in every situation in the lives of his people. We should be comforted with the knowledge that our heavenly Father is working in the situations of our life today. From this text in Genesis 39, we are going to see three different life situations where God is working, first in times of prosperity, second in times of temptation and third in times of adversity.

#### 1. We can take comfort knowing that God is working in times of prosperity. Genesis 39:1-6a

Why was it important to note Potiphar's occupation? The word for "officer" can mean a high-ranking court official. His occupation as captain of the guard was given to emphasize his importance; this man was an aristocrat. His house was probably opulent and cultured and his guests were the movers and shakers of the land.

The theme of chapter 39 is reflected in verses 2 and 23, "*the LORD was with Joseph and he prospered.*" Notice the cause and effect: Because the Lord was with him, Joseph was successful. God is the hero of this story, not Joseph. It was not Joseph who was amazing. His success did not come from his intelligence or his education or his business acumen; his success came from God. This is not a story of the success of Joseph; rather it is a story of God's faithfulness to his promises.

Joseph rose quickly through the ranks, going from household slave to personal attendant to overseer of the household. Life was now good for Joseph, easy in most ways; he had plenty of food, decent accommodations, a reasonable amount of respect, etc. Joseph was in a time of prosperity. Why would God bless Potiphar for Joseph's sake? Temptation often comes with success. This was true in the story of Joseph and it is still the case today.

#### 2. We take comfort knowing that God is working in times of temptation (6b-19).

Why does temptation defeat believers? There are powerful and personal forces like our fleshly desires, the world and Satan. And oftentimes success seems to bring a false sense of invincibility. This very sense of self-confidence, arrogance and pride often precedes a fall. Proverbs 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:11-12. But how did Joseph triumph and overcome temptation?

Let's look at temptation. Potiphar's wife first enticement was pretty straightforward: "Come to bed with me!" At this point, Joseph could have rationalized a "yes" response. Casual sex was common and acceptable in the culture of the day. Joseph did not rationalize; he did not succumb to situational ethics.

Joseph gave three reasons why he would not sleep with her. First, it would be an abuse of Potiphar's trust. Second, it would be adultery. Third, it would be a sin against God. Joseph rightly perceived that sin is not only against man, but against God. He refused the temptation.

Joseph's well-reasoned argumentation didn't have much effect on her, because she kept after him. No doubt she hoped that Joseph's enjoyment of the close proximity would lead to adultery. Although she tried to wear him down over time, Joseph perceived her intentions and wisely chose never to be alone with her. He resisted the temptation.

She grabbed him and said, "Come to bed with me!" a second time. The difference in this situation was that there were no witnesses. This was a golden opportunity! He could have sex and not get caught. But Joseph knew that even if Potiphar never caught them, God would know and would not be pleased. He ran from the temptation.

Her patient efforts to woo Joseph were not successful. The passionate desire of Potiphar's wife suddenly turned into the rage of a woman scorned. She set in motion a tale to get Joseph in trouble, altering it appropriately for each hearer. There are two implications to her accusations, the first was that a Hebrew had no place being in Joseph's position and the second implication was that Joseph took advantage of Potiphar. The first accusation was to the other slaves and the household staff and the second accusation was to her husband. Joseph realized the situation he was in and was ready to pay the price.

**3. We take comfort knowing that God is working in times of adversity (21-23).**

In the second section of the text, the Lord was with Joseph in Pharaoh's prison. Look at the phrase "The Lord was with Joseph" appears at the beginning of the chapter in verse and at the end when he is sent to prison. How does that give you comfort in your life situations?

Note that obedience, resisting temptation, does not necessary give an external reward. Joseph had preferred obedience to God over illicit sexual satisfaction, but now he was in jail. Joseph was in a time of adversity.

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:**

When we face temptation we need to be like Joseph and respond like we are told in 1 Peter 3:16-17.

If we have yielded to temptation we need to be like David and confess and repent of our sins read Psalm 51:1-4, 7-13.

In order to be alert and prayerful we need to consider the following verses, Matthew 26:41; Romans 6:1-2, 6-7, 12-14.

**And in conclusion we take away this promise.**

**"AS THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH IN HIS LIFE HE WILL BE WITH US IN OUR LIVES."**