

"Being Successful in the Market Place."  
(Genesis 39:1-23)

Sermon Summary: Jesus is our ultimate boss at the workplace. To be successful Christians in the marketplace, we must be accurate representations of God, seeking to please Him and to emulate His character. Others will see God in us, through our speech and behavior, particularly when we are confronted with challenges.

## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Testimony Joseph Exhibited

We are starting a new preaching series on Heroes of Our Faith. I have chosen a man that started at the bottom of the company and rose to the top. What were the causes of his success? During the work place, he was confronted with sexual temptation. How did he handle it? This hero was mistreated and judged unfairly. How did he respond to such unjust treatment? I am sure we can learn many important lessons from him.

Let me give you some background about this hero of mine. His name is Joseph, who was Jacob's favorite son. Favoritism caused animosity among his brothers. Their feelings toward Joseph grew from irritation to hatred. It came to the point where they wanted to kill him. Instead, they sold him as a slave to the Ishmael merchants, who sold him to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

Could you imagine how Joseph felt? He had a very good position at home before being hijacked by his brothers and sold to become a slave. He went from the top to the bottom, where there seemed to be no glimmer of external hope. Ironically, note how Joseph was described in Gen. 39:2. It said that the Lord was with Joseph and he prospered. The cause of his success is because "The Lord was with Joseph", which was repeated 4x in this chapter (39:2,3,21,23). Since the author used it so many times, it must be significant. It shows how God does mighty work through the person that He is with. Although it appeared that God has abandoned Joseph, yet it was just the opposite. The word "Lord" is Yahweh, which is described as the personal covenant name of God. Joseph was never alone. The Lord was with Joseph although he was in a foreign pagan land.

We all probably can claim that God is with us, but do we really believe that? Do we recognize God's presence with us? What kind of a God do we believe in? If we really know God personally, then it is natural for us to fear God. We fear out of reverence of Him; being in awe of our Lord for who He is and what He has done. Joseph recognized that God is a sovereign God that is in total control of all things and there are reasons why negative things happen to us. He recognized that God loves His children and has the best for us. Although he might have not understood it all, he trusted the Lord. He knew that God is a powerful God and there is nothing that He cannot do. Our behavior is a reflection of what we believe.

That the Lord was with Joseph and he prospered tells us that Joseph trusted and depended on the Lord. He had an intimate relationship with God. He found his identity and security in God. He has a strong devotion and commitment to follow God. After being sold by his brothers as a slave, you would think Joseph's trust in God would be destroyed, but it was not. This speaks of his strong faith in God. Joseph had a choice to be angry or not. He chose to

trust God with his life. As a result, the Lord was with Joseph and he prospered. God took note of Joseph's character and conduct and blessed him. The key to our day-to-day success is living in the reality that God is with us and we put Him first in our life as we trust Him in all circumstances. God is our ultimate boss at work. May we seek to please Him and be the best representative for God.

What was astonishing is that the master saw that the Lord was with Joseph and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did. How was that evident? I believe it is through Joseph's speech and behavior. He was probably a man of character that talked a lot about God and gave God the credit in a regular fashion. He would not hesitate to wear God on his sleeve. Joseph was proud to be a child of the Lord and not bashful to tell others about it. I believe that is how Joseph's master was able to know that the Lord was with Joseph and that the Lord gave him success.

Joseph's work ethic did not go unnoticed. Through time, he was promoted to be Potiphar's personal attendant and then to be the overseer. I believe Joseph was faithful in smaller responsibilities. As a result, Potiphar gave him more responsibilities. His master had such great trust in Joseph that he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned. As a result, God blessed Potiphar's household. We see this in v. 5, "From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field."

**APPLICATION:** At work, are you putting in just enough effort to get by or are you giving your best effort? Are you a complainer or an encourager? Are you faithful in the small things? Does your boss know that you are a Christian? Does your supervisor recognize the Christian values you display? Do you only do your own work or do you also help your co-workers? Do you work hard only when the boss is present or do you work hard consistently? May we represent God well in our marketplace by seeking to please God and to emulate His character. When we are a good testimony for the Lord, God will honor us. [ In our work place, it is common to face different kind of temptations. Joseph was confronted with sexual temptation. How did he deal with it? Let us read vv.7-9, "And after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her."

## B. The Temptation Joseph Endured

In verse 6, it said that Joseph was a well-built and handsome man. Potiphar's wife was attracted to Joseph and commanded Joseph to come to bed with her. From Genesis 37:2, we know that Joseph was 17 years old. His hormones were kicking in full force. It would be easy for him to rationalize the situation. No one would really know. He was a slave and he needed to listen to his master's wife. Sexual promiscuity was prevalent during those days. It's common, everybody is doing it. By giving in, it could enhance his career. But Joseph did not consider any of the above reasons.

Without any hesitation, he refused and gave three reasons why he refused to sin against 1) the trust given to him, 2) the woman's husband and 3) God himself. Joseph was a man of integrity. The greatest deterrent to falling to the sexual temptation was Joseph's awareness that God was with him. Earlier, I said that when we come close to God and know Him, we will fear God. One way to fear God is to revere Him. Be at awe of who God is. The second way is to be scared of God because God is a holy and just God, who hates sin. Although God might be a patient God, you can be assured that He loves us so much that He will discipline us if we do not turn back to him. Although no one was present when Joseph was tempted, he knew that God was present and He knows what is going on.

Too often, we do not fear God; we are not scared of God's judgment. We under-estimate the power of sin. Yielding to "little sins" will lead to "bigger sins." Joseph did not want to take any step down that slippery slope. It is because of his high view of God that enables him to resist Mrs. Potiphar's advances.

**APPLICATION:** At our workplace, there are many kinds of temptations. Definitely, there are sexual temptations particularly toward those that are married and are having unresolved conflicts at home. We tend to be more vulnerable under those circumstances. We all want to be cared for and understood. If we cannot find it at home, we look someplace else for it. If there is a person of the opposite gender at work that is willing to listen to our trouble and care for us, it is natural to be attracted toward that person. One get together can easily lead to a second meeting. One advice I want to tell all married people. Resolve your problem with your spouse as soon as possible. Please do not tell your domestic problems to a coworker of the opposite gender. One step can easily leads to another. If you have problem resolving your issue with your spouse, seek help. Do not let it linger.

Mrs. Potiphar was fixated on Joseph. Although he refused her, she would not take "no" for an answer. In verse 10, it said that she spoke to Joseph day after day. In spite of her persistence, Joseph stood strong on his convictions. He endured the temptations. In the latter part of the verse, it said that he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. Joseph basically kept his distance from possible temptations. This is preventive care. Don't place yourselves in situation where you will be tempted.

**APPLICATION:** There might be other temptations that we face at the workplace, such as stealing- Taking things from our desk, surfing on the computer, manipulating the expense account, taking extra long lunches. We are to represent God well at our workplace. God is with us although there might not be anyone looking.

### C. The Triumph Joseph Experienced

Mrs. Potiphar just would not give up. She set an ambush for Joseph and caught him off guard. One day, she sent all of the servants inside the house away. She was aggressive toward Joseph when he came into the house by grabbing his shirt and saying, "Come to bed with me!" Joseph fled from the situation as quickly as possible. He even left his cloak in her hand. Sexual temptation is so strong that you cannot battle it and win. There is only one solution that is to get out of there. The Apostle Paul makes it clear in 2 Timothy 2:22 when we are confronted with sexual temptation to flee youthful passions.

Mrs. Potiphar was furious at Joseph. In order to punish him, she lied about the incident by claiming that Joseph made advances to her; she screamed and he left his cloak and ran out of the house. The master's wife blamed her husband for bringing the Hebrew slave to make sport of her. He got angry and threw Joseph into prison. Apparently, Potiphar was not completely convinced by his wife; otherwise he would have had Joseph executed.

What an amazing journey that Joseph took. He went from a pit in Canaan to the house of Potiphar and now down into the prison in Egypt. Although Joseph was in a terrible situation, he never doubted God nor blamed God. We see the same phrases repeated in the beginning of chapter 39 as well as the end of this chapter. In vv21-23, it reads, "The Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did."

I see a man that had a consistent commitment to God in spite of the circumstances. Joseph knew that God was in control although he might not totally understand it. He did not complain, but trusted God and continued to be faithful to Him.

There are reasons why God put us in difficult situations. Many times, it is to prepare and shape us for something big down the road. READ (Rom. 5:3-4) "But we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character, hope." God permitted Joseph to be treated unjustly and put in prison to help build his character and prepare him for a major leadership role later on. He had to learn to trust God and wait upon the Lord.

**APPLICATION:** You might be in a difficult situation right now at your workplace. You might be mistreated unjustly. Do trust in the Lord and be faithful to Him. It is during crisis time that we will see our real self. We will see what we really believe and what our view of God is. May we remember that God is with us and He is in control.

Although Joseph was in prison, the Lord was with him. Joseph found security in God and was faithful to Him. As a result, God gave him success. The warden trusted Joseph and appointed him to be in charge of all those held in the prison.

We face all circumstances at work. May we remember that our ultimate boss is our Lord Jesus. May we trust him and represent Him well by seeking to please Him and to emulate His character. Through our speech and behavior, others will recognize God is with us. It is during most challenging times that we can best shine for the Lord.