

Love of the World (Temptation) Genesis 39

Parents don't like friends over illust. Focus on fine with parties outside not inside. Thought they didn't like my friends but turns out just different expectations/views on what home is. That was their principle. It's ok for me to be out at a party, but not ok for me to bring a party over. Well the Bible has a similar principle for us Christians. And it's what our passage today is trying to remind us. It's ok for you to live in the world, but it's bad if the world lives in you.

The Bible is talking about the problem of worldliness. Worldliness is, at its core, a matter of the heart. If your heart is captured by the world, you will love the things of the world. If your heart is captured by the love of God, you will be drawn to Him and to the things of God. What is the love of your life? What is it that gives you the greatest happiness and satisfaction?

1 John 2:15 says "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." To put it more bluntly, the one who loves the world does not love God. The one who loves God will not love the world. It's black and white, night and day. John is saying the same thing that Jesus said (Luke 16:13), "You cannot serve God and Mammon." You must make a decision: either you live to know God and His love, or you live for this world and its temporary pleasures. You have to choose.

What's wrong with the things of the world? When the Bible talks about do not love the world and the things of the world, it's talking about a system that does not promote God's glory. This world is anti-God. It has been twisted by sin. So a Christian cannot love both God and the world which is anti-God.

So what do things of the world look like? John says in 1 John 2:16 "For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world." Notice he identifies three things: desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and pride of life. And the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife illustrates this verse perfectly. And that's what I want to share with you today. How do we deal with the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and pride of life? How do we resist all these temptations from the world? Let's turn to Genesis 39 together.

Now you know the story of Joseph. He had been sold into slavery by his brothers to a band of traders on their way to Egypt. In Egypt we learn that he is sold as a slave to Potiphar. And it's in this foreign setting we see a different kind of challenge that Joseph has to deal with. We see three things: success, temptation, and integrity. Complete success, comprehensive temptation, costly integrity.

Complete Success – Now the first thing we must understand is who Potiphar was. He was the captain of the guard under Pharaoh. Now there are a lot of ideas as to what that position is exactly. The two most common and plausible theories are Potiphar is either the chief of security for Pharaoh or he's the commanding general of the military of Egypt. So this was an incredibly powerful position in the most powerful and advanced kingdom of its time. Potiphar was someone who held considerable influence, incredibly wealthy, and tremendously successful. This is someone you want on your side. Someone you don't want to mess with, and someone whose family you don't want to offend.

So in comes Joseph, sold into Potiphar's household as a slave. He's probably in the early

twenties by this time and has served Potiphar for some years. He's very gifted and capable. Having learned a new language in a foreign land and able to do everything well. We're told that he's so good at what he does that Potiphar decides to make him in charge of everything in his house. His possessions, accounts, assets. Joseph becomes his manager in chief.

On top of that, we're told in v6 that Joseph was handsome and well-built. Now the Bible doesn't describe someone as being handsome and well-built very often. So you can imagine Joseph must have been really fit and attractive. So he's young, successful, good-looking, single, working for one of the most powerful people in the world. And he's Godly. He's the most eligible bachelor. Who wouldn't want to be like Joseph? Who wouldn't want their daughters to marry Joseph? I'd be begging him to be my son-in-law.

You want an example of someone who has it all? Joseph. You want a picture of complete success to the point that it may make you sick? Joseph. If there's anyone who should be worldly, it should be Joseph. In v2-6, five times the word 'all/everything' (same word) is used. Joseph is someone who has complete trust from Potiphar. He enjoys complete blessing from God. And he's completely dedicated to his master. That is a picture of complete success.

Now is there something we can apply or learn from this? Absolutely. First of all we see that clearly success comes from God. God is the one who blesses Joseph in everything he does. Without God, there's no success. And so this teaches you and me to be grateful to God in our success. God may make you incredibly successful in this world, but don't forget who gave it to you. Your grades, your job, your beauty, whatever it is that you have that people envy and you're proud of, it came from the Lord. Don't forget to give the credit to God and thank Him for it. Constantly.

Second of all, we learn that success cannot replace God. See God doesn't guarantee success for us all the time. But God does promise his presence. Just because God is with you doesn't mean you'll be wealthy, powerful, and attractive. Look at how Joseph was sold into slavery. God was with him. God planned it. Where's the success in that? The emphasis here is on God's presence. Four times in this story we're told that God was with Joseph. Twice in the beginning with Potiphar and twice at the end when he's in jail. Now that should encourage and comfort you. Even though you may find yourself in a tough spot. You may be betrayed. You may be falsely accused, but God will never leave you. And even if you don't have the success of the world, God is still with you. He may give you success, but he can take that away as well. But no matter what, he will never abandon you.

Comprehensive Temptation – If Joseph is the most eligible bachelor, then Potiphar's wife is the quintessential desperate housewife. She's married to one of the most powerful man in the world. Most likely beautiful as well as wealthy. But because Potiphar is often away for duty, she becomes lonely, desperate, even seductive.

Now imagine Desperate Housewife and The Bachelor Cairo, 15th century BC combined into one tv show. Most eligible bachelor meet most desperate housewife. Could be most scintillating reality show and a disaster waiting to happen. And in the middle section of this story, we find one of the earliest record of false accusation of rape. If Joseph was the epitome of success, then Potiphar's wife is the personification of temptation. Not just a simple, one time temptation. But comprehensive temptation.

She notices Joseph's physical built and good looks. Then tries to seduce him in v7. Now notice a couple things here. First of all, her interests in Joseph don't take place until Joseph has become successful. It's not like Joseph suddenly became good looking. V7 gives us a hint of this that 'after a while she started to take notice of him'. It's not a coincidence that the seduction attempt comes AFTER we're told how successful and important Joseph is. What that tells you is that success will often, or I should say always be follow by temptation. The more successful you are, the more you will be tempted. By lust, by power, by fame, by wealth, whatever. All the things of the world, they were tempting before. Now with success, they will be even more alluring. There's something about success, complete success that draws and attracts people. And there's something intoxicating about success that makes men and women easily tempted.

The sinful nature is especially tickled when we've become successful. Pride and entitlement sets in. Greed and vanity begins to whisper in our soul. We start thinking to ourselves: I deserve this. I earned this. I'm this good. I want more. I can get away with it. All those kinds of thinking begin to sneak into our consciousness. Success will always be followed by temptation. And this is also true for spiritual success. When you did a great job with a bible study, or you served someone, or you preached a sermon that someone liked, it's really easy to be tempted. And that's because we want to attribute success to ourselves. And the moment we start thinking that way, we forget God is the source of our success. Temptation then comes swiftly and powerfully.

Now another thing I want you to notice here is the manner in which she tries to tempt him. At first she tempts him directly. Tells him to his face, actually commands him to sleep with her. Then when that doesn't work, she tempts him persistently. V10 says everyday. And when that doesn't work, she doesn't give up. She tries to force herself on him. She is the personification of temptation itself. Comprehensive temptation. She tempts Joseph directly, persistently, and suddenly. If once doesn't work, try try, and try again.

Listen, dealing with temptation requires dramatic measures. Because temptation won't quit just because you fight it off once. It will come back again and again. So it is important to know how to confront it and overcome it. And in Joseph's example, we see him dealing with comprehensive temptation in three ways. He appeals to God, he avoids her, he runs from her. And this is exactly what you and I must do as well.

When temptation comes to you, remember God's word. Fight it off by reminding yourself what God says in the scripture. Listen, people always think that the way to handle temptation is by building up self-control. You know, just look within yourself. Find those negative emotions and bad thoughts and just suppress them. But that's not what Joseph does here. Joseph's argument is that this is a sin against God. Joseph get's self-control by loving the God who is with him. Joseph had one supreme desire that put all other desires in its proper place. I like how Pastor Tim Keller puts it: "Self-control is not the will suppressing the desires of the heart. But it's the reordering of all the loves, passion, and desires of the heart by an overarching master love and passion and desire." In order to get self control, you need the supreme love. And that's what Joseph was doing. God was his ultimate passion, heart and desire. And because of that, everything else, power, fame, sex becomes not only secondary, but placed in its proper place, proper context. That's how Joseph was able to resist Potiphar's wife.

Secondly, avoid being in a spot that you know you will be tempted. If you know you're going to

be tempted to surf for porn online, don't try to go online alone. Go online only in a place where others will be around. Don't put yourself in a position that you know you'll be tempted. **CCFC Alex asked to sleep over for accountability illust.** And finally, run from it. If you're being tempted again and again by the same situation, same person, run away. Don't sit around to take it. Get away from it. You don't mess with temptation. Temptation is comprehensive. It'll never stop. It'll keep coming at you. So get out! Fight it with God's word. Pull yourself out immediately, even if it means you may lose your shirt, or something valuable. And that leads us to the third point.

Costly Integrity – Now what happens when you take drastic measures to fight off temptation? You get to keep your integrity. Or you could say your integrity is revealed. But it often comes at a cost. Learning to love God instead of the world can be costly. But it is absolutely worth it. **Dad always told truth in business dealings illust.** V13 and on tells us that when Potiphar's wife couldn't seduce Joseph, she decides to turn her lust into jealous rage. Talk about fury of a woman scorned. She turns the whole story around to smear and falsely accuse Joseph for attempted rape. And as we see, Joseph is thrown in prison by Potiphar, unjustly.

Some people say integrity is who we are when no one else sees what we are doing. I think that's a good definition. But I also like defining integrity this way: Integrity is never putting your goals above your principals. Sometimes when your goals are just within reach but it requires you to compromise your principals, what are you going to do? It's hard. It's not easy. When you stick to it, it may cost you, dearly even. It could cost your team a championship. It could cost you a wonderful career when you refuse to cheat. It could cost you a relationship when you refuse to sleep with him. It could make you a hated person, cost you financially. And in Joseph's sake, integrity cost him his freedom, his wealth, and his reputation. Do you love God that much? Are you willing to resist temptation to that degree?

Joseph probably had plenty of time sitting in prison to replay the scene and think about what he would do if he had the chance again. Satan often will whisper in your ear, "Next time just give in and all this won't happen. See how your God takes care of you". But Joseph still had the presence and blessing of God, even in prison. It wasn't worth trading that, even with prison, for the fleeting pleasure he would have enjoyed with Potiphar's wife. Why? Because God was his ultimate desire and author of his principals, even though integrity was costly, is completely worth it.

This Joseph is attractive. He was in a position of influence. But there's another Joseph in the Bible. Who was also beautiful. Surrounded by the glory of God in the heavens. He was majestic and awesome. And yet he left his father in heaven to come down to this world. Jesus, when he came to this world, was not beautiful. Despised, rejected, poor, betrayed. Joseph even though he was innocent was thrown into the prison to be among the sinners. Joseph was betrayed, despised, rejected. So was Jesus. Why? Isaiah 53 says he poured out his life for the sins of the many. Why didn't he give in to the temptation to not get on the cross? Because he loved God more than Himself or the world. And He did it out of his love for us. And when you understand that, God then starts to become your supreme love. Then you'll be able to resist temptation. You can have integrity when temptation comes after whatever success God has given you. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace."