

Genesis 39:1-6 *And Joseph was brought down to Egypt¹; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither []. ²And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house² of his master the Egyptian. ³And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. ⁴And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he [Joseph] served him [Potiphar]: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand [all that Potiphar had was managed by Joseph]. ⁵And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. ⁶And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had [and Potiphar didn't even know how much wealth he had], save the bread which he did eat [he just knew that Joseph would arrange everything, even for the meals to be ready on time]. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored.*

I. Introduction

A. Joseph's family

1. Son number 11 out of 12 sons by four different women (two wives and two slave women)
2. He was 17 years old when he was sold as a slave – Genesis 37:2
3. Joseph was the favorite of his father Jacob – Genesis 37:3
4. He received dreams from God that he would be the greatest of the 12 sons, and he shared this with his family – Genesis 37:7, 9

B. His ten brother's envy & hatred

1. They hated Joseph because he was their father's favorite – Genesis 37:4
2. They hated Joseph because of his dreams – Genesis 37:8, 11
3. They plotted together to murder him – Genesis 37:18-20

¹ Background: Joseph had been sold by 10 of his brothers as a slave to some travelling slave-traders (Ishmaelites). Some of the brothers were so angry with Joseph that they wanted to kill him, but one of the brothers convinced the others that Joseph's life should be spared but sold into slavery. At this time Egypt was a very wealthy country and paid the best price for slaves. The 10 brothers thought this was as good as killing Joseph, since they would never have to see him again.

"...Joseph was brought down to Egypt.": Egypt was lower elevation, just slightly above sea level, while the land of Joseph and his brothers was on a high plateau. The slave traders would travel downhill to go to Egypt.

² "...in the house..." Joseph would have needed to start as a field slave and prove himself superior to them to work his way to a position in the house of the slave owner. Joseph proved himself to be a valuable asset (employee) to Potiphar.

4. They instead sold Joseph as a slave to some passing merchant traders – Genesis 37:26-28
5. They told a lie to their father of finding Joseph's unique coat ("coat-of-many-colors") covered in blood – Genesis 37:31-32

C. Joseph's life turned upside down in a moment

1. He lost his privileged status as his father's favorite son
2. He lost his freedom

II. Joseph's Wisdom

A. Joseph before his slavery: Jacob trusted his favorite son Joseph

1. Joseph told his father of some of his brothers' bad behavior – Genesis 37:2
2. Jacob trusted Joseph to bring an accurate report of his other brothers – Genesis 37:14

B. Joseph as a slave

1. Joseph found way to honor God as slave

Luke 12:43 *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing* [when the master shows up unexpectedly, finds his slave diligently performing his duty].

2. He was a **victor** in God & not a **victim** of circumstances

Proverbs 22:29 *Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings* [he will work for important people]; *he shall not stand before mean men* [he won't have to work for crude people].

3. He was diligent in his work

Ecclesiastes 9:10 *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do* [in this life], *do it with thy might* [do it with your best efforts]; *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest* [because after this life you won't have the opportunity to use any of your skills].

4. He found grace & favor from his master for his effort – Genesis 39:4

C. Adversities will come in everyone's life

1. Christian has choices to make in troubling times – faith in God's plan or bitterness that you can't control your circumstances
2. Reactions to troubles & adversity reveal a person's character

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose* [to those who seek to serve God in everything they do].

III. Joseph's Walk

A. God was with Joseph

1. Potiphar his master noticed his work – Genesis 39:2
2. He had not become bitter, but became patient waiting on God
3. His work did not depend on the state of his soul
4. God's main work is to save struggling humans

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise* [is not slow to fulfill his promise], *as some men count slackness* [and some men might think that He does not plan to keep His promise to us because they don't see it happening for such a long time]; *but is longsuffering to us-ward* [extremely patient towards us], *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

B. Joseph had the presence of God in his life

1. Keep clean hands & pure hearts

James 4:8 *Draw nigh* [near] *to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

2. Search for God with all your heart

Jeremiah 29:13 *And ye* [Israel when in exile in Babylon] *shall seek me* [God], *and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

3. God will show the path to life

C. Joseph is similar to Moses, who also had presence of God in his life

1. He was very meek person (humble, patient, power under control)

Numbers 12:3 *Now the man Moses was very meek* [or humble], *above all the men which were upon the face of the earth* [more than any person who had ever lived].

2. He understood his position of leadership and his abilities

Acts 7:35 *This Moses whom they* [enslaved Israel] *refused* [after he had just killed an Egyptian], *saying, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge?" the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand* [deliverer when he was sent] *of the angel which appeared to him in the* [burning-but-not-consumed] *bush.*

D. Joseph was different from his brothers, who wanted self-control of their lives

1. All ten were involved in the plot to destroy Joseph
 - a. Judah's idea to sell Joseph as slave – Genesis 37:26
 - b. Reuben tried to save Joseph secretly when the brothers anger had passed – Genesis 37:21-22

- c. They remembered Joseph's anguish while they stood in front of him in Egypt – Genesis 42:21-22
- d. They were fearful of Joseph seeking revenge – Genesis 50:15
- e. They were **all held in the bondage of guilt all their lives** while having the freedom of self-determination they denied to Joseph

2. Joseph's life

- a. He was alone, without support from his family
- b. He maintained godly life when he could have given in to despair
- c. He lived in freedom of God's presence as a slave

1 Corinthians 7:22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant [For a slave that is saved], is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant [and any free person who is saved is the slave of Christ].

E. True prosperity & success found in presence of God

IV. Joseph's Witness

A. Potiphar could see that God was with Joseph – Genesis 39:3

- 1. Potiphar did not know God, but he knew Joseph's God was different from the gods of Egypt.
- 2. Potiphar was part of foreign pagan culture & worshipped Egypt's idols
- 3. Potiphar was a military man, the captain of Pharaoh's guard – Genesis 39:1
- 4. But Potiphar noticed Joseph's life & saw his work prosper

B. Example of Job compared to the example of Joseph

- 1. God used Job as example of man who had God's presence
- 2. God held up Job as example of godly man

Job 2:3 And the LORD said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth [turns away from] evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him [Job's integrity is intact, even though I allowed you to take what he has], to destroy him without cause."

C. Live in obedience to God

Matthew 5:14-16 Ye [Christians] are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick [When men light a candle they don't cover it up, but they put it in in high place]; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

V. Joseph's Work

A. God blessed Potiphar's home because Joseph was there

1. Potiphar made Joseph the overseer of his property
2. Joseph's work gave a good testimony of God in his life

Psalm 1:3 *And he [the man who delights in God's Law (Bible)] shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and **whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.***

Matthew 25:21 *His [the slave's] lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

Psalm 33:12 *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and [blessed are] the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*

B. Consider the example of Abraham asking God to spare Sodom because of the righteous people that lived there: even the pagan benefit when God blesses His people

1. Abraham understood God's righteous character to not destroy righteous souls with wicked ones – Genesis 18:25
2. God promised not to destroy Sodom if He could find 10 righteous souls – Genesis 18:32 (which He did not, though he did send angels to search for those 10 righteous people)
3. God did rescue righteous Lot & his family from destruction – Genesis 19:15-17; 2 Peter 2:6-9
4. God listens to His people and saves them, even in this world

C. Joseph served God's purpose

1. Joseph remembered his dreams when he later met his brothers in Egypt

Genesis 50:19-20 *And Joseph said unto them [the 10 brothers that betrayed him], "Fear not: for am I in the place of God [I am not going to judge you, even though I have that power. I'm going to turn your judgement over to God, who has perfect knowledge of everything that you did]? ²⁰But as for you, ye thought evil against me [You planned to destroy me]; but God meant it unto good [but God was able to use the evil that you did], to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."*

2. Joseph gave a summary of his own life

Genesis 42:8-9 *And Joseph knew his brethren [Joseph knew the evil in his brother's hearts], but they knew not him [but his brothers could not understand his trust in God]. ⁹And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come [You are trying to see if our land can be attacked so you can take our food by force]."*

VI. Conclusion

- A. Notice Potiphar's views of Joseph
- B. Lord was with Joseph in his work as a slave – verse 2
- C. Potiphar saw how Joseph's work was successful – verse 3
- D. Joseph found grace & favor in his master's eyes – verse 4
- E. Potiphar made Joseph overseer over everything he owned – verse 5
- F. Potiphar totally trusted Joseph to work well – verse 6
- G. And the Lord blessed Potiphar's home because Joseph was there
- H. Joseph was able to save his family from starvation because of his selfless service to Potiphar, Pharaoh, and all Egypt
- I. Joseph forgave his brothers for the hard life they caused him because he could see God working in all the difficult circumstances.
- J. Joseph only cared about serving God and being close to Him in all the situations in his life.