

GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Chapter 39 Study Guide

July 25, 2004

GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Genesis 39

1. EXEGESIS & PICTURES OF CHRIST

He's young, he's popular, he's handsome . . . in fact, women are throwing themselves at him! Again, this sounds like a Hollywood script, but how Joseph handles this situation is what sets him apart.

Because he is faithful, God exalts him and makes him the head honcho, right? NO! At least not yet. Joseph does the right thing and instead of receiving blessing, he gets tossed into prison!

Before we race on to the end of the story (where the good guy wins!), let's take a little more time in chapter 39.

Potiphar, whose name means "Sun Worshipper," is the head of the executioners (the prison guards) who buys Joseph as a servant. Remember, Joseph is a young lad (all of this started when he was only 17). But God is merciful! Joseph finds favor and is quickly elevated from a horrible start (left in a pit and sold to the Ishmaelites) to a position of authority.

Interesting Note: If Joseph had lain with Potiphar's wife, against whom would his sin have been? (see verse 9)

So, Joseph does the right thing and God rewards him with a stay in prison! Potiphar probably knew his wife was lying, although verse 19 states that his wrath was aroused and does not say at whom his wrath was directed. If he really believed his wife, he would have had Joseph killed. Remember what his position was? He was the head of the executioners!

Arthur W. Pink lists over a hundred comparisons between Joseph and Christ. Take a moment and reflect on the comparisons found just in this chapter alone.

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|------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. 39: 1 | He becomes a servant | Phil 2:6,7 |
| 2. 39:2,3 | Prosper as a servant | Ps. 1:3; Isa. 53:10; 52:13 |
| 3. 39:4 | Master was well pleased with him | Jn 8:29 |
| 4. 39:6 | A goodly person, well favored | Mt 27:54 |
| 5. 39:7-12 | Sorely tempted yet sinned not | Luke 4 |



GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

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| 6. 39:16-19 | Falsely accused | Mt 16:59, 60 |
| 7. 39:19 | No defense presented | Isa 53:7 |
| 8. 39:20 | Cast into prison, without verdict | Jn 18:38 |
| 9. 39:20 | Suffers though innocence | Acts 7:9,10;
Ps 105:17;
Isa 53:7-9 |
| 10. 39:21 | Won the respect of the jailor | Luke 23:47 |

So this portion of the story ends in sorrow, but there's a great sequel coming!

Soul-Winner So What

Sometimes when you do the right thing not everybody is pleased and the results are not exactly what you would prefer. However, there is One who *is* pleased and he has given you Romans 8:28 as a promise that you can use as an anchor!

Small Group Questions

Share a time in your life when you did the right thing and ended up in a prison (figuratively speaking).

Potiphar's wife used Joseph's clothes to get him in trouble. This is the second time that garments have caused Joseph problems. What was the first?

2. THEME & AUTHORSHIP

Themes

A couple of predominate themes are found in Genesis. First is that this is a Book of Beginnings, the great introduction to the drama of redemption.

Second, God is preparing a people. He chooses and tests them. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Noah, God chooses, winnows and purges. Remember, His goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. This is the initial step for man's redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

Author – Moses / **Date** - 1450 – 1410 BC

3. Theology



GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Genesis 39 is a classic story of someone doing the right thing and still getting the short end of the stick. We have trudged through so many stories of human failings over last several months that it is refreshing to see one of our heroes of the faith do something right for a change.

Joseph has been put in charge of the whole house of his master, Potiphar, and the Bible describes him as “well-built and handsome.” Soon Potiphar’s wife starts to take notice of him and asks him to sleep with her.

Joseph, being the man of God that he is, refuses out of loyalty to his master. Some time later, Potiphar’s wife sets him up. When he comes into the house to do his duties, she grabs him by the tunic and orders him into bed with her. Joseph flees leaving his tunic behind. Well, being the wonderful woman that she is, Potiphar’s wife accuses Joseph of trying to seduce her. Of course, chapter 39 ends with Joseph sitting in his jail cell.

Why would God allow something like this to happen to Joseph? He did everything right that he was supposed to do, and he still got punished! Well first of all, read ahead to the end of the story and you will see that Joseph does come out on top. But this isn’t always the case. Sometimes bad stuff does happen to good people and they don’t come out on top in the end.

We may think this is unfair, that God is insensitive and uncaring, but we would be wrong. We live in a fallen world, a world full of sin and deception. God has given the world the free will to make whatever decisions we want to make. As Americans, we bristle at the thought of our basic rights and freedoms being taken away, but when it comes to protection, we want God to step in and take control. We can’t have it both ways; either we have control and bad stuff happens or God has control and we make no decisions for ourselves. There are implications for both, but luckily this decision has already been made. We have been granted free will, with which comes responsibility for our actions and repercussions of mishandling that freedom.

4. Word Studies

Word: Joseph = “Jehovah has added”  “Yowceph” (yo-safe)

In this chapter, we see Joseph as a type of Christ, who took upon him the form of a servant and made it clear that his actions are chosen because God’s spirit was with him. He was tempted by Satan, but overcame the temptation. He was falsely accused and even bound, and yet had all things were committed to his hand. He became a blessing to those who were in his family.

[Soul-Winner So What](#)



GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

It is God's presence with us that makes all we do prosperous. Those who prosper must make God their friend and give God all the glory.

Small Group Questions

In what ways do you give God glory for your prosperity?

5. Gospel & Culture

Genesis 39:7-18

The Discipline of Self-Control

Joseph was an attractive man who had attracted the attention of Potiphar's wife (29:17). As Egyptian women were not bound by the covenant of God with regard to sexual purity, she was not concerned with fidelity. God used this situation to test Joseph (and God does test His people!); if Joseph was unable to control himself as a servant, he could never control others as a ruler. Joseph could have caved to the pressure ("everyone is doing it" or "nobody will ever know"), but instead he chose to adhere to what was right by God's standards.

What was Joseph's desire according to Genesis 39:9?

- Is that the inward desire of your heart today?
- How can one practically apply Joseph's belief principle on a daily basis?
- How did Joseph practically apply his belief principle? (see verse 12)
- What was the success of Joseph's trial? (see verses 2, 5, 21, & 23)

Sanctification is the continuing spiritual process experienced by those that are saved by faith as they are transformed into Christ's image and likeness. Romans 13:13-14 instructs us with clarity in how to achieve this victory from our side of response.

- What image does Paul use in verse 14 to describe this process?
- The words *put on* mean to *sink into a garment*.
- What parallel can you draw between Romans 13:13-24 and Colossians 3:12?
- What are practical examples of the Church *sinking into its garment of Christ*? What are some ways that the Church fails to do this?

What do you suppose God does with people who continually fail to display self-control?

- How does Paul describe self-control in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27?
- Do you *run with certainty*?
- Do you have reason to be *disqualified*?
- How does Proverbs 25:28 define a person who has no rule over his spirit?
- What is the end result of a city without walls?



GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

- How is your life one that is clothed with Christ-likeness? Do you ever walk in a vulnerable state for the enemy to conquer? When/How?

Soul-Winner So What

How do the trials of Joseph enable you to share Christ with non-believing acquaintances?

6. Attributes of God

God can be with us

²The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

God allows others to see that He is working in us

³And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand.

God can bring blessings on an entire household because of one man's faithfulness

⁵So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field.

God can bless us, even in prison

²¹But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

Soul-Winner So What

1 Cor 10:13 *¹³No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

Joseph's master's wife took him by the clothes to get him to have sex with her. Verse 12 says he "left," "fled," and "ran." God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle, so sometimes He wants us to simply use our feet and get away from sinful situations! It has been said that if you don't stand in slippery places, you're less likely to slip.

Small Group Questions

What are your "slippery places"?

How can you flee the next time you're faced with those tempting situations?

7. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES / PROBLEM PASSAGES



GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Chapter 39 raises the question, “God, how could you do this to Joseph again?” He already was sold into slavery by his brothers and now he was unjustly accused of sexual harassment and imprisoned. He served You and did the right thing not sleeping with his master’s wife, but look what happened to him: he was thrown in jail! Life so often does not seem fair, but God’s Word says in Isaiah 55: 8 *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.* Romans 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

So eventually, what happened to Joseph while he was in jail? God showed favor on him! He did not permit Joseph’s persecution to continue, but raised him again to a position of trust and authority.

Soul-Winner So What

When others are going through a series of trials, what hope can you give them?

Small Group Questions

What purposes do you believe God has for your life? In what ways has He been molding and shaping your character to be more effective in His purposes?

8. Additional Questions

Soul-Winner So What

1) In verse 8, Joseph repeatedly resisted the temptation from Potiphar’s wife. There is also a recurring phrase, “the Lord was with him,” which helps to explain Joseph’s goodness. The empowering presence of God in his life helped Joseph to resist temptation. He also went a step further by proclaiming the righteousness of the one true God to Potiphar’s wife, who most likely believed in multiple gods.

2) **God’s Grace**—God’s grace was with Joseph. God changed disastrous circumstances into blessings for Joseph. A gracious and sovereign God can use any and all circumstances to further His cause or bless His people. God does not cause all things that happen; still being a sovereign God, He allows evil and suffering. But in His grace, God can use calamities to work out blessing and victory. God uses what we view as evil to work out His purpose in the lives of His people. (Romans 8:28)

Small Group Questions

1) Identify some situations in your life when God turned bad into good. How did God bless you? How did He bless others?



GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

- 2) How is your relationship with God? How does His presence empower you to resist Satan and give glory to God?