



How can you resist temptation?

What is the difference between sin and temptation?

What does Joseph mean when he talks about a sin against God?

The scripture makes it clear that sin is primarily against God.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, Psalm 51:4

The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you." Luke 15:21



What was Joseph's motivation?

I must do what is right because it is the Law.

I will get into trouble if I am found out.

My master trusts me I should not betray that trust.

I must do what is right before God.

If I do right God will bless me.

Joseph was loyal to God but also loyal to his master. It seems that Joseph was more concerned with being right before God than anything else.



Why do you do what is right?

Do you think Joseph's attitude will help us overcome temptation?

Why do you think Potiphar's wife acted the way she did?

How do you act when you don't get what you want?

What story does Potiphar's wife tell her husband?

Who does she blame?

What is the result?

The temptation Joseph faced was adultery, but the crime he is accused of is attempted rape.



Before we move on.

Genesis is a clever book, it is not just a bunch of stories thrown together, the book itself has structure and purpose.

Take a look at Genesis 38

What happens?



Most of the commentaries on Genesis are perplexed as to why Genesis 38 is there and why it breaks up the story of Joseph which started in Genesis 37. Consequently, they assume it is a later addition added by someone who had no idea what they were doing.

Having taken a look at the passage why do you think it is there?



Tamar has been married to two of Judah's sons and should have been married to the third. This is called Levirate marriage and was a very important part of the inheritance rules of the time. Tamar tricks Judah into doing what custom said should have been done (at least almost). It is widely held that Tamar could not have gotten away with what she did if her village were not behind her.

Where does Tamar end up? Matthew 1:3

The stories parallel each other. Both feature gentile women, who seduce different children of Israel. Both use a garment to do so. (Remember deception by garment, by the end of the story Joseph will use this same deception on his brothers).



How does Tamar compare with Potiphar's wife? Genesis 38:26

How does Joseph compare with Judah?

This is one of Genesis favourite tricks. Every character has a foil another character put alongside them so that we can make comparisons.



What do we learn about Gentiles and Israelites?

What do we learn about men and women?

What do we learn about the choices we can make?

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Joseph - In Potiphar's house



Read Genesis 37:12-36

The brothers are a long way north at Shechem, once again Joseph is sent to find out how they are doing. By the time he arrives they have moved on to Dothan. This time it is the sons of Leah who are involved.

How are his brothers likely to feel about him coming to visit them?

Considering verse 11 why do you think Israel sent him? Was this wise?



It has been pontificated that right through to Israel conquest of the Land, they maintained a settlement in Shechem. The odd little episode in the field may imply this. They see Joseph from afar. Good shepherds keep watch.



What do they call him?

What were the brothers motive in wanting to kill him? v19-20

Are they afraid that the dream may be true?

In doing so were they opposing Joseph or God?

As a reader this prompts our interest – we want to see what will become of Joseph's dreams too.

What kind of a brother...?

How did it get to this?

Much has been said about people or things that want to kill your dreams.



What are they and how might this work?

What would you identify as dream killers?

Should you expect everyone to welcome your dreams?

Can you force your dream on others?

Can other people kill your dreams?



Much has also been said about the right of the believer to dream. It has almost become a tenet of our faith. It must be remembered that Joseph's dream was not of his own making it was given to him by God.



Dreams are powerful things.

Dreams are dangerous things.



What is the difference between a God-given dream and a dream that represents our own desires?

Is God obliged to honour your dreams?

Does that mean your dreams have no significance?

It is good to dream and it is good to aspire to do creative and expansive things for God. Often God does honour these dreams. What is important is that we do not confuse the two.



Which brother takes the lead? v26

What was Reuben's motive in trying to save him? v21-22

What was his plan?

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Is it significant that they stripped him of his robe? v23

Why did the brothers change their minds about killing him? v26-27

Why did the brothers change their minds about killing him? v28

What did they end up doing with him?

Why was Reuben frantic when he found the boy missing? v29-30

How does Reuben come out from this account?



What did they do to fool Jacob?

How do they sell it to him?

What does he conclude has happened?



What was Jacob's response? v34-36

How do you think Jacob felt?

Towards his Brothers?

Towards God?

Does the promise of God mean that everything will go straight?

Again it is a little more complicated than it appears. There is one of the narrative twists here from which Genesis is famous.

What did Israel/Jacob do to deceive his brother and father? Genesis 27:9-15



He uses a cloak and a goat. (Spoiler alert this is not the last time in Genesis that this will happen.) Effectively Jacob is deceived the same way that he deceived. Jacob is, after all, the master of deception.

This raises the question does Jacob suspect that Joseph has been killed by his brothers? There is no doubt that a 'ferocious animal' is responsible, the question is whether they are standing before Jacob.

What do you think?



How do you think Joseph felt

Towards his Brothers?

Towards God?

How would you feel?

God had a call on Joseph's life, Joseph had a different set of standard to his brothers. This put him in a difficult position. John 15:18-19; 1 John 3v13; 2 Timothy 3:12



Why do you think this is?

Could Joseph have avoided this grief?

Can you always avoid grief?

If Joseph had avoided the pit, what else would have avoided?

Why did it have to be this way?

Would you say God's plan had gone awry?

When things go badly in your life does it mean that God's plan for you has gone awry?



Read Genesis 39v1-6

In Egypt, things are looking up for Joseph he has been sold into a rich family and is doing very well for himself.



Who was Potiphar?

Why did Joseph prosper?

Why did Potiphar prosper?

Does this dynamic still work?

Should you expect God to bless the places where your energies are put?



What were the results of God being with Joseph?

Prospered

Succeeded in all he did

Found favour.

How do you prosper as a slave?

What do you think it means to find favour in someones eyes?

How do you do this?



How would you feel being sold as a slave?

What two reactions could Joseph have had?

Which one did he take?

Why?

If he had been negative in his attitude would he have succeeded?

Joseph prospered because of God's blessing, but it is also clear that he worked hard and had a really good attitude.

Do these things go together?

What attitude should you have in everything you do?



Potiphar recognised Joseph's potential and began to trust him. The NIV describes him as the captain of the guard. This would mean he was responsible for Pharaoh's personal safety. The NIV is probably right, although the Hebrew is not entirely clear. If this is his role then it has a bearing on the story. It means that the prison Joseph is about to end up in, is probably under his control and he is responsible for uncovering things like attempts on Pharaoh's life Genesis 40:3.

He is wealthy, powerful and busy. He was a man who knew talent when he saw it and was not afraid to delegate.



What areas did Potiphar entrust to Joseph?

What do you make of his quick promotion?

How does verse 6 describe Joseph?

We later discover he is also articulate.

Our ideas of slavery are dominated by the African slavery of the last century. Slavery took many forms in the Ancient world at different times and places. But in some cases, slaves in the ancient world could have a much higher degree of freedom and could rise to be quite influential, even wealth.



Read Genesis 39:6b-20

Once again it seems just as Joseph can begin to see the fulfilment of God's promise the bottom falls out of his world.

What happens?



Why does Joseph attract Potiphar's wife's eye?

Joseph finds favour with Potiphar and his wife!



What is Joseph's argument as to why he should not sleep with her?

What would have happened if he had given in?

Do you ever think of the end result of your actions?



What did Joseph do wrong?

Did Joseph's innocence protect him?

How long did this go on for? v10

What is easier to resist one-off temptations or ongoing temptations?

What advice would you give to Joseph?

What enabled Joseph to withstand the temptation of his boss's wife?

Joseph not only refuse Potiphar's wife's advances he also avoided her, v10.

Why do you think that was?

Any lessons we can learn from this?