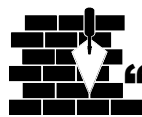


Joseph - "Avoiding The Train Wreck Of Moral Failure"



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Overall)** It is at least likely that the author has left out a lot of details surrounding this story. It is probable that Potiphar’s wife was older than Joseph *and* younger than her husband. That would have been typical for the ancient near east. If so, this would have added to the already “awkward” situation Joseph found himself in. The difference in age would have created a commensurate difference in “rank,” with her being an “older woman” *and* the wife of his superior. It might also have explained *her* attraction to Joseph as a younger and better-looking and better-built man than her husband.

Also, even though there is no mention of it, it is reasonable to assume that she “altered” her wardrobe either progressively, or at least near the end, to try to catch Joseph’s gaze.

2. **(Q3-vv 7-9)** Joseph’s defense at this point is totally rational. He tries to *reason* with her on the grounds of trust and integrity, social stigma, and finally religious sensibilities. All to no avail. Joseph argues with her that her request would violate every relationship he has on earth and in heaven! It appears that his appeal is to her own common sense. She is not interested in any of his arguments.
3. **(Q3-v12)** Moses’ inclusion of the phrase, “*But one day...*” is a literary device intended to alert the reader (i.e. us) that this day was very different from every other day. It appears that she had “given the servants the day off,” and Joseph strategy for maintaining purity—never allowing himself to be alone with her—was now totally non-functional!
4. **(Q5)** Joseph seemed to have some sort of “strategy” in place. After his initial attempts to reason with her on the basis of trust and integrity had failed, and when she showed no fear of God or her own gods, it seems that Joseph determined to create a world in which her choices were limited. A world in which it would be difficult for her to “succeed” with her seduction. The phrase, “*But one day...*” is a clear marker that the “rules” had been changed. She successfully dismantled all the “fences” Joseph had so carefully built to keep them apart.
5. **(Q6-Titus 1:15)** These two mens’ situations share many similarities, but also demonstrate significant differences:
 - a. **SIMILARITIES:**
 - (1) both involve a man and a woman who do *not* belong together
 - (2) both are sexual encounters
 - (3) both involve one party who is an aggressor and the other who is a “victim”
 - (4) both involve a willing and an unwilling party
 - (5) both involve a disregard for the will of God by one party
 - (6) both occur in private
 - b. **DIFFERENCES:**
 - (1) Joseph was proactive; he seemed to have a “plan”
 - (2) David was reactive; he followed instinct
 - (3) Joseph ran *from* the temptation
 - (4) David brought the temptation into his home.

- (5) Joseph's temptation was continuous and intense; it was "on the job"
 - (6) David's temptation was singular and spontaneous
 - (7) Joseph had learned by "practice," how to say "no" to both his own feelings and her advances.
 - (8) David didn't say "no" to himself soon enough.
 - (9) Joseph was answerable to Potiphar *and* Yahweh
 - (10) David was "untouchable" in terms of retribution, except from Yahweh
6. **(Q9-Matt)** This verse presents a very powerful principle: adultery occurs before sex. The decision to allow the *thought* of adultery to be "at home" is adultery. Second, Jesus' startling statement about dismemberment of one's eye or hand stands in stark contrast to the weak level of convictions that characterize the American Christian sexual ethic.
 7. **(Q10)** The larger issue here is "ownership" of our bodies. For *all* believers, the "deed" to our bodies has been transferred to Yahweh. He paid the purchase price. But, Paul teaches that for *married* believers, this principle of "ownership" goes a step further—*away* from personal ownership. Paul teaches that one spouse has claim to the other spouse's body. There is, as it were, a *double* barrier to overcome in the case of adultery. In the case of premarital and extramarital sexual sin, the offense is the same: giving to someone who has no right to it, something I have no right to give away. I do not "own" it!
 8. **(Q11)** The source of sexual temptation (at least the *majority* of it), is always *visual*. The "eye gate" is the point of entry as it has been since the beginning ("*Eve saw...*" in Gen 3:6). The metaphors in scripture of dismemberment and war are *not* the language of "learning to deal with..." sin. The Bible paints a picture of life-long warfare, not a learning curve like tennis or word processing.



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q3-10a)** Don't lose sight of the fact that this is all happening "on the job," daily! Joseph's not at the laundromat or a sports bar! This is something Joseph *had* to anticipate every day. Sometimes we give into temptation out of fatigue of fighting it. This *had* to be wearing him down.
2. **(Q4)** Don't forget that Joseph's entire knowledge of Yahweh was limited to the oral history passed on to him by his grandfather Isaac, and his father Jacob. There was no well-developed theology of Yahweh or sexual conduct for that matter. Joseph had no scriptures to ponder and meditate on. He didn't have any direct appearances from God either, like both his ancestors. All this combines to make his life and decisions all the more amazing. We have scripture *and* the indwelling Holy Spirit. He had neither.
3. **(Q6)** It would be easy to assume that Joseph was "bullet proof" in regard to this scenario. That this story is about a godly young man looking sexual opportunity in the eye and saying, "*No thanks, I'm not interested.*" We might think he left the house that day out of irritation, or not wanting to "tarnish" his testimony. It is more likely that Joseph fled because this was a *legitimate* temptation, and he *knew* he might fall. Joseph left because of *himself*, not because of her! Immaturity does not mistrust itself. Maturity always has a healthy mistrust of oneself.
4. **(Q9-Matt)** Sexual temptation is *not* something we learn to "manage," like our rest or weight. It's something we are told to "run from." The Greek word translated "flee" in Paul's command regarding sexual sin (pornea) in 1 Cor 6:18, means to run because you are being *chased*, not because there's a danger to get away from. Sexual temptation is *pursuing* us, not waiting ahead for us.



“Going Deeper”

1. **(Q9-Matt)** “How far would you go to be free of a sexual temptation? Change jobs? Change churches? Change cities?”
2. **(Q9-Matt)** “Do you think of sin as something you have to get a grip on, like rest or your weight, or something more serious and dangerous? Does your life support this conviction?”
3. **(Q9-1 Cor)** “Have you ever thought of your body as something that had a ‘mind’ of its own and needed to be disciplined?”
4. **(Q9-1 Tim)** “Do you think of incest as a more serious sin than adultery? If so, do you think it would make difference if you thought of illicit sex between believers as incest?”
5. **(Q12-13) *These two questions are vital!*** Take time and allow group members to share their answers. Perhaps, to conserve time, only have them share the ones they marked with a “6” or less for question 12, and one of the two items they marked for question 13.