

Topic	Joseph and Temptation
Reference	Genesis 39
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Speaker	Samuel Khew

Well, good morning church. Praise God that we can still meet together in one spirit. Wherever it is you are that you are watching this, thanks to technology and the hardworking AV team here at FBC, we can still listen together, worship together, pray together as one body of Christ. You all know my wife Salome, she is very much into carpentry and one of the latest projects that she did was to make this pallet wall. Pallet wood is basically those boards that you find it at the back of supermarkets. It's job is basically to keep food off the floor, right? So there's two blocks of wood, you would stack onions or whatever kind of food you want on it and it just makes it easier for forklifts to be able to pick it up and transport it to wherever it needs to go. And once they're done with it, they pretty much just throw it away because the wood is very, it's almost useless, right? It's not very symmetrical, so you can't make nice tables or chairs out of them. Some of them are dented they're scratched. If they've been left out in the rain they're moldy.

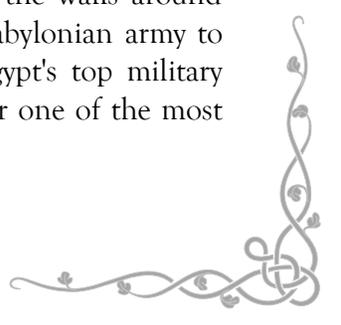
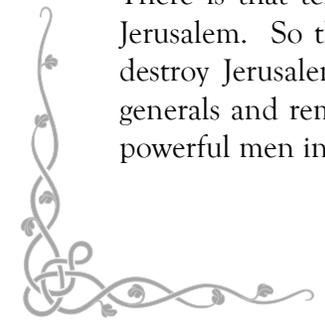
So we got our hands on, on a couple of cheap pieces of pallets, and we took it to our house and we had to dismantle it. So there was hammering involved and then once we dismantled the pieces, we had to sand it with the saw it to the right size and then varnish it and put it up on a wall. And now it's, it's really quite beautiful. It's like a piece of nature on the wall and gives really nice contrast against the white wall background that we have, and today we're going to see how God does the same thing in our lives. He takes things that are broken, he fixes them and molds into something that is beautiful.

The story of Joseph as a familiar to all of you, I'm sure. He's one of the 12 sons of Jacob, one of only two sons of Rachel, who was his favorite wife. And as a youth, he was arrogant. He had a loose tongue. He didn't really think about what he said or did, which made him very unpopular among his brothers who decided one day to take his robe, to sell him as a slave, to dip his robe in goats blood and to present it to their father Jacob, and say a ferocious animal has ripped Joseph apart. And that's where we pick up the story today in chapter 39, where Joseph arrives in Egypt and he's bought as a slave by a man named Potiphar.

In verse one, we read that Potiphar is one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. Now, when we read this in English, right? The captain of the guard. We tend to think of Potiphar as sort of the head of the bodyguards. Right. But it's lightly not that position. It is likely actually a military role and a highly ranked one at that. Right. If we look at another passage in 2-Kings, 25:10, it says this,

The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the Imperial guard.

There is that term again? Right? The commander of the Imperial guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. So this term, the same term is used to describe the general that led the Babylonian army to destroy Jerusalem and to take her inhabitants captive. Potiphar was likely one of Egypt's top military generals and remember that Egypt is the superpower at the time, which makes Potiphar one of the most powerful men in all the world.



And over the years, Joseph becomes his right-hand man. Potiphar notices something different about this Joseph boy, right? Let's read verse three.

When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household and he entrusted to his care everything he owned from the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned. The Lord bless the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had both in the house and in the field.

Something about the way Joseph carried himself, something about the way he performed his duties, the way he spoke to his peers and his superiors, the way he treated other people, the pace in which he learned the Egyptian language, the pace in which he learned new skills. He seemed to have a level of competence that was far beyond anyone else in the household. He seemed to have a discernment far beyond his years.

Now, of course, it doesn't say any of this. I'm just conjecturing, but those of you who are employers, right? Isn't are these the characteristics that you will look for in your employees, right? Integrity, diligence, compassion, kindness, politeness, being well-spoken, being honest. Here's a quick question. How does our work ethic reflect on Christ? What do people think about us from the way that we work, from the way that we treat others, from the way that we speak to others? That's just food for thought. That's a side note. You can add that one for free, but let's move on.

We read that Joseph was not just Potiphar's personal assistant, he was put in charge of everything Potiphar owned from the household to the field. See in verse four

The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.

Joseph was put in charge, not only of Potiphar's living quarters but also his side business. Right. And just to give us some perspective of what Joseph was running here, do you remember back in Genesis 14 when Abraham's nephew Lot gets kidnapped, what does Abraham do? He takes 318 trained servants born in his household and he goes after Lot and he rescues him. Now, this is not counting the women, the children or the elderly. So, if I were to ballpark it surely Abraham would have had, I don't know, 600 servants at least. Right. And Abraham was just a wealthy immigrant living in the land of Canaan. Potiphar is the second most powerful man in the world. Surely, he had at least that many servants, if not more.

Joseph was in charge of feeding them, clothing them, caring for them, working out their schedules, their tasks, and Joseph did such a good job in everything that he was tasked with that he was given more and more and more responsibility until there was nothing left to give. Everything went under Joseph's purview. In today's terms, Joseph was the head of Potiphar's advisory board. He was his HR manager, his financier, his investment broker, his real estate agent. He was the COO of Potiphar Industries with 600 employees under him, because the Lord was with him and gave him success.

Now things start to go downhill. We read in verse six.

So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care with Joseph in charge he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now, Joseph was well-built and handsome and after a while, his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said “come to bed with me.”

Joseph was sold as a slave at 17 years old and he became Prime Minister of Egypt at 30. So, at this point, he must be early twenties, mid twenties, right and he has risen in the ranks. And he's caught the attention of this loose woman who is Potiphar's wife. It would have been all too easy. He could have arranged the schedules of the servants so that he could be alone with her every day. Often it takes a bit of work, a bit of coaxing, a few flirtatious encounters, a few expensive gifts, a lot of charm to lure someone into having an affair, right. But not so in this case, Potiphar's wife was willing and ready at a moment's notice.

It would be all too sweet. The act itself we understand has a pull factor all on its own, but as humans, as sinners we're envious by nature. Have you seen that experiment that they showed on Ted where they had two monkeys and they called it the fairness experiment. So the monkeys are trained to do a task and whenever they do the task they get a slice of cucumber as a reward. And so the first monkey does the task, gets a cucumber. Very happy with it. Eats it. Second monkey does the same task but receives a grape. Oh, first monkey does the task again, receives a cucumber. You know what he does, he throws it back at the scientist. Right and the second monkey does the same task gets a grape. First monkey does the task again, gets a cucumber. He throws it back at the scientist, starts rattling the cage, banging the floor and trying and trying to reach for the grapes. Right and oftentimes we're exactly like those monkeys. The only reason we want certain things is because someone else has them. Sometimes the thing that we want most is the thing that we cannot have. We are envious by nature.

It would also have been all too sweet because she was a powerful woman, perhaps. She could have got him a salary or added benefits. I don't know whether he was earning a salary or not. Perhaps she could have given him his freedom in exchange for his “services”. Your network is your net worth. And some of us listening now spend a lot of time on networking, rubbing shoulders with people that we want to collaborate with, work with, pitch to, invest in. Right. What better way for Joseph to advance his prospects than to be rubbing shoulders quite literally with the wife of the second most powerful man on earth.

On the flip side, if he did not sleep with her, she could have turned on him. She could have made his life miserable, spread a bad report about him, which is what we find out she does right at the end of the story. She could have made him the lowest of the slaves, the one who cleans the latrines or washes down the animals. I don't know. She could have made his life miserable. So, you see here, there is a lot more at stake than what we realize at first glance. Joseph has everything to gain, but he also has everything to lose. And so how does he overcome? Well, let's find out. Verse eight,

but he refused with me in charge he told her, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house. Everything he owns, he is entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you're his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God? And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

How does he overcome. Well, the first thing is he does not sugar coat sin. Oftentimes what we do with our sin is we stop calling it sin. We start to make excuses. It's only this once. I won't do it again. Everyone else is doing it. Who am I hurting? Right. I can't help it, it's my weakness. I was sold as a slave, I've been working so hard for years, I deserve some downtime.

I can just imagine Satan, you know, sort of sitting on Joseph's shoulder, whispering into his ear into the night. "Joseph, Joseph, self-indulgence, it is not self-indulgence you know what this is Joseph self-promotion. That's what it is. You can rise in the ranks. You could be free." Not working. Okay. Let's try something else. "Joseph, Joseph, you know what she's going to do if you don't sleep with her. So it's really self-defense right. Protect yourself. Self-defense that's what it is." Hmm. Not working. Okay. "Joseph, Joseph, stand up straight chest out. Come on, be a man. Fulfill your potential. This is self-actualization. That's what it is. Go get her tiger." Hmm, not working. Let's see, let's see. "Joseph, Joseph. You're good. You're a good Christian man aren't you, right? You believe in God. Excellent. Excellent. Do to others, as you would have them do to you. Come on. You, you seen Potiphar, he is an old man, right? His wife, she has needs, you know what this would be. You know what this would be Joseph. Self-sacrifice that's right. That's what it would be. Go on, go in there."

I can just imagine Satan sitting on his shoulder saying all these things, and even without Satan, we have all of the excuses that we come up with absurd as they are bouncing around in our heads. Very few of us are willing to call sin out for what it is. To call a spade, a spade to call the things that we attempted towards wickedness before a Holy God. Look at how he responds in verse nine.

How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God,

He refuses to sugarcoat it. He calls it out for what it is, sin before a Holy God. And notice again, notice what he says. He says sin against who God. Joseph understood that it would have been against Potiphar, it would have been a sin against Potiphar's wife. Yes. He understood that. But most of all, it would have been a sin against all mighty God. Joseph saw sin as not just breaking some moral code on the horizontal plane. No, he saw it as idolatry on the vertical plane, putting something above God that in essence that is what's sin is. Any sin that we are tempted towards, right, is idolatry against God. Putting something above God and so what that's what makes sin so vile, so horrid, so horrendous, so wrong is that it is an offense before a Holy God.

It is not just on the horizontal plane. If it was then sure if Potiphar's wife really wanted it, if Potiphar would never find it out then yeah it would not be so bad if it was just on the horizontal plane, but it is not. Joseph had the right view of sin on the vertical plane. He saw it as taking a bucket of paint and pouring it on the white robes of God.

When King David committed adultery, he sinned against Bathsheba. He sinned against his loyal friend Uriah and had him murdered. He sinned against the whole nation of Israel. He abused his power and position, but when he pens that famous Psalm of repentance, Psalm 51. He says, Oh God, against you. You only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

You see, David had the same understanding that Joseph did many years before that sin is always first and foremost a sin and offense against a Holy God. So let's recap. How did Joseph overcome?

1. He did not sugar coat sin.
2. He understood the holiness of God.
3. He did not play with fire.

Now I think that we would all agree that sleeping with Potiphar's wife would have been wrong. I think we would all agree with that, but answer me this honestly in your heart. What if Joseph just held her hand? Just picked her on the cheek from time to time, just flirted with her a little bit, would that be so wrong? If there is a forest fire coming for us, we ought to run. We ought to run as fast as we possibly can away from it. But many of us try to go as close to the fire as we can. You'll lo right, what is life with a little excitement.

FBC is a church of what close to a thousand attendees every week and with a crowd this size, I imagine and I am quite certain that there are many of us who are playing with fire. Some of you are privately meeting people that you have no business meeting with, going places you have no business in going, silently chatting with people you have no business chatting with. In a crowd this size, I know for a fact that there are many of you who are dabbling in and even addicted to pornography, right? Every study that I've read, every poll that is out there says that pornography is a pandemic that has ravaged the globe and even the global church that's right. The church has not escaped this.

These are some statistics from studies that I gathered from online :64% of Christian men admit to viewing porn monthly, 37% of Christian men and interviewing porn weekly, 55% of married Christian men admit to viewing porn monthly, 25% of Christian men erase internet browsing history to conceal porn use, 17% of Christian men install a computer or phone app to enhance viewing porn, and it is not just limited to men, it's women as well. We would be naive to think that this is just a man's problem. 60% of Christian women admit to having significant struggles with lust, 40% of Christian women admit to be involved in sexual sin in the past year, 20% of Christian women struggled with looking at pornography on an ongoing basis.

Not even the clergy is exempt 1 in 5 youth pastors and 1 in 7 youth pastors use porn on a regular basis and are currently struggling. Now these next statistics boggle my mind. 68% of divorce cases involve one party meeting a new lover over the internet, 56% of divorce cases involve one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.

Pornography is more widespread and deadly than anything else that we've ever witnessed. It is a parasite that is eating the church alive. It is cutting her legs out from under her. It is staining the sacred name that she stands for, and it is ruining the effectiveness of her ministry. If you are dabbling in pornography, I urge you, I plead with you to reconsider. If you're addicted to pornography, I would plead with you to get the help that you need. Right here in FBC there are three elders, there are four pastors, there's even a counselling team. That's more than a lot of churches can say. We are blessed to have a counseling team here at FBC. So, you have the resources there. They are wanting to hear from you. They want to help you. They want to minister to you.

The Bible often tells us to resist the devil, to stand firm, to be courageous, to put on the armor of God. Right. But when it comes to sexual temptation, do you know what the Bible says? It says run. Run. It says flee. 2-Timothy chapter two, verse 22.

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Joseph understood this. He knew better than to play with fire. Look at verse 10,

He refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

He did not even want to get close. He never wanted to find himself alone with Potiphar's wife. It was too dangerous. Verse 12.

But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out the house.

Most of us would lure to there a little while, not Joseph, as soon as he finds himself in this position and she has got him by the cloak, he says forget the cloak. And he runs for his life. Don't allow yourself to be in a situation where you can be compromised. How did Joseph overcome? He did not sugarcoat sin. He understood the holiness of God and he dare not play with fire. Verse 13.

When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house. She called her household servants. Look, she said to them, this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us. He came here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left this cloak beside me and ran out of the house.

Joseph's worst nightmare has now come true. Potiphar's wife is framing him, framing a slave for attempting to rape an owner. That's a serious, serious allegation. It costs Joseph his career, his name, his prospects, his reputation, his position, what little freedom he had, his comfortable lifestyle, his wealth being, but you know Joseph left with one thing intact, his purity. He left with one thing intact, his purity, his integrity. Joseph had no price. All that the church today, both the global church and us here at FBC would hold ourselves to that same standard. He considered his purity of greater value than everything he had. We treat our purity like chump change. Pornography use in the church is just as prevalent as outside the church.

More and more churches are now becoming open to their members living LGBTQ lifestyles. The rates of divorce without proper precedence are higher than they've ever been in the church. Fornication, affairs, cohabitation, adultery are rampant. When is this sin going to stop? If you don't think that sexual immorality has serious consequences, has serious repercussions, if you don't think that it will cost you your life then you are a fool and you know nothing of God. Look at the word of God, Proverbs 5 verses 3 to 5

For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey. Her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end, she is bitter as gourd, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death. Her steps lead straight to the grave.

Look at the imagery that the Bible gives us, death, grave. 1 Thessalonians 4 verses 3-5.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified, that you should avoid sexual immorality, that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is Holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans who do not know God.

Did you get that last bit? Not in passionate lust like the pagans who do not know God, you know what that means? That means your sexual purity is the yardstick on which to judge whether you know God or not. Hebrews 13:4

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure for God will judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral.

We don't hear this being taught in churches very often do we? A lot of global church leaders shy away from saying this? And I'll be honest with you. There's a little bit of trepidation in my heart to speak on this. Right, but it's the word of God. It's true. As a preacher, I have the same responsibility as all the other preachers to preach the word of God and to teach the whole counsel of God. I can't skip over these things just because they're uncomfortable. 1 Corinthians 6 verses 9-10.

Do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters, nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God,

Jude verse 7

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns give themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who will suffer punishment of eternal fire.

I don't know how much clearer the Bible can be. It is clear, sexual immorality will cost you your life. And if you do not repent, it will cost you your salvation. Trust me, trust me when I say that of all people I know this, I understand this. You want to know how I know. This is true, is because I myself struggle with pornography for many years. It was an addiction that I couldn't seem to shake. I would come clean. I would apologize, but sure enough just give it some time. A few days, a few weeks, a few months, I would be back to square one.

I used to write handwritten letters to God. So when I hit the bottom and I thought to myself, enough is enough. I would write out sort of like a contract, right? Never again, God. And I would sign it. I would, I would put a date on it. I'll fold it up and put it away, but sure enough given enough time, I would find myself back in the same place. And so for years, for years I was hooked on pornography and then I got married and all my problems went away. Said, no married person ever right. Youth who are listening to this, don't think that just when you get married, all these issues will go away. No. In fact, I would go as far as to say it becomes exponential. It becomes worse, right? This time now, before my pornography use was just hurting myself. Now it was hurting my wife as well. Right? Every time I clicked on those sites, I

committed adultery in my heart and I broke my marriage vows every single time I clicked on those sites. I Samuel take you Salome to be my wedded wife and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses my life to you in all love and honor in our duty and service and faith and tenderness to live with you, to cherish you according to the ordinance of God in the Holy bond of marriage, to be your loving and faithful husband in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health till death do us part.

Those were my vows and sure your vows are somewhat similar, right? But every time I clicked on those sites, you know:

- Love and honor, broken.
- Duty and service, broken,
- In all faith and tenderness, broken,
- To cherish you, broken,
- To be your loving and faithful husband broken.

Now if the statistics are true, if they're accurate, there are plenty of men and women who are currently right now breaking their marriage vows on a regular basis. Plenty of people who are seeking out, clicking on erasing, paying for content that is absolutely vile in the eyes of God and if that's you please listen to my voice. Please hear me up because I'm speaking from experience, I've been there. I've been to the bottom of the pit. It will cost you everything. It will cost you your life and you will lose everything that you hold dear.

I can tell you that when it says in Proverbs 3, in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword, her feet go down to death, her steps lead straight to the grave. I can tell you that it is true. There was nothing sweet about that time. It was all bitter. Nothing minor about it. It cut deep and it took years to heal. Nothing life-giving about it. It was all dead. Well, let me tell you something else.

God demonstrated his love by reaching down into the muck, into the dirt to find me, to take hold of me. It was as though he dropped something as precious as an engagement ring into a toilet bowl and he looked down and he saw how disgusting it was. He saw how horrendous it was but he didn't care. He rolled up his sleeves. He put his hand down, he found me, he picked me up, he plucked me out and he washed me clean. Through the accountability of three of my close guy friends, through over a year of counseling and through difficult and heart wrenching confessions he freed me and he healed my marriage.

God gave Salome the strength to persevere, to forgive and forgive and forgive, sometimes through tears she would forgive me, but by God's grace in her heart she chose to see the man that I could be, not the man that I was. She chose to see the things that I could do. None of the things that I had done. I can stand before you here today because of the sweet, sweet grace of God and the persevering love of my wife. And that's exactly the reason why Jesus died on the cross isn't it. It is so that we can be reconciled back to the father, so that we can be healed so that we can be free from the guilt and the shame of our past sin, the brokenness of our past. So we could have the power to live in purity, so that we can be turned from pallet wood into a pallet wall.

It is through the gospel that people like you and I broken, shattered, dented, scratched, rough, unsymmetrical can be made into something beautiful, something elegant, something worthy of putting on display. Will there need to be some sawing . Yes. they will. Well, there need to be some sanding. Yes. Some hammering. Yes, there will. Sanctification and discipline is never ever fun at the time. It is always painful. It is always difficult. But in the end, the result is that you can be a piece of wood that holds up other pieces of wood that holds up other pieces of wood that form the beautiful canvas that is a pallet wall.

No matter how dark your past is, no matter how far you have strayed, God is willing to forgive you. God is able to fix you. If he can fix me, if he can rescue me surely He can fix you. There is nothing that you have done that he cannot forgive, that he cannot fix. The power of the cross is stronger than anything you have ever done. I guarantee you that because it's in the word of God, right? I can stand before you here today and share my shameful past. Because as far as the East is from the West so far, has he removed my transgressions from me? Because therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because his grace is sufficient for me and his power made manifest in my weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more in my weakness because when I'm weak then I'm strong. Because I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither past nor present, neither angels nor demons nor any powers nor anything else in all creation can separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, my Lord.

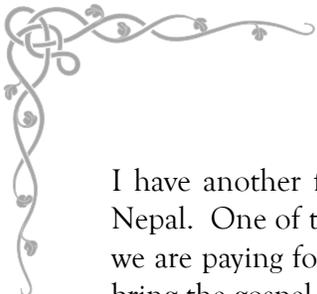
I purposely wore a white shirt today to signify to you the purity that I have now because of the cross. I am forgiven. God does not see me as Sam the unfaithful, Sam the sinner. He sees me as Sam righteous, Holy blameless. And the story of Joseph that we read today in chapter 39 is a picture of exactly that. Joseph was righteous. He was blameless. He did nothing wrong. He committed no crime. Potiphar's wife on the other hand was unfaithful. She was loose, out of control promiscuous and unfortunately that is an illustration of you and I and just as Joseph paid the price for a crime he did not commit, Jesus paid the price for crimes he did not commit. He paid the price for yours and my sin.

Find your way to the foot of the cross, because it is only there that you can find the forgiveness and the freedom that you seek. Other Christians can help to bring you there. There can be a crutch to help you, but they are powerless to give you any lasting change. Only the gospel can do that, repent and find your way to the foot of the cross.

The church, both our church and the global church needs men and women like Joseph. Men and women who will not exchange their purity for anything, who have no price that is the bedrock on which the church must be built. That is the bedrock on which families must be built, ministries must be built. If not, it will all crumble.

I have a classmate who is a missionary in Kenya, so him, his wife and his three kids what they do is, the work that they do is they organize evangelistic rallies for huge crowds of Kenyans. They also discipleship in the bush where they would go out and seek people to evangelize and to disciple.

I have another friend who is a missionary in Germany and the work that he does is to disciple people to bring kingdom culture to their workplace or to their universities.



I have another friend who works in Nepal along with her parents, training missionary leaders there in Nepal. One of the guys in my discipleship group is going to Japan in a couple of weeks' time for work and we are paying for him because he is looking for mission agencies that he can work with to disciple and to bring the gospel to the Japanese people and to serve them.

We just heard today that there are Christians being persecuted, killed, tortured, imprisoned all over the world today. You get my point. You hear what I am trying to say. There is work to be done. There is kingdom work to do. God has specific things for you to do. God has design and engineered your life, your upbringing, your education, who your parents are, who your siblings are, who your friends are. He has engineered all of that to mold you to do specific tasks to fulfil his plan of bringing the gospel to every tribe, every tongue and every nation but he can only commission pure vessels. Did you get that? He can only commission pure vessels. Think about this. because of Joseph's integrity, he was dragged of to jail, which led to him meeting the cupbearer, which led to him interpreting the cupbearer's dreams, which led to him meeting Pharaoh and interpreting Pharaoh's dreams which led to him becoming the prime minister of Egypt which led to him saving thousands if not millions of people from the famine including his own family which led to the Jewish line being preserved which led to Jesus being able to come down to die on the cross for all our sins.

Did you get that? Without knowing it Joseph's decisions to be pure played a role in you and I being saved. Joseph's decisions to be pure led to our salvation. Your purity, your integrity, however much it is costing you today has implications for generations to come but on the flip side so does our impurity. Every single time we compromise our integrity, it could be that time that knocks over the domino for generations and generations of needless suffering. Let us be man, let us be woman who make that decision every single day, every single moment of our lives to be pure, not just for the sake of our families but for the sake of Christ, for the sake of His church, for the sake of His mission for generations to come.