

Explore the Bible: May 5

Accused • Genesis 39:7-21

By Laura Lee Leathers



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Judah promises Tamar that she will marry when his youngest son, Shela, is older. However, this promise did not materialize. Tamar took matters into her own hands and created a plan to get Judah to sleep with her. The plan worked.

Three months later, when Judah learned Tamar was pregnant, he issued an order for her to be burned to death. However, when Tamar produced the items Judah had left behind, he realized he was the father. He admitted that he was wrong for not giving Shela to her. Tamar gave birth to Perez and Zerah, twin sons.

In chapter 39, we learn that Joseph, purchased from the Ishmaelites, is now a slave in the house of Potiphar. "The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man" (v. 2). He "found favor in his master's sight and became his personal attendant" (v. 3). His job description was to oversee all that Potiphar owned. And because the Lord was with Joseph, Potiphar's household was blessed.

Notice verse six, Potiphar left everything under Joseph's authority. He did nothing except think about the food he was eating. At the end of this verse, we learn that "Joseph was well-built and handsome."

As you study the lesson, remember, "Sometimes believers pay a high price for doing the right thing. Yet, God is not oblivious to the person who chooses the way of integrity, even when circumstances look like God is unaware or uncaring" (Lifeway).

Tempted (Gen. 39:7-10) – Potiphar's no-named wife has eyes for Joseph. The phrase, "After some time," doesn't give us a time frame regarding her desire. In her next step, she acts by asking Joseph to "sleep with me" (stated again in 10, 12, and 14).

Joseph refuses! He reminds her that her husband has placed everything under his authority. He trusts Joseph. Furthermore, as Potiphar's attendant, no one was greater than Joseph in his

household.

He reminds her that she is married and then states, "How could I do this immense evil, and how could I sin against God?" It didn't register with her, and she didn't care.

Joseph does the right thing. He takes a stand against betraying Potiphar. The greater sin is against God. Yet, Potiphar's wife continues. She is one persistent and powerful woman.

Trapped (Gen. 39:11-16) – Making the right choice is not easy and can cost an individual everything. Joseph encountered this, and he chose to be faithful to God.

All the household servants were absent on the day Potiphar's wife made advances towards Joseph – seductress to the aggressor. The word for the garment in Hebrew is *begeg*, general clothing, perhaps a cloak.

Notice the three things that Joseph did: he left, he escaped, and he ran. He did what 2 Timothy 2:22 tells us to do – flee. Taking the garment, she runs outside, calls her household servants, and tells them a lie. She also used the Egyptians' intense dislike of the Hebrews to draw sympathy for her.

And what does she do with the garment? She keeps it until her husband returns, the second incident of Joseph's cloak used to fabricate a story (see Genesis 37).

Trustworthy (Gen. 39:17-21) – Now it is time to share with Potiphar. His wife tells the same story, but this time, she blames him for "The Hebrew slave you brought" and for making a fool of her.

With all that Potiphar had been told, his reaction to the situation was to be expected. The slave Joseph's side of the story didn't matter. He was thrown into prison, his second imprisonment (thrown into the pit, 37:24).

Joseph did the right thing before God and for Potiphar. Yet, he lost his freedom and his prestige in Potiphar's house.

But God, who is sovereign, had a greater plan. Read verse 21 slowly and note three things: "The LORD was with Joseph, extended kindness to him, and granted him favor with the warden."

Notice that our focal verses use God's covenant name, YHWH, eight times. "The Yahweh emphasizes God's eternality and unchangeableness; He is the same in the past, present, and future. In the midst of the hills and valleys of Joseph's experiences (*and ours*), God remained the constant in his life" (Lifeway).

Leathers is a member of First Church, Lexington.