



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Genesis (Part 2)

Lesson 8: Genesis 39:1-40:23

“Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face continually” (Ps. 105:4). I am so proud of all of you ladies out there who have been studying this great book with me and striving to seek God daily. I hope you have had a close walk with Him this past week and that you have allowed Him to communicate with you every day through His word. As we begin this week’s lesson, we are entering once again into the life of Joseph. The remainder of the book of Genesis will cover the time frame of Joseph’s life. It is time to pray and find out what we can learn from Joseph and some of his trials.

Read Genesis Chapter 39

Potiphar is the blessed man who decides to buy Joseph from the Ishmaelites. His name means “belonging to Ra” or “belonging to the sun”. Ra was an Egyptian sun god. The text also tells us that Potiphar was an “Egyptian officer of Pharaoh”. The Hebrew word for “officer” here is *CARIVC* and is most often translated “eunuch”. There is a possibility that Potiphar was a eunuch despite having a wife. It was not uncommon for Eastern kings to castrate their officials and not unheard of for them to have wives. If he was a eunuch, it could make his wife’s sexual urges toward Joseph more pitiable, but certainly not justifiable. We are also told that Potiphar was the “captain of the bodyguard”, which most likely meant he was the head executioner. The man in this position was sometimes castrated so that he would not have trouble carrying out his duties

upon any female subjects. Potiphar, eunuch or not, made a wise decision that day to add Joseph to his household.

The next several verses of chapter 39 explain in detail about all the success and blessings that were not only given to Joseph, but to Potiphar as well. What a fantastic lesson for us! I am not suggesting that God always chooses to give us success in the physical world, but I am confident that He blesses us and those around us when we keep Him near. Interestingly, verse 3 says that Potiphar “saw that the Lord was with [Joseph] and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand”. Remember Potiphar is an Egyptian. How did he know it was the Lord who was blessing Joseph? I suppose Potiphar could have heard of the Lord before he met Joseph, but it seems likely that faithful Joseph spoke of his God. He had become Potiphar’s personal servant, so they undoubtedly spent some time together. This would have afforded Joseph the opportunity to tell Potiphar what great things God had done. What another great lesson for us! Speak of your Lord. Speak of Him often. Give the Lord verbal credit for your successes and blessings. This is something I have been trying to practice more in my life and I have found it has tremendous benefits. It not only glorifies God to others, but it keeps my mind and heart more focused on Him throughout my day. I want to encourage you to grow in this area whether you already do it or not. I challenge you to excel still more!



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Another great thing about Joseph is that he did not seem to focus on how he had been mistreated. Instead of dwelling on what he had lost, he dwelled on what he had gained from God. Instead of living in the past, he seemed to look to the future. Instead of fighting his circumstances, he embraced them and made himself and those around him better. Instead of searching for revenge, he waited on the Lord. Oh, to be like that!

When you are succeeding at life like Joseph was, there always seems to come about a snag. I guess when God calls a man “handsome in form and appearance”, as he did about Joseph, he should probably expect some ladies to act a little crazy about him. Joseph is very commendable in this situation with Potiphar’s wife. She offers herself to a young man in the prime of his sexual urges and he refuses. That alone takes character and conviction. He further explains to her that in doing so he would be taking the one and only thing that his master has kept from him. He further asks her how he could commit such a “great evil and sin against God”. A lesser person would have taken her up on that offer. A person who focused on the one thing being withheld, instead of on all they have. Gratitude can keep us from sin. I also believe that if we considered our sins personally against God as Joseph did, we might not commit them so freely.

As you know, we women can be quite persistent, and Potiphar’s wife was no exception. Verse 10 makes it clear that she was relentless “day after day”, but he was steadfast in avoiding her advances. You must admire Joseph. He obviously strove to walk closely with the Lord, or he certainly could not have born up under such

pressure. 1 Corinthians 6:13 says “flee sexual immorality” and Joseph literally embodies this verse when Potiphar’s wife attacks him. In the process he leaves his outer garment next to her, which provides her with an evil plot. She is a prime example of the phrase “hell hath no fury like a woman scorned”. She makes up an elaborate and completely fabricated story about Joseph trying to rape her which, as expected, leaves her husband furious. Potiphar could certainly have had Joseph executed, but instead he imprisons him. In fact, he imprisons him in the place where the king’s prisoners were confined, so it may have been a slight upgrade from the common prison.

Joseph is once again at the bottom by society’s standards, but that’s not a problem because the Lord is still with him and “extended kindness to him”. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit, as it is an attribute of God’s that we need to emulate. It is intriguing to me how God shows Joseph kindness. He does it by giving him “favor in the sight of the chief jailer”. I don’t know about you, but I’m not sure I have ever credited God when someone has liked me. This was a special circumstance and I do not believe that God affects His will on everyone’s feelings toward one another, but this text makes it clear that He can if He is so inclined to. What a powerful God we serve! Joseph is in prison, but “the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper”. Whatever your circumstance, He is still there.



Finer Grounds Bible Study

How would your life change if you were as resolute to avoid sin as Joseph was?

What do you think helped Joseph to focus on what he had instead of what he had lost?

What is something you have desired to obtain and, in the process, has robbed you of the joy of what you have?

Can you think of another Biblical character who claimed their sin was against God?

Why do you think Joseph does not seek to right the wrongs that have been done to him?

Why do you think Potiphar had Joseph imprisoned and not executed?

Think of some ways that you could practice kindness this week and get to it!

Read Genesis Chapter 40

As chapter 40 opens, we see the cupbearer and the baker offending the king of Egypt and being imprisoned with Joseph. In verse 3, we find out that Joseph is “in the house of the captain of the bodyguard”. Wait a minute, wasn’t Potiphar the captain of the bodyguard? Verse 4 says that “the captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them”. Time has passed so it is possible that there is a new captain of the bodyguard. Verse 7 says the prison was in Joseph’s “master’s house”. Potiphar was his master. It is possible that Potiphar could have cooled down and reasoned that Joseph was innocent, but kept him imprisoned because of his wife and his reputation. It could also be that Potiphar sold him to the new captain of the bodyguard. Either way, Joseph is in charge again. He has accepted his circumstances yet again and persevered. He has still not given up on doing the right thing. What another great lesson for us to persevere and “not lose heart in doing good” (Gal. 6:9). If anyone had reason to become bitter in doing the right thing, it’s Joseph, but instead He keeps looking to God and trusting in Him. What faith!

Bread was a big part of their diet, so kings employed a full-time baker. The cupbearer was the man who tasted all of the king’s food and drink first to assure that it was all safe. I guess you could consider him like the secret service of the king’s food and drink. Instead of taking a



Finer Grounds Bible Study

bullet for the leader, he takes the poison for him. It has never sounded like a fantastic job to me, but it did hold some clout as you spent time in the king's presence daily. If you remember Nehemiah was the cupbearer for King Artaxerxes and was able to plead his case concerning the rebuilding of the wall because of his position.

After serving some time, the baker and the cupbearer have dreams on the same night. We see Joseph display kindness towards them by noticing they are sad and asking them about it. I love how Joseph imitate God. God is faithful to Joseph, so he learns to be faithful to God. God extended kindness to him, so he learns to extend kindness to others. Joseph is still a very young man and his character in these two chapters certainly lend credence to the idea that he was an "old soul". I wish I was such a fast learner! I also love Joseph's response to their problem. He immediately brings God into the conversation as the answer to their problems. He gives God all the credit and glory by saying, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" Honestly, when people tell you their problems, shouldn't God always be in the answer?

After the cupbearer tells Joseph his dream, Joseph does not seem to hesitate at all to interpret it. God has displayed great power and validated Joseph's boast of Him. This is the only recorded time we have of Joseph mentioning his past to anyone. Yet, even now, he simply states the facts seemingly without bitterness or slander of those who have wronged him. All he asks is for the cupbearer to remember him and show him "kindness by mentioning [him] to Pharaoh" when he is restored to his position.

Hoping for the same good news, the baker relays his dream to Joseph. Once again, Joseph does not seem to hesitate to speak what God has revealed to him. Joseph does not hold back despite having to tell the baker of his horrific demise in three days. Joseph doesn't shrink back from telling the baker all that God has revealed to him about his dream. Is that how we are with God's word? Do we ever leave some things out because they make people sad or uncomfortable? Do we avoid the hard parts because we think we are being merciful? That would imply that God was not merciful in what He has said. Joseph once again humbles us with another great lesson on how to respect God and His words. He also displays tremendous confidence in God's ability and immediately obeys. Lord, make us like this!

As you know, God was right. Three days later, on Pharaoh's birthday, the dream interpretations were fulfilled. "Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." Kindness - needed by all, but not practiced by all.

Do you think the cupbearer and the baker believed Joseph's interpretations of their dreams?

What do you think the baker's last three days were like?



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Based on Joseph's character so far, how do you think he treated the baker in his final days?

What hard things do you think we struggle to share about God's word?

Do you think God had a hand in the cupbearer forgetting about Joseph? Why or why not?

Take some time to look up and meditate on several verses about kindness. Write them down and read them each day for a week.

Who have you forgotten to show kindness to? Do so today.

What lesson from Joseph so far has resonated the most for you?

Thank you, ladies, for joining me once again. I hope that something from this lesson will

send you into deeper study of the living Word. Be kind to one another.