

Joseph – Fleeing Youthful Lusts

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Gen 39:11-12 – “Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. She caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me!’ And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.”

2 Tim 2:22 – “Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

When Potiphar’s wife grabbed Joseph, he did not sit down with her to try and teach her about God. He didn’t attempt to reason with her and remind her of the consequences of such an action. They didn’t pray together. Joseph didn’t even say “No!” He instead does the only thing he could do – he fled. Joseph knew the power of sexual temptation and that it was not something he should stay and battle out.

The subject of sexual temptation can be a sticky topic to preach on. It’s become taboo in the minds of so many that to even utter the word in the pulpit is often met with disdain. Others claim they don’t want their children hearing lessons of this genre. And yet, Satan is preaching to our children about sex every single day - on TV, in movies, on the internet, in public schools, through public immodesty. In order to counter Satan’s indoctrination on the looseness of sex, we must deal with it in the church and in a way that is honorable, decent, and brings glory to God. The bible deals with this subject and so we must as God’s teachers and preachers.

2 Tim 2:22 informs us that we must flee “from”, flee “to”, and flee “with”. Here are 3 ways we can flee “from” sexual temptation:

- 1) Visually fleeing – Job 31:1 - “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?” The eyes are where it all begins. If it wasn’t for the eyes, we wouldn’t lust with our minds with reconstructed objects of affection. And without the mind, much of our premeditation that finds us in situations we ought not be in would be severely limited. Jesus tells us “The eye is the lamp of the body.” (Matt 6:22). So the first thing we must do if we truly want to flee youthful lusts is rid our lives of everything that is sexually suggestive or explicit – the magazines, certain internet sites, indecent movies and TV, etc. We must learn to develop a trigger finger with the TV remote and if need be cancel cable. Will God actually send me to hell for not controlling my eyes? Jesus says, “Yes!” – Matt 5:28-29 - “Everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”
- 2) Mentally fleeing – 2 Cor 10:5 – “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Before Joseph had to physically flee, his mind was already made up about what he would do in such a situation - “He (Potiphar) has put all that he owns in my charge. How could I do this against God after everything he has given me?” Joseph could look around and see how much he had been blessed. Before lustful thoughts begin knocking on the door, we must let the power of reason reign and decide beforehand how we will respond. With our mind made up beforehand, our conscious will be stronger during times of temptation.
- 3) Physically fleeing - Like Joseph, when we have done everything we can do, sometimes we’re still going to find ourselves in potentially dangerous situations that require extra due diligence. It is during these times we must avoid walking on the edge and convincing ourselves we’re stronger than we truly are – 1 Cor 10:12 – “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.” Rather than standing on the edge, we need to run as far away from danger as we can, to get away from the situation using whatever open door we can

find which God has provided us (1 Cor 10:13). When you're in this situation, don't think, don't reason, and don't worry about whether you'll hurt someone's feelings or not - just get away!

In addition to fleeing "from" sexual temptation, 2 Tim 2:22 tells us 4 things we must flee "to" – righteousness, faith, love, and peace. We dare not undervalue this aspect of fleeing temptation. Jesus reminds us in Matt 12 that when an unclean spirit returns from having left a man only to find it unoccupied, swept, and put in order; it therefore brings seven unclean spirits with him. The point is our lives aren't likely to be a total vacuum. It's not going to be that suddenly we'll empty our mind and heart of sexual temptation and then just leave them empty. We need to fill our minds and our hearts with virtuous things – righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Rom 12:2 – "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." With the renewing of our minds comes the transformation of our person and it may well be that we won't have much room for lust and sexual temptation if we're filling it with that which is good, pure, and wholesome.

- 1) Flee to Righteousness – Joseph fled to righteousness in that he decided to do what was "right" and not what was convenient and appetizing. There is nothing temporally appealing about this decision since often times it can cost us. That is why it is so important to make up our minds ahead of time that we will do the right thing lest the temptation take us by surprise in heat of the moment.
- 2) Flee to Faith – Joseph undoubtedly knew there would be consequences to refusing Potiphar's wife, but by faith he knew God was with him and would take care of him. How strong was his faith? While putting ourselves in Joseph's sandals and removing the advantage of hind sight, we might surmise that such an accusation as Potiphar's wife made would not cost me freedom, but my life. How was Joseph to know that Potiphar wouldn't exact vengeance in its fullest capacity? When God is with us, whom shall we fear?
- 3) Flee to Love – Joseph felt a deep sense of honor and love for God as well as Potiphar for everything he had been blessed with. True love is honoring our God who desires so much to protect our moral integrity that He allowed His only Son to be tortured on a cross to get the message through to us. True love is respecting a person's morals and ideals so much that you'd never want to risk their soul by making a proposition they are uncomfortable with. True love is honoring the parents who have given their lives to protecting the purity of their child so they don't make a mistake that could cost them their soul.
- 4) Flee to Peace – For doing what was right, Joseph had everything taken from him but one thing - his peace of mind. Though in jail he could sit there in his chains knowing that he had done everything he was supposed to and nothing more. That thing God has given us called a "conscience" can be our best friend or it can be our worst enemy. It commends us when we have done right, and when we do wrong it keeps us up at night saying over and over again, "How could you do that, how could you do that? If you think you're going to sleep anytime soon you have another thing coming..." There's great value in making choices that bring peace in our lives, peace within ourselves, and especially peace with our God of heaven with sees all.

Finally, 2 Tim 2:22 tells us that we should flee "with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." This is the one thing Joseph could not do since there was no one in Egypt with a like-minded faith. But Christians are able to harness strength from other brethren who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

It may be after we've tried everything else that we need to turn to a trusted brother or sister in Christ for help and accountability to rid our lives of sexual temptation. Surrounding ourselves with brethren who are truly like-minded is fundamental to our walk. Our friends many times will dictate our success.

If Absalom hadn't gotten such bad advice from his friend Jonadab, Tamar would have had a chance for a normal life, Amnon could have lived, and there might not have been the strain between David and Absalom that eventually led

to David losing his kingdom and Absalom his life. It's one thing to talk about choosing the right friends, it's an entirely different to see the ripple effects of choosing the wrong ones.