



Episode 106: Favored Son to Tested Soul Gen. 39

Hi Friends! Welcome to Moments to Ponder. This is a podcast designed to help you journey through God's Word, gain fresh perspectives, and find meaningful takeaways to ponder throughout the week. I'm Betsy Marvin, and this is episode 106.

(music fades as narration begins)

Chapter 38 has an interesting story of Judah, one of Joseph's brothers which you can read yourself if you're curious. Needless to say, we pick back up with our story of Joseph in Genesis 39.

*When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.*  
*Gen. 39:1*

Joseph is placed in a household of the high-ranking official, Potiphar. On a side note: the Hebrew word for officer here actually means eunuch. Key officials around the king were made eunuch's to prevent them from having sons that might challenge the throne. We know Potiphar had a daughter, so this may have happened to him later in life and we'll see this come into play later in the story.

*The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. <sup>3</sup>Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. <sup>4</sup>This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. <sup>5</sup>From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. <sup>6</sup>So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!*  
*Gen. 39:2-6*

Although this is one paragraph in scripture, it covers 11 years of Joseph's life. 11. From 17-28 years old, Joseph will serve in this household rising in authority until he has complete responsibility under Potiphar over all he owned. Verse 2 states that the Lord was WITH Joseph and Potiphar noticed this. The Talmud, which is sacred ancient set of teachings in the Jewish tradition, tells us that Potiphar noticing that God was with Joseph, should be translated

“Yahweh was always on his lips” meaning that Joseph was giving God the glory for all the success. He had not forgotten the God of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.

He has gone from a favored, and probably spoiled, son to a young man owned by someone else, a slave, told what to do and when to do it, having to learn the language and culture of an entirely new country while serving this new Egyptian master.

Yet, somewhere in those 11 years, Joseph was placed over the entire household and this led to more blessing for Potiphar. His abilities to run Potiphar’s entire household shouldn’t be a surprise. Remember, Joseph had been raised to lead by his father. He had been learning how to run a large estate, oversaw his brothers and other workers, and most likely understood the costs involved. His administrative skills would have been something he had been taught for years by Jacob and Potiphar is reaping the benefits.

Something that brought pride and arrogance as a teenager, has now become a foundation for integrity, respect, and trustworthiness. Instead of becoming bitter and angry, we see Joseph become all the things his family wasn’t – which brings up a question to ponder. Was separating Joseph from his family a way for God to help Joseph grow? But, that question just brings others...so let’s move on.

*Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man,<sup>7</sup> and Potiphar’s wife soon began to look at him lustfully. “Come and sleep with me,” she demanded.*

*<sup>8</sup> But Joseph refused. “Look,” he told her, “my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. <sup>9</sup> No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God.”*

One translation describes Joseph as strikingly handsome, very good looking, and well built. No other man is described like this in Scripture, but they are very like the words used to describe his mother Rachel in Genesis 29. This may have been another reason his brother’s didn’t like him...It’s no wonder Potiphar’s wife noticed him. From what I understand, this demand was completely within her right and may have been her habit as this was acceptable behavior for a Egyptian aristocrat.

One podcast looks at these words from Joseph about his responsibilities as more arrogance, but I see something different, I see a young man trying to back out without offending this woman who has set her sights on him. He knows if he offends her, it could go badly, so he takes the road of – listen your husband trusts me, he has honored me and I can’t violate that trust. How could I dishonor him – how could I sin against God? But...

*<sup>10</sup> She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. <sup>11</sup> One day, however, no one else was around when he*

went in to do his work. <sup>12</sup> She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, “Come on, sleep with me!” Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house. Ok, first of all – how was it that there is no one around? Seems a bit planned doesn't it? She is a sneaky one. He had been avoiding her, but it seems she has set up a trap and grabs him. The words for grabbed here means to seize or grasp, to be captured. This isn't a casual hand on the arm, this is an aggressive move and Joseph has to make a decision. I get the visual of him pushing away, he would have been so much stronger than her, but he chooses to slip out of his coat and he doesn't just leave, he ran. But, he left his coat.

<sup>13</sup> When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled, <sup>14</sup> she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running. “Look!” she said. “My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I screamed. <sup>15</sup> When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got away, but he left his cloak behind with me.”

<sup>16</sup> She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. <sup>17</sup> Then she told him her story. “That Hebrew slave you've brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me,” she said. <sup>18</sup> “But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!”

Holding his coat, a plan forms in her spurned heart. If she can't have him, she'll take her revenge. She tells the servants, she tells her husband - Joseph tried to rape me. This is a strong accusation which held a death sentence for Joseph. But, I have a feeling everyone new she was lying – after all this time the household, and Potiphar, knew Joseph's character and that of Potiphar's wife.

<sup>19</sup> Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. <sup>20</sup> So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. <sup>21</sup> But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. <sup>22</sup> Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. <sup>23</sup> The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

In many of the commentaries I read, the authors make a point to note that we don't really know who Potiphar is furious with but they all agree that he was probably furious with his wife for causing all this. Since Joseph is not put to death, we can assume that Potiphar knew that it was a false charge.

Interestingly, in the Yalkut Shimoni, which is like a commentary to the Hebrew Bible – the Torah it notes that Potiphar's daughter, Asenath (aw-se-nath'), stood up for Joseph trying to convince her father of his innocence and what had really happened. Later, when Joseph is released from prison, we find in Genesis 41 that he will marry Asenath which then makes Potiphar his father-in-law...quite a turn of events.

We'll talk more about the prison element next time, so let's close our time with a couple things to ponder.

Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do?  
How did you react?

It's a hard one because it depends on who's doing the accusing, right? We want to set the record straight, we want to defend ourselves, especially if there are consequences involved. Sometimes we get the opportunity to speak up and others, we don't. We want life to be fair...but it often isn't.

It brings to mind someone else that was falsely accused and stayed silent. Someone who didn't fall to temptation but stood for righteousness. Someone that lost his garment and was punished for the sins of others...and it wasn't fair. Yet, he did it because he knew the outcome would be the salvation of us all.

Jesus.

Joseph has no idea that he will save his people – but he does know that God is with him. Throughout these verses we read, *And the Lord was with him. But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love.*

No matter what happened in his life, Joseph learned to lean into the presence of God and lived for God's glory. He faced death, slavery, false accusations, and imprisonment yet in it all, we see him continually make the best of it and use his gifts and talents for God wherever he landed. God was with him and that, in itself, was the blessing.

Here's what I feel like God is teaching me as I study this story with you...When you think about what you are facing in your life today – do you realize that God is with you and THAT is the blessing?

Jesus was named Immanuel, God with Us. He was WITH them. He is with you. The most incredible thing that could ever be, God literally with you, and how often are still we are looking for more – more security, power, healing, more...honestly, more our own way.

God was at work in and through Joseph, he is setting the stage for what is to come. He is doing the same for you.

Dear One, Jesus is enough.

It's not about what we can get, it's about who we are with.  
You have Jesus WITH you every day!  
He loves you.

What if you thought – I'm living this life WITH Jesus? Can you believe it?

The King of the Universe,  
The Lord of all Creation,  
The Savior who loves unconditionally,  
The Father of Eternal Life WITH you!

May you walk in that truth today and every day.

Amen.