

Explore the Bible: Tempted

January 23, 2019

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Feb. 10 focuses on Genesis 39:3-12, 19-21.*

America obviously is a country comprising many nations. In America's infancy, indentured servants and other Europeans traveled from England in search of a land to transform into an extraordinary nation. Included in this great nation are the numerous Indian tribes, who were already living in the land when the Europeans arrived, as well as other ethnic groups who arrived through slave trade from Africa and other countries. Today, people of all ethnic backgrounds and races become citizens of America and appreciate the opportunities to live a better life.

God's promise to make Israel a great nation had to be fulfilled and would include people of other nations. Although, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and carried to Egypt against his will, God protected him by placing him in the house of Potiphar, Pharaoh's official, to serve him (Genesis 39:2).

Successful (Genesis 39:3-6a)

Although Joseph was taken from his homeland and sold into slavery at a young age, he was assured God granted him favor and success in Potiphar's house. Joseph was a diligent, faithful servant who performed his task loyally; consequently, Potiphar noticed the hand of God on his life and favored him. Not only was Potiphar blessed, so was his household and field. God's word is truth, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing (Genesis 12:2).

As believers, God blesses us to bless others. We are presented opportunities to serve others in our homes, in the workplace, in church and throughout the world with resources we have in our possession. There may be times when we are unable to share finances, but there are other talents and gifts we possess to bless others. For example, a hospital visit, a phone call or a word of encouragement to someone is included in our treasured gifts. We are obligated to God to bless others simply because he favors us. Our prayer to God is to make us a blessing to someone today, no matter our position in life.

Prayerfully think of using your spiritual gifts or resources to bless someone this week.

Tempted (Genesis 39:6b-12)

Joseph was loyal to Potiphar while serving in his house. Potiphar trusted him with everything he owned and only concerned himself with the food he ate (Genesis 39:6). The narrative shares a moments of temptation Joseph experiences. He is described as “well-built and handsome.” Potiphar’s wife took notice and invited him to sleep with her (Genesis 39:6b-7). The wife relentlessly begged Joseph daily to sleep with her, but his love for God and his loyalty to his master helped him to overcome these temptations. Joseph found himself at a crossroad and consciously made quick decisions to reject the offers every time.

While alone in the house. Potiphar’s wife made a final advancement toward Joseph. Again, Joseph rejected the invitation to sleep with her and fled, but she was able to grab part of his garment as proof a visit. Despite his ability to be careful and watchful of Potiphar’s wife, she managed to retaliate against him by spreading lies to the entire household, as well as to her husband.

There are times when the believer has to make split-second decisions

regarding spiritual and moral issues. Our hearts and minds should be established in the word of God, as we listen daily for his directions and warnings. Our love for him should cause us to flee from every temptation. Though tempted, we have the assurance that temptation cannot overtake us because God is faithful to provide a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Favored (Genesis 39:19-21)

The narrative brings us to another tension in Joseph's life when Potiphar believes the lies of his wife over the loyalty and integrity of Joseph. Her creative way of casting Joseph as a criminal and rapist justified her to her husband as the innocent victim. She reminded Potiphar that Joseph was only a slave with permission from him to govern everything in the household. Because of her deception and Potiphar's anger towards Joseph, "he was confined to prison" (Genesis 39:20). In prison, God had not forgotten Joseph and gave him favor with the warden (Genesis 39:21). Even in prison, God was with Joseph and his purposes prevailed.

Christians may be accused falsely for many reasons. The natural response is to become angry and react. The right thing to do is to try and reconcile differences, if possible. Scripture reminds us: "But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain" (Psalm 3:3-4). God is with us when we are accused falsely and during times of temptations. Through it all, we must allow God's purposes to prevail in our lives.

Are you able to handle those moments of temptations whether small or great temptations? What are some steps you take to overcome temptations?

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