



+ **YOU**

Sermon Series: How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls
To Be Used with Session 2: The Pitfall of Temptation

Sermon Title Possibilities: The Seduction of Success

Scripture: Genesis 39:1-12

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *"How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls: The Pitfall of Temptation,"* use this sermon outline. One definition of temptation is "to try or test one's faith, virtue, character, by enticement to sin." It reminds us that being tempted is not a sin, it is an invitation to sin. The Scripture passage reveals us that we have a God who is with us, not only to help us overcome trying circumstances, but to help us overcome temptation.

Introduction:

Having been sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:28) and believed to be dead by his father (Gen. 37:29-35), Joseph is now in Egypt, a slave of a man called Potiphar (Gen. 39:1). But the God who worked to save Joseph from the pit, is the same God who is with him in Potiphar's house. A change in location does not change God's promise to "never leave us nor forsake us" (Deut. 31:6).

1. The Blessings of Success (vv. 1-6)

Joseph was successful because the Lord was with him. But success does not come without hard work. This is where God's faithfulness and human responsibility intersect. We cannot be successful without God, nor can we succeed without hard work. Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph through Joseph's work, and Potiphar put Joseph in charge of everything. As a result, everything he owned ended up being blessed.

Jesus said that if we are faithful over a few things, He will put us in charge of many things (Matt. 25:23). No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in and no matter how menial the task, we should do "everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said:

"If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'"

The success of being blessed is when we are a blessing to others!

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2. The Seduction of Success (vv.7-10)

There's a saying: "For every level, there's another devil." While success brings incredible blessings, it also comes with intense temptations. Joseph faced a particular type of temptation—seduction. Seduction is especially the enticement of a person to engage in illicit sexual activity. Temptation is inviting, but not enticing, unless it's tempting. Joseph didn't refuse because he wasn't tempted. Joseph refused for three reasons: 1) It would mean committing adultery; 2) It would mean violating his master's trust; 3) It would mean sinning against God.

The last reason was the greatest reason. Joseph may have been able to justify sleeping with Potiphar's wife because it appears Potiphar did not pay much attention to her (v. 6). Joseph did have authority over everything Potiphar owned and may have even justified it to include Potiphar's wife. Potiphar only withheld her from Joseph, not because he loved her, but simply because she was his wife (v. 9), and Joseph may have justified sleeping with her because she was in a loveless marriage. But no one can justify sinning against God.

Joseph refused to sin against Potiphar, his wife, and God (vv. 8-9). But none of those reasons deterred Potiphar's wife (v. 10).

3. The Fleeing from Seduction (v. 11-12)

First Corinthians 6:18 says, "Flee sexual immorality!" It appears that this is the first time Joseph and Potiphar's wife are alone. Joseph being accompanied by others may have been one of the ways he resisted temptation. Hebrews 10:23-25 calls upon us to provoke one another to love and good works by not neglecting the gathering of ourselves together. One of the reasons going to church is important is because there is strength in numbers and people of like minds encouraging one another. Fellowship helps us to resist temptation.

Perhaps Joseph flees because the temptation is overwhelming. But God is with him to deliver him. "No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Oliver Goldsmith said, "He who fights and runs away may live to fight another day; but he who is battle slain can never rise to fight again." It is better to retreat from temptation than continue to fight and fall.

Conclusion:

Success is being faithful to God. However, being faithful doesn't always look successful. Joseph not only loses his position, but he also ends up in prison (vv. 19-20). But God is still with him, and God is still at work (vv. 21-23). If success is being faithful to God, then

we can still be successful in less-than-ideal circumstances, knowing that “all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

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