**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**What Was He Thinking (Joseph)**

In Genesis chapter 39 we read of Joseph being a slave in the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Because of Joseph’s integrity, faithfulness and that “the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand”, Potiphar made Joseph overseer of his house. Well, in time, Potiphar’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph and she said to Joseph, “lie with me.” (Gen. 39:7) Verses 11 and 12 says, *“But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me.’”* Joseph here is facing a critical decision. Will he yield to this temptation or maintain his sexual purity? Young people today get a lot of pressure to have sex. Young people, you will have to decide if you will cave to this pressure or maintain your purity. Even the married may face such situations where the opportunity arises to be unfaithful to their spouse. You will have to decide if you will give in to the temptation or remain faithful and sexually pure. This is a serious matter. Hebrews 13:4 says, *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”* Such sins are no trivial matters to God.

Now, Joseph refuses Potiphar’s wife’s advances. It says in verses 8 and 9, *“But he refused and said to his master's wife, ‘Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’”*

Later, when she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me,” it says, *“But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.”*

The question I want to ask on our program today is what was going through Joseph’s mind at this pivotal moment in his life? What was he thinking that led him to refuse her advances?

His words in verses 8-9 reveal at least four things that, I think, factored into his decision. I want us to take note of these, because they are things that we should consider as we wrestle with decisions about our sexual purity. What was he thinking when confronted with this temptation?

First of all, he was thinking about Potiphar. Notice again, Joseph said to her, *‘Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you…”* Although Joseph was in a slave-master relationship with Potiphar, his master had been good to him. He mentions three things specifically on this occasion. Number one, he says, *“There is no one greater in this house than I.”* Potiphar had promoted him because Joseph was faithful and the Lord was with him. Number two, Joseph said, *“He has committed all that he has to my hand,”* and *“…nor has he kept back anything from me but you.”* Potiphar had entrusted Joseph with great responsibility. Potiphar depended on Joseph. And number 3, *“Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house.”* Potiphar had confidence in Joseph to do the right thing. He trusted Joseph.

Joseph is thinking about all of this as Potiphar’s wife propositions him. After all the kindnesses that had been shown to him, and the trust placed in him by his master, there is no way he would repay him with this betrayal. Joseph here is thinking of others. I’m impressed that this is on his mind. He’s not just thinking about himself – what he wanted to do in this situation, what his desires may have been, but he’s thinking about others. He is thinking about how his behavior will have an effect on others.

This is something we must consider as we wrestle with sexual temptation. Sometimes a guy will pressure a girl to have sex by feeding her some line like: “This is just a way of showing you how much I love you.” That is nonsense. The truth is, the last thing on his mind is demonstrating love for you. It’s not about his love; it’s about satisfying his lust. Sometimes girls give in because they don’t want to lose this guy they “love.” But this too is not about love. It is about selfishly using this guy to satisfy your need to have someone in your life. Premarital, or extramarital sexual relations is a selfish act. Those who engage in it are thinking about themselves and not the effect of what they are doing has on others. God’s people don’t operate this way. We don’t run around just thinking about what we want and satisfying our needs. We think about how our conduct will impact others. Phil 2:3-4 says, *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let* *each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own* *interests, but also for the interests of others.”*  1 Cor. 10:24 says, *“Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.”*  Because this is the way we operate, we would never pressure anyone to commit sexual sin. Dear listener, if you have someone in your life putting that pressure on you, you need to know that they don’t love you. Let me add, if you give in to their pressure, then you don’t love them either. When you love someone, you don’t join them in committing sin.

And also the impact of sexual sin will extend beyond the two people involved. It will impact the people who do love you – your spouse, you parents, your siblings, your brethren in Christ. It will impact or have an influence on your friends at school or at work that you have been trying to influence for the Lord. Your influence for good will have been reduced to nothing. I need to think about all of this as I fight the battle for sexual purity. I need to think of others. It’s one of the things that was on Joseph’s mind.

Secondly, Joseph was also thinking about the sanctity of marriage. In verse 9 Joseph says to Potiphar’s wife, *“…nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife.”* Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph’s care. Nothing was kept back from Joseph, except his wife. But, of course he withheld her, she was his wife. No doubt, Joseph understood that there was a sacred covenant involved. God joined these two together. He had no right to be with this woman; she was married to another man. Isn’t it odd that he had more respect for her marriage than she did? Joseph is thinking about all of this at this crucial moment.

When faced with sexual temptation, we need to think about it too. Sexual intimacy is reserved for couples who are married to each other. God’s law is clear. Heb. 13:4 - *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”*

To those of us who are married: We have had entered into a covenant of God (Prov. 2:17). When we married we entered into a covenant of which God is a witness and of which he holds us bound. In getting married we have made promises to each other and to God. We said that we would forsake all others and be faithful to our spouse. For this reason, WE HAVE NO RIGHT to have sex with someone else. We don’t ever have the right to make a “special friendship” with someone who is not our spouse. It doesn’t matter what’s wrong in my marriage or how much some other person comforts me. I HAVE NO RIGHT to be with that person. It is not a matter of how I feel, but it is a matter of me keeping my marriage vows.

And to those who are not married: God said only a married couple can have sex. He has restricted sexual relations to marriage. Read 1 Cor. 7:1-2. Sex before marriage is called sexual immorality or fornication. You must discipline yourself and wait until marriage and give your spouse the gift of your purity. YOU HAVE NO RIGHT to have sex with someone you’re not married to.

I’m impressed that when Joseph was tempted, he was thinking about the sanctity of marriage. We need to think about it too.

Thirdly, Joseph was thinking about his principles. Joseph said to Potiphar’s wife, *“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”*  Joseph understood that sleeping with her was “great wickedness.” Joseph’s home life had not been the best, but he had been taught that it was wrong to have sex with another man’s wife. At the moment of crisis, this teaching served him well. He did not falter with uncertainty at this crucial moment.

In this age of moral relativism, we need to be armed with moral absolutes. We live in time where any mutually agreed sexual activity is said to be ok. Those who oppose the practice of homosexuality are said to be hateful people. In a world like this, our minds need to be trained with morality learned from God’s word so that at any moment we can immediately size up what is right and what is wrong.

Specifically, if we are to win the battles for out sexual purity, we need to understand clearly what God requires. When the crisis comes, I need to see clearly what I ought to do.

Our children need this. Some parents have decided to allow their children to figure out right and wrong on their own – to make up their own minds. God tells parents to do exactly the opposite. Eph. 6:4 says, *“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”* Moms and dads need to be sure that values are taught and ingrained at home so their children have a clear picture of what is right when faced with crucial moral choices. This is especially true when it comes to issues of sexual purity. Our children need to have a clear understanding of what God expects.

Joseph weathered his crisis because he had been taught God’s principles and he considered those principles. We need to do the same.

And then fourthly, Joseph was thinking about God. He said to Potiphar’s wife, *“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* It is interesting that even though Joseph is a long way from home in the middle of idolatrous Egypt, he still has a sense of God’s presence. He knew that God could see, that God was watching. Also Joseph recognized that to do this thing would not only hurt Potiphar, it would also hurt God. Notice that this mattered to him. Joseph was not living to please himself. More important than his selfish concerns, Joseph wanted to please God.

We need to think about God as we battle for our sexual purity. Sometimes we think we have done something really clever when we have been able to hide it from our parents or from other Christians. But what have we really done? In the end, the One who matters most, the One to whom I will give an account sees everything. He even knows about the motives that drive my actions. Eccl. 12:13-14 says, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”*

I need to think about all of this when I’m faced with sexual temptations. It may seem that I’m in some private place and have arranged things so that no one will ever know. But remember at that moment the windows of heaven are open and the eyes of our loving Father look down on us and see it all! Nothing we do is hidden from the sight of the One to whom we must give account.

And I need to think about the fact that my sin is against God. My sin grieves God. Read Eph. 4:30. How can I sin against the God who loves me so? Joseph thought about God at this moment of crisis. We need to think about Him more often than we do.

What was Joseph thinking about when he was tempted to commit sexual immorality with another man’s wife? He thought about her husband and the effect it would have on him. He thought about the sanctity of marriage. He thought about the principles of right and wrong. And he thought about how his sin would be against God. We need to think about these things when we are tempted to commit sexual sin to help us overcome the temptation.

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