

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: February 10, 2019
Lesson Title: "Tempted"
Lesson Passage: Gen. 39:3-12,19-21

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In Egypt, Joseph at first gets on well with his new master, Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard. But he falls into moral jeopardy when Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him, and physical jeopardy when she falsely accuses him. He copes with the moral testing and survives the physical danger, thanks to the presence of the Lord in his life. But the incident sends him to prison, where he soon becomes a trustee, in charge of other prisoners.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the series of events that led to Joseph's imprisonment.
(2) From Joseph's story, identify principles for coping with temptation. (3) Describe what happened to Joseph in prison.

BEGINNING THE SESSION

Begin with these comments: Our lesson this week is based on one of the Bible's classic temptation stories, the attempted seduction of Joseph by his master's wife. In a sense, we should all be able to identify with Joseph, for temptation is very much a part of the Christian life. As C. S. Lewis once said, "there is a silly idea about, that good people don't know what temptation means. [But] No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good." It might even be said that temptation serves a constructive purpose; for, as Thomas a Kempis once observed, "Fire tries iron and temptation tries a just man." *This aptly describes what happened to Joseph.*

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Summarize the situation in which Joseph found himself when he first began to reside in Egypt: (1) Gen. 37:36 gives us our first clue concerning the fate of Joseph; this information is repeated in 39:1. We can't know precisely what Potiphar's rank was, as "captain of the guard." But 40:3 implies that he was in charge of Pharaoh's prison. (2) Because "the Lord was with Joseph" (v. 2), he became a successful man. (Interpreters have used the words "clever, pleasing, industrious, modest, and handsome" to describe him.) Realizing the value of this extraordinary young slave, Potiphar put him in charge of his household (let someone read 39:3-6).

2. Explore the temptation story in 39:7-14. Make these points:
(1) The temptation was very real and very intense, for four reasons: First, Joseph was physically mature, subject to normal sexual

desires. Second, he was far from home, removed from social influences that ordinarily lend support to acceptable moral conduct. Third, this was no fleeting temptation; the woman's attempts to seduce him persisted day by day (v. 10). (And there certainly was nothing subtle about her advances.) Fourth, he knew that she could cause trouble for him if he spurned her. (2) Three things helped Joseph resist temptation successfully: First, he felt a sense of duty to his master, who had trusted him. (He had the wisdom to know that adultery is never a private sin, that it wrongs not only the partners in adultery, but, also, their spouses, children, and other members of both families.) Second, Joseph knew that adultery would be a sin against God. Third, he acted decisively to escape the temptation, immediately running from the house, rather than hesitating long enough to ponder the situation. (QUOTES: "Most of us keep one eye on the temptation as we pray not to be led into." "Temptations are like tramps; treat them kindly and they return bringing others with them." "To pray to be delivered from temptations, and at the same time blindly rush into occasions for temptation, is like sticking one's fingers into the fire and praying that they may not be burned." Read 2 Tim. 2:22 and point out that this was exactly what Joseph did.

3. Comment on the reaction of Potiphar's wife to Joseph's rejection of her advances (39:14-18): (1) She demonstrated the truth of the familiar lines written by William Congreve: "Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned." (2) She also demonstrated the truth that there is a thin line between lust and hatred, when a relationship is not purified by authentic love. (3) Suggest that it isn't surprising that Potiphar "bought" his wife's story, when you consider his only alternative--to suspect her.

4. Describe Joseph's situation in prison (39:20-40:4): (1) Joseph was put into a prison that seems to have been attached to the house of Potiphar (see 40:3). (2) Just as he had won the confidence of his master when he was a slave in Potiphar's household, he now made a favorable impression on the "keeper of the prison" (the jailer, not Potiphar), and was made a "trustee," in charge of the other prisoners (39:21-23). (3) Once again, the reason for this is given--"the Lord was with Joseph" (39:21). (4) Joseph's position of responsibility within the prison brought him into personal contact with two officials imprisoned by Pharaoh (40:2-4). (The words in v. 4, "and he served them," suggest that Joseph's services were made available to these two officials, even in prison, because of their importance.)

CLOSING THE LESSON

Read Rom. 8:28: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (RSV). Observe that this scripture explains what was happening in the life of Joseph. (His brothers' hatred, the experience of slavery, the false accusation of Potiphar's wife, his imprisonment, and his access to the imprisoned court officials--God was working in it all.)