

Joseph, the Dreamer

Genesis 37 and 39

Joseph's rise to power and influence can only be described as meteoric. Such an ascent often leads to pride and to the assumption that one is an exception to the rules. We all know that power tends to corrupt... But Joseph remained uncorrupted by power. From what the Scriptures tell us, he avoided financial impropriety, political scandal, and sexual seduction. He stayed unstained to the end. What was the secret of Joseph's integrity? One key is that he saw leadership as a holy stewardship, for which he would someday be accountable to God. Joseph lived with the daily awareness that leaders must possess a high degree of moral authority if they're going to lead well. Moral authority comes from a completely surrendered heart, an unsoiled mind, and a clean conscience before God. Joseph had the kind of integrity that led to moral authority, and he kept it throughout his entire lifetime...

In this series on the life of Joseph (from Genesis 37, 39 – 50), we will discover how Joseph, who lived around 1600 BC, exhibited the kind of integrity we need to have, as followers of Jesus...

Joseph's dreams and Joseph sold by his brother (Genesis 37)

- In what ways does the young Joseph (aged 17) appear somewhat naïve?
- In this story, how many words describing emotions can you find? Which ones are negative?
- How would you describe Jacob's relationship with his son Joseph? Was it a healthy relationship?

Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39)

- Joseph "prospered" (verse 2) and had "success in everything he did" (verse 3, 23). Why? What was the secret of his success?
- It wasn't long before Joseph came up against temptation of a very subtle kind. As he rose in position and responsibility in the house of Potiphar, he became an object of desire to Potiphar's wife – a woman of loose morals. It is probable that Potiphar was away from home for long periods, and possibly his wife was a lonely and neglected woman. How did Joseph respond (see verse 12)? What can we learn from Joseph's example? See 2 Timothy 2, verse 22.
- It is sometimes said that 'virtue is its own reward'. How does this story show that this is not always the case? Sometimes we're tempted to think that the Christian life is a bed of roses. This story shows that the opposite can be true. When we suffer unjustly, what truths expressed by St Paul in Romans 8 verse 28 encourage us?
- Consider all the other characters in the story (not all good ones!) – Jacob, the brothers, Reuben, the Ishmaelites, Potiphar, Potiphar's wife. How did God 'use' these people to shape Joseph's life and character?

Prayer – Lord, as we look at the life of Joseph, help us to learn from his example of integrity. And when we face temptations, help us to remember that you also were tempted, yet without sinning. Help us always to draw near to your throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Amen.