



LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES

Potiphar's Wife ... Bad to the Bone: Lesson 9

A few women have recently asked me if I'm only going to write about the "good girls" in the Bible, which I responded to with a firm "no!" (What fun is that?) I personally believe we can learn as much from a bad example as we can from a good one. This week our lesson will be on one of those women. We will take a look at a woman whose life screams "warning" to every person she meets. Throughout the lesson, I'll be referring to her as PW, which, by the way, does NOT refer to pastor's wife. 😊 Potiphar's Wife is just too long to keep typing out! In reality, she has no name, which makes her a little less real, don't you think? I assume that's the writers intent; to guide the reader into seeing her as an "idea or principle" rather than a person. Who she was isn't as significant as what her life teaches us.

Usually, the story of PW is taught from Joseph's perspective, with him being a wonderful example of how to flee from sin. Although this is true, I want to look at her from a different angle as well; a woman who was lured by temptation, blinded by an unquenchable desire, and had a drive that refused to be quenched. Have you ever wanted something so badly you lost sight of what was right? I think maybe we all have ...

First Day

1. Let's get a little background on our friend so we can get more details of the story and put it into proper context. Read Genesis 37:1-37 and record the facts you find. Who is Joseph? Why do his brothers hate him? What did they do? How did he end up as Potiphar's property?

that Joseph did he “found grace in his sight” (Genesis 39:4). Consequently, Potiphar made Joseph the head servant (overseer) of his entire household and gave him complete control of his finances, so much so that Potiphar “knew not what he had, save the bread which he did eat” (Genesis 39:6). Potiphar and his household were blessed for Joseph’s sake.

7. Let’s end with this question. Can God use bad people, or evil, to get us where He wants us to be? Are the people still responsible, though, for their actions?

We’ll take a closer look at PW tomorrow. In the meantime, I hope you are praying for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and heart to His truth as you study, showing you the change you need to make as a result of this interesting lady. Also, this week’s memory verse is a little longer than usual, but it packs a wallop, so I hope you can memorize it! (Potiphar’s wife should have!)

Memory Verse of the Week: “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left, remove your foot from evil.” Proverbs 4:23-27.

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Genesis 39 again. Introducing Potiphar’s wife. What details do we actually know about her?
2. What do we actually **NOT** know?
3. Briefly summarize the story.

4. Now use your imagination for a minute. What else do her actions seem to reveal about her character? Why do you think she did what she did?

Some call her the Mrs. Robinson of the Bible. (Remember the movie *The Graduate* from 1967? If not, Google it! 😊) I know I'm answering the question above, but we don't know her age, her background, or any physical description. We don't really know much, except that she was obviously very attracted to Joseph. At that time, women slaves were actually sexually available to their masters, so perhaps she thought this slave boy should be subject to her whims as well? Was Potiphar so busy that he was neglecting his wife? After all, it seems that all he cared about was his food! (39:6) Was she bored, lonely, and depressed? Maybe they had become semi-close friends and she began to get emotionally attached to Joseph since Potiphar was away so much. Usually people don't wake up and just "decide" to become an adulterer. It usually begins when a seed of sin and temptation is planted, then watered, then allowed to grow (James 1:13-16).

5. How can being too emotionally tied with a man other than your husband be the first step to falling? What are some boundaries that we can have to protect that from happening?
6. Some think that maybe PW was a rich woman without purpose, bored with life, idle, and restless. How do you think that could play a part in what she did?
7. Sometimes when we have nothing of value to do or have feelings of purposelessness and uselessness, we allow our hearts to wander. Has this ever happened to you?

8. Read Genesis 3:1-7. In what ways are Eve's actions similar?

9. We all have been tempted by some "forbidden" fruit in this life. What are some things that can distract us from the Lord and become that forbidden fruit?

10. PW wouldn't give up. How often did she try to seduce him? Genesis 39:10.

11. PW took notice (39:7), didn't give up (39:10), and finally caught him (39:12). She gazed long enough that it kindled a deep desire, one that seemed to be unquenchable. Have you ever wanted anything so badly that you pretty much put all logic aside, as well as neglected to pray and ask the Lord about the situation? Have you ever rationalized and made a decision on something that you wanted so badly, then later realized it all stemmed from the desire of your own heart? Are you willing to share?

I feel like we may have more in common with PW than we care to admit. We often allow our gaze to linger too long on someone or something, rather than keeping our focus on the Lord and what's right. The enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10) and he will use anything and anyone to do it. This is where our memory verse comes in. Keeping your heart with all diligence, keeping your eyes and your feet moving forward towards Christ ... this is the remedy for temptation. James 4:7 tells us to resist the devil and he will flee from you! Stay focused ladies!

Third Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Genesis 39 again. Describe Joseph's response to her in verses 8-9.
2. What did his response reveal about his character?
3. When PW was tempted to sin, she gave in. But when Joseph was tempted, he resisted and fled. What do you think made such a difference in their responses?
4. Do you commonly see your sin as something wicked before God? Is that your first thought? (How much quicker would we be to repent if it was?) What does David say about this in Psalm 51:3-11?
5. Joseph didn't just say no, he fled! He took drastic measures to ensure his purity and integrity. How willing are you to take drastic measures against sin? Have you ever had to flee?

I feel bad for Joseph. This was the second time someone grabbed his robes! (What's up with that?) Divine grace and a reverent fear of God kept him from following youthful lusts. I mean, in his mind, he could have told himself that, after all, she was his master's wife, and he probably shouldn't say no, etc. But he desired to honor God in all his actions. Way to go Joseph! But even though he does the right thing, the story doesn't end well. (At least in this chapter.)

6. After he runs, she seems to be humiliated and shamed by this servant. What lie does she come up with? Does her husband believe her?

7. So often we are tempted to lie to cover up some dishonorable action if we are caught. What does God think about lying? Read Proverbs 6:16-17 and Ephesians 4:25.

8. Joseph does the right thing, yet is still put in prison. What are your thoughts on that? Why doesn't God allow Joseph to be vindicated? What was God doing?

Joseph could've allowed himself to become bitter and resentful having been falsely accused, put in prison, and seemingly forgotten. Although we know the end of the story, Joseph didn't. Joseph never complained, blamed anyone, or allowed anger to eat away at his soul.

9. What enabled Joseph to respond in such an amazing way? How could he do it?

10. Have you ever been falsely accused? Have you ever done the "right" thing yet still suffered a high price? How did you respond?

11. Read 1 Peter 2:21-25, Hebrews 12:1-3, Romans 8:28, Proverbs 3:5-8 and James 1:2-4. What do these verses tell us about how to respond to hardships?

12. Do you tend to point fingers, blame others, and hold on to bitterness? What is the Lord calling you to do about that?

God permitted Joseph to be treated unjustly to build his character and prepare him for the tasks ahead. Warren Wiersbe wrote, "The prison would be a school where Joseph would learn to wait on the Lord until it was His time to vindicate him and fulfill his dreams. Joseph had time to think and pray and ponder the meaning of the dreams God had sent him. He would learn that God's delays are not God's denials. Meanwhile, Joseph found ways to be productive, responsible, and to live with integrity. Where we find ourselves should never be the ultimate guide for our actions."

13. Write your thoughts on the above paragraph. What is the ultimate guide for YOUR actions?

Fourth Day

Work on your verse. Are you guarding your heart?

Kathy Collard Miller wrote, "Although God used Potiphar's wife to fulfill His plans for Joseph and the Israelites, she is still responsible for her evil action and desires. God works in mysterious ways; in ways that we might not understand or even agree with. God wants Joseph to be put in prison so that he can eventually be called before the Pharaoh (Genesis 41), made the ruler of Egypt, and meet up with his brothers again. God uses an insignificant woman, aimless and lustful, to imprison Joseph. God is able to use evil people, like Potiphar's wife, to secure His purposes."

1. Has God ever used something you would consider "evil" or "bad" in your life to secure His purposes?

2. Joseph was able to exercise self-control, whereas PW wasn't. Read Galatians 5:23, Proverbs 25:2, and 2 Timothy 3:1-7. What do these verses say about self-control and why is it so important for the believer to show it? What can some of the consequences be of NOT showing self-control?

3. Name some ways that Jesus exercised self-control.

4. Ok, you knew it was coming. What about you? Do you possess the fruit of self-control? Is it something you are lacking or struggling with? What can you do about that?

5. Potiphar's wife seemed to have time to spare, for whatever reason, and she was obviously drawn to Joseph. When you have time to spare, what are you drawn to? Is it anything that is questionable, such as particular books, movies, shows, etc.? Is it anything that puts your spiritual growth at risk? Think on this ...

6. If the Holy Spirit showed you anything, what can you do to stay clear of those questionable things that can threaten your spiritual growth? Is that your goal?

7. Potiphar's wife was tempting Joseph to sin as well. Do you ever tempt others to sin? Maybe in gossip, or participating in something they shouldn't, or pursuing something they shouldn't? (Remember Eve's sin tempted Adam as well...)

8. Why does getting someone to follow us in our sin make us feel better at times?

9. Perhaps you're the one who is being tempted to do something the Lord has clearly told you to stay away from, and you're feeling pressured by someone. What does James 4:17 say about this?

This might be a hard lesson for some of you. Perhaps you were actually Potiphar's wife at one time, responsible for seducing someone and ruining relationships and/or marriages. Please know that there is forgiveness for you as you repent and ask forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 tells us that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I pray that if this speaks to you, you will take the proper steps to receive forgiveness from our gracious Lord, as well as to ask forgiveness from those you've sinned against. I pray we will all take responsibility for our own sins and transgressions and bring them before the Lord.

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory. You can do it!

