

# The Story of Joseph

## *The Grip of Lust*

Part 21 – July 29, 2012



We're talking about Joseph and Mrs. Potiphar. And, as we saw last week, this *isn't* about a guy who *can't be tempted*, but a man of God, facing the *greatest temptation* of his life! We talked about *Joseph's 'master desire'*. So now let's talk about *Mrs. Potiphar's ... lust!* Lust is different from most other sins. We *weren't designed* to hate or kill. But sexual desire *is* part of our created-identity (like hunger). So, lust is a natural appetite, out of control.

Remember the two cities in every city: City of God, City of Man? Each citizen is marked by a *supreme* desire: love of God or self. And the *practical* difference is in how they use their power. Lust is sexual energy or power focused on *itself*. That's why, and you should know, that the sex is *way better* in the *City of God!*



The University of Chicago published the *most* comprehensive study ever undertaken of American sexual behavior.<sup>1</sup> The cover of Time called it “The most important survey since the Kinsey report”. (Oct 17, 1994) It found that religious people, who are married, far and away have 1) the most frequent sex, 2) the most satisfying sex, 3) the most fun sex, 4) and the longest-lived sex lives! And within *that* group, the *most* satisfied were conservative, evangelical, Protestant, women! The reasons are obvious: trust and commitment are foundational for good sex. In the City of God, the *goal* is total trust and commitment, and sex is the *expression* of that.

In the City of Man, *sex* is the *goal*; it's just a “healthy appetite” that needs to be fed when it's hungry. The problem is, the more you feed lust, the hungrier and emptier you feel! C.S. Lewis wrote that wanting sex without commitment is like wanting to eat and vomit (a disorder called bulimia). You desire the *feel* of eating but you don't want it to become *part* of you.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph ... [NAS: “looked with desire”. It's not a sin to *notice* someone's fitness, face, or features, but her thoughts *lingered*] – Genesis 39:6-7a NIV

Men think wives and girlfriends get angry if they *notice* another woman. Not usually. But they're *experts* at perceiving *lingering*. “Glancing” is a *notice* (it might even get you some points). But “gawking” gets you the “linger-elbow”! To review: *noticing* is fine, walking into a lamppost, not so much. It goes: noticing, lingering, dwelling, arousing; and then you do mentally what you *want* to do physically. Jesus speaks to this.

<sup>1</sup> *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*, 1994, University of Chicago Press



“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman [or man] lustfully has already committed adultery with her [or him] in his [or her] heart.” – *Matthew 5:27-28 NIV*

And so, after fantasizing about Joseph, and in spite of personal risk and spousal betrayal, Mrs. Potiphar acts on her impulse.

... and [she] said, “Come to bed with me!” – *Genesis 39:7b NIV*

The reason bulimic sex has such a grip is that it taps into very real, unfulfilled, God-given needs and desires, but it tries to seduce us into meeting them in non-God-honoring ways.

But he refused. [We covered his reasons last week. But, he ends with] “... you are his wife. How then could I do such a *wicked* thing and sin against God?” [He doesn’t call it wicked because it’s sexual, but because they’re not married ... to each other!] – *Genesis 39:8a-9 NIV*

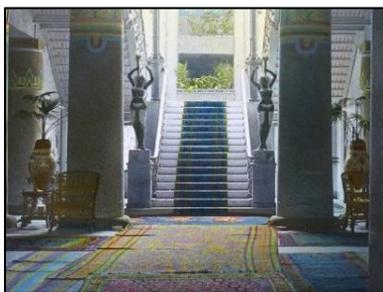
In the City of God and the City of Man, there’s only one symbol of total trust and complete commitment: marriage. There’s a startling statistic in Dr. David Gudgel’s book “Before You Live Together”. Out of every eight cohabitating couples, four will split up without marrying and three will marry and divorce. Sex cools and relationships struggle when you have to *audition!*

And though she spoke to Joseph *day after day*, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. – *Genesis 39:10 NIV*

Once she’s in the grip, she can’t stop herself. What began as a diversion has become a diminishing of her sexuality-based self-esteem. Now she must conquer Joseph or accept his rejection.

[Verse 11 begins with dramatic, suspenseful words] One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and [PUZZLED] none of the household servants was inside. [This is where the audience is shouting, “Don’t go into the house! Get out! Run!”] – *Genesis 39:11 NIV*

Joseph didn’t dust or sweep. He’s the Chief of Staff. He’d meet with his personnel to get reports and go over the day’s agenda: visiting officials, banquets, repairs, supplies, transportation.



The business wing was typically a *beehive* of activity. But *one day*, it was deserted. Wind wafting, leaves rustling, one lone cricket. “Hello? Where’d everybody go?” And *then* ... even the cricket stops chirping! “Where is everybody?!”

“I gave ‘em the morning off, sent ‘em to town. We’ve got the whole place to ourselves, just you and me ... and that *cricket*.” And this is it, her last all out, now or never, do or die attempt.

She caught him by his cloak and said, “Come to bed with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. [I imagine yelling, “What is it with me and coats?!” But was it a coat? And is she just holding onto it?] – *Genesis 39:12 NIV*

Why did Joseph *run*? Day after day, he's *walked away* from her seductions. She uses the same ol' line. And I *assume* she didn't jump out like the *boogey-man!* She's trying to *seduce* not *scare*. What is so alarming or appalling *or appealing* that he instantly, reflexively hightails it? And *why* does she want to *kill* him for it?



He's told her face to face he won't be alone with her. So what are we missing? What throws her into a *murderous rage?! We* need to examine two things: "his cloak" and how "she caught him".

Have you ever caught a fish? Have you ever had it wriggle loose and escape back into the water? The word for "caught" means *caught* (e.g. seized, captured, taken).



Obviously her attempt failed, he got away, but what did she *do* that she *thought* would *trap* him, *prevent* him from leaving, and *force* him to stay? Let's look at the "cloak".

I use the NIV <sup>2</sup> for reading, but *not* studying. There's a *tradeoff* between readability and exactness.



Potiphar's Wife, Baldi Lazzaro c. 1703

NIV does a good job balancing the two, but the literal versions hold the key to the cloak. None of them use "cloak" or "coat" to translate the word "begged" [behg'ED]. They *all* translate it more precisely as "garment" or "outer garment". It *can* refer to a cloak; often *does*. But "begged" can be *any garment ... except* what's common to the classic 17th and 18th century paintings. He *wasn't* European!



Amenemhat I, 12th Dynasty, c. 1977 BC

Thanks to modern archaeologists, who've discovered *tons* about Joseph's era, the 12th Dynasty (Middle Kingdom), something that was linguistically ambiguous is culturally clear.

It's hard to find a 12th dynasty painting or statue of a man wearing a *coat*, *especially* to work! Here's how King Amenemhat dressed. We *know* what they wore.



Loincloth of Maiherpra, c. 1450 BC

Men had loincloth underwear like this mesh one, 1450<sup>BC</sup>, with a privacy panel!

Over it, they wore a wrap-skirt *outer garment*, like this one worn by the steward Senbi who lived the *same time* as the steward *Joseph!*



The steward Senbi II, c. 1950-1900 BC

<sup>2</sup> New International Version, 1996

I agree with the scholars who say that Joseph's outer garment was a *kilt*. So, how'd she trap him? Scripture *never* says his garment came off *as he fled*. It says "he left [it] in her hand". The most literal reading implies that he *abandoned* that which was taken. In other words: she pulled his skirt off! Something the church wasn't really interested in painting in the 1600s!

Do or die! *Shockingly unlike* any other approach. She thinks she's *got him*, that he won't risk his reputation by leaving. But, *Flash-Gordon!* He streaks out of the house in his underpants! His reaction is the *ultimate rejection*. He doesn't care who sees, or what the consequences will be. And he makes Mrs. Potiphar's adulteress seduction, and *failure*, and *humiliation*, *very public!* When sexual temptation is stalking, don't try to be cool. Wriggle off that hook and jump back in the water, or you *will be* fried!

Love desires the person. Lust desires the pleasure (the person is *negotiable*; they're just the required delivery system). Lust and indifference and hatred are very closely associated. Mrs. Potiphar's bulimic lust instantly becomes vindictive loathing.

When she saw that he had left his cloak ["outer garment"] in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. "Look," [Written as though self-evident] she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed." – *Genesis 39:13-14 NIV*

The Word says that sex is the ultimate, intimate expression of love: heart and soul and body and mind. And the goal is to use sex to say, "I'm completely committed exclusively to *you*, in *every aspect* of my being." The World says that sex is just the manipulation of body parts. And the goal is to use the person to get as much as you can, *commitment free!*

When someone says "I want to have sex with you but I don't want to be married to you." They're saying, "I don't want to be "bound up" heart and soul and mind. Just *body* ... *temporarily* ... unless the audition goes *well*. I want your body, but not your heart or soul or mind. I want to give you *my body*, but I don't want to *entrust* myself to you. I want to ravish you, devour you, and then vomit you up. How hot is *that?!*"

And those who buy into this disorder deprive *themselves* of the ultimate, intimate expression of love ... according to the *surveys!* Bulimic sex, can *never* provide the intimate closeness and connection that Godly sex was designed to provide.

But there's no reason to wallow in guilt. Recognize wrongdoing, reject bulimic sex, receive His grace, and be restored! It's *not* about breaking religious rules. It's about finding what you're looking for. That's why Jesus did all He did. To help you find what you ultimately, intimately desire most ... *Him*.

Great sex is a *gift* from God, *and* the *proof* of God! But, that's for next time. We'll leave Mrs. Potiphar in her humiliated rage.

You won't *believe* what she tells her husband!