

#3 – THE CRUCIBLE OF CHARACTER (David Yeghnazar)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Genesis 39:2-21

² The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, ⁴ Joseph found favour in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. ⁵ From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. ⁶ So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, ⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, 'Come to bed with me!'

⁸ But he refused. 'With me in charge,' he told her, 'my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹ No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?' ¹⁰ And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even to be with her.

¹¹ One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. ¹² 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.

¹³ When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, ¹⁴ she called her household servants. 'Look,' 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. ¹⁵ When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.'

¹⁶ She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him this story: 'That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.'

¹⁹ When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, 'This is how your slave treated me,' he burned with anger. ²⁰ Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹ the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warder.

1. Forty years ago, Richard Forster wrote a follow-up to his book, ***Celebration of Discipline***. It was: ***Money, Sex, and Power: The Challenge of the Disciplined Life***. Young ministers used to be warned of the triple temptation – to pursue 'the gold, the girls, or the glory'. In **1 Timothy 1:18-19** the author warns his young protégé, "I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith." Temptation can come unexpectedly, as it seems to have done for Joseph. Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 10:12-13**, "if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." Oscar Wilde once said, "I can resist anything but temptation", but I doubt he ever tried very hard. Of Joseph, on the other hand, we read, "But he refused." (Genesis 29:8). Joseph had three strategies of resistance. (1) He remembered God and his own sense of calling. (2) He guarded his vulnerability as much as was possible. (3) When all else failed, he ran away.
 - *What temptation do you need to run away from?*
 - *How will you run away?*
 - *Joseph paid a price for his resistance. What price are you willing to pay to be faithful to do what is right?*
2. The Apostle James wrote, "we are tempted by our own desires that drag us off and trap us." (**James 1:14 CEV**). Meanwhile, **Matthew 1:21** promises that "Jesus... will save his people from their sins." In 2020, a prominent Christian leader, fired from his role as Senior Pastor after being unfaithful in his marriage wrote, "When you lead out of an empty place, you make choices that have real and painful consequences."
 - *How do we make sure we are not living (and leading) out of an empty place?*
 - *How do we get free from the temptation trap?*
 - *What sins has Jesus saved you from?*
 - *Do you need to ask him for forgiveness?*