

READ

Genesis 39

REFLECT

After a short break, we're back to Joseph and his saga. The Ishmaelites that bought him from his brothers find a new buyer for their cargo in Egypt – Potiphar. Whereas his brothers never found him to be useful, Joseph was incredibly successful in Egypt, a success that led him to basically do Potiphar's job for him while Potiphar enjoyed life. All seemed to be going surprisingly well for the guy whose brothers sold him into slavery, but then Joseph ran into a very difficult problem. Joseph was a handsome fellow, and not just handsome, but *beautiful*. The Hebrew speaks of him having a beautiful body and was beautiful to look at, and, apparently, people took notice. Potiphar's wife, used to having whatever she wanted, saw Joseph and wanted him. Joseph, however, knew he had been given much by Potiphar and didn't want to betray that trust, so he rejected every sexual advance made toward him. But she was incessant, coming on to him every single day. One day she took it even farther, grabbing on to him, and so Joseph left quickly; so quickly, in fact, that he came right out of the clothing he was wearing and left it there. Angry Joseph continually refused her (again, she was not someone used to being refused), she decided to use the forgotten clothing to her advantage. She spun a tale of attempted rape, foiled by her screams, and the forgotten clothes were her proof. No one dared question her claims, so Joseph was imprisoned. Despite being jailed, Joseph remained fervent in his faith, and God remained with him. He had the same success he had in Potiphar's house, rising in power so that he became the jail commander's assistant and, essentially, running the jail in which he was held. This story does a couple of things – first, it takes a terrible situation and turns it into a blessing, which is something God is doing constantly. Secondly, it shows how keeping the faith can keep us headed in the right direction, even when things seem to be going against us. Finally, it begins to build the narrative so that we can see how Joseph's dreams, which he'd gotten in trouble over, were beginning to come true.

REACT

- When things go bad in your life, how have you reacted? Have you given up hope and moved on? Have you found a way to stay positive? Both are probably true – what might you do to hold onto faith that things *can* work out?
- The sexual assault allegation is a tricky element to the story. We're often told to believe the victims of sexual assault, and that remains to be true even in the case of a false accusation like the one against Joseph. What could have been done for a different result?
- Joseph was propositioned countless times by Potiphar's wife, and we can be sure that it was a big temptation for him. How often have you faced temptation, whether it be being tempted by money, power, sex, or something else? Have you given into that temptation? Have you resisted? For most of us, it's probably both. What was different about each situation that led to different decisions being made?

RESPOND

Centering Prayer: When it feels as though everything is spiraling out of control and you have no hope, centering ourselves can be a good way to ground us in our faith and our trust in God. While it might not immediately seem to fix things, it slows us down, and calms us down, so that we can change our perspective and then allow God to lead. Then things can change. Find instructions for the guided centering prayer at: www.theworkofthepeople.com/be-still