

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES – STUDY 5

QUESTION 1

- a) Doing the right thing doesn't always mean that we will avoid problems; or unfair consequences.
- b) In verse 11 we see that Joseph was alone with Potiphar's wife; knowing that she had constantly been trying to seduce him.
- c) She had been waiting for such an opportunity. No doubt he had been avoiding her when he could.
- d) Whether he had any choice about being where he was at that moment; here is a reminder that wherever possible we should avoid putting ourselves in position where temptation might be yielded to.
- e) In verse 12 Joseph did the right thing by running away; even though on this occasion he was open to false accusation (**1 Corinthians 6:18** "*Flee from sexual immorality*").

QUESTION 2

- a) Potiphar's wife felt scorned and no doubt humiliated.
- b) By doing the right thing we can often invite a negative response.
- c) Here she takes her revenge. It is of no benefit to her ultimately (apart from her ego perhaps); but it demonstrates her power over her slave.
- d) In relaying her story to the other servants in verse 14, Potiphar's wife is appealing to their jealousy. Joseph is a foreigner who has been elevated to a higher position than them. Note the reference in verse 14 to "*a Hebrew*"; rather than mentioning his name.
- e) She was feeding their resentment.
- f) In verse 17 she not only refers to 'the Hebrew servant' again; but reminds her husband that Joseph is there because of him. It's therefore partly his fault!

QUESTION 3

- a) This is clearly a passage about injustice. Yet equally it demonstrates God's overruling in providence.
- b) Notice that Joseph is not immediately executed, but put in prison. This is significant; for in Egypt, attempted rape was a capital offence.
- c) Perhaps Potiphar is not entirely convinced by his wife's story. Is he aware of his wife's flirtatious ways? He is certainly aware of Joseph's integrity. He had put his trust in him (verse 6).
- d) The key thing is that Joseph's life is spared and Potiphar is restrained.
- e) This is not the first time that Joseph's life has been spared (see **37:20-24**). Neither is it the first time that his clothing had been used to give a false account (see **37:31-33**).

QUESTION 4

- a) Verse 21 reveals that Joseph is not alone and that God will use the situation for good.
- b) Here we have the same phrase as in verse 2 "*The Lord was with Joseph*".
- c) We might suggest these are completely opposite circumstances, but here we still have the abiding presence of God.
- d) The circumstances change; but God doesn't.
- e) As Roger Ellsworth puts it in his book: "*God didn't simply send Joseph to prison. He went with him*".
- f) Joseph might have been out of view of everyone else. He might have been rejected by his own family. But he is not away from God's steadfast love. The idea here is that of 'covenant' love.
- g) God's purposes for redemption are not diminished by what happens here; despite the desperate situation Joseph once more finds himself in.

QUESTION 5

- a) This is reminiscent of the situation back in verses 3-6.
- b) Here we see God's plans unfolding.
- c) In the simple act of giving Joseph responsibility among the other prisoners, the scene is set for him to be able to interpret a series of dreams.
- d) If we knew nothing of what was to come next in the story, we might consider what has happened so far to be totally pointless.
- e) However, the critical point is reinforced again in verse 23; that "*the Lord was with him*".

QUESTION 6

- a) We must see that through all of this, that Joseph maintains his integrity.
- b) Remember Pharaoh's dramatic statement to his servants later in **Genesis 41:38** "*Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?*"
- c) It's not easy. Doing the right thing can in the short term make life more difficult.
- d) God has a plan for his life (see **Psalms 105:8-22**).
- e) But remember that whatever happened it is God working: "*And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed*" (verse 23).
- f) Throughout this story we trace God's hand through good times and bad. It's His covenant love (verse 21).