

Escaping the Vortex of Temptation

Joseph grew up in a blended family. His dad, Jacob, had four wives all at the same time. Joseph was Jacob's favourite son. Joseph's dad was a weak and indulgent father.

At aged 17, Joseph tells his father about the evil actions of his half-brothers. Jacob does nothing. Instead, he rewards Joseph with a multi-coloured coat! This arouses the hatred of his brothers to the point they are unable even to speak to him. When Joseph explains the meaning of his two dreams, even his dad rebukes him.

To compound this dysfunctional home background, his brothers sell him off as a slave to some Ishmaelites who then sell him to an Egyptian. Did Joseph feel rejected? Lonely? Was he longing for understanding, acceptance and genuine love?

As a slave, Joseph excels to the point that his owner, Potiphar, puts all his household and business affairs under Joseph's control. Joseph is described as "well-built and handsome." He is your "Mr Egyptian."

Enter Ms Egypt, Potiphar's wife. Mrs Potiphar tries day after day to seduce Joseph. He resists her. He doesn't want to be anywhere near her. Then one day she springs on him, clings to him, pleading for him to come to bed with her. Joseph struggles out of her grip and flees leaving her clutching his cloak! For his trouble, Joseph gets thrown into prison.

What stronger force than lust enabled a hot-blooded, 20-something-year-old Joseph to say "No, No, No, No, No!"? Fear. Fear does not often get good press in our liberated society. Joseph feared his owner, Potiphar, and he feared God. The Bible records his words to Mrs Potiphar: "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?"

Today there are cries of outrage against anyone who conveys a tone of judgment. When President Reagan asked that sexual abstinence be taught as an option, possibly the best option, for young people the headlines read: "Don't lay a guilt trip on us!" "Don't try to scare us." But fear may serve us well, as warnings against the real dangers posed by a disease like AIDS or against the more subtle dangers represented by an addiction to lust and the ultimate danger of eternal damnation.

One person asks: "Why are we here? Are we on earth primarily to experience pleasure, to have fun? If so, Christianity, with its offer of a cross and sacrificial love . . . seems pretty thin. If we are here for no real reason, why go through all the bother of trying to connect glandular desire with lofty goals like intimacy within marriage?"

"Or are we here with a mission? Are we indeed creatures who will best find fulfilment by living up to the demands of the Creator?" If the answer is yes, then the thrills offered by the easy lie of pornography or sexual promiscuity will not permanently satisfy. We have three options: sexual indulgence, sexual repression or to seek God with all our heart, determined only to find sexual fulfilment within a heterosexual marriage where sex belongs.