

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study “*Strong In Purity*,” this sermon will explore the character of Joseph and his pursuit of purity. Joseph’s pursuit of purity led him to respond to temptation in a manner that honored God.

**Introduction:** All too often we make the mistake in thinking that purity only applies to relationships between men and women. While that is part of it, purity is much more. As a follower of Christ, we must pursue purity in our relationships with the opposite gender. We must pursue purity in our work ethic. We must pursue purity within the rolls we play in the context of family and work. This sermon will study Joseph’s responses when impurity presented itself and the reasons for his responses. We would be wise to follow the model that Joseph provides.

### I. **Joseph refused temptation (v. 8 & 10)**

To refuse someone indicates that you have chosen to decline an invitation. We might be invited to a game of golf after work, but have to decline it because of other commitments. We might be invited to a dinner party with our Bible study group, but have to respectfully decline for various reasons. Each refusal is an action on the part of the one declining. Joseph was given an invitation and he refused more than once. Yes, he declined Potiphar’s wife. More importantly, he declined temptation.

Joseph’s first refusal is found in verse 8. The word used here shows that he simply rejected the offer. The original language does not indicate that there was any hint of delay between the offer and Joseph’s refusal. We find Joseph refusing yet again in verse 10. The word use here is different from verse 8. This time Joseph did not even listen to what Potiphar’s wife was saying. He completely ignored her.

Joseph’s temptation was to accept an offer to engage in sinful behavior between a man and a woman. What is our temptation today? Is it similar to Joseph’s, or is it something completely different? No matter what the invitation might be, we would all be wise to refuse it in the same way that Joseph refused this temptation.

### II. **Joseph ran from temptation (v. 12-13)**

What is the best response to sexual temptation? The best answer is to RUN! Sometimes we wonder how close we can get to temptation without committing sin. We need to have the exact opposite mindset. We need to consider how quickly and how far we can get away from the temptation so that we do not give in to sin. This is exactly what Joseph did because he was a man that pursued purity as opposed to his own fleshly desires.

The Bible says that Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife. Joseph understood that he was around something that would only do him harm. His action was to get away from this temptation, to flee from it without hesitation or delay. His actions were of such extreme measure that he left his outer garments behind. Anyone who happened to be in close proximity to this saw Joseph less than fully clothed. This would result in others questioning Joseph's actions and they would not have the benefit of the full story to reach their conclusions. But, Joseph knew that leaving his outer garments behind was better than staying in that setting at that moment.

We can once again learn from Joseph. Let's return to our question, What is your temptation? It would be wise to run from it as Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife. Others might not understand your actions, but you know what needs to be done. Do not let your temptation grab a hold of you and pull you in too close.

### **III. Joseph respected God**

#### **A. He respected God by not sinning against Him (v. 9)**

One of the arguments that we tell ourselves as it relates to giving in to temptation is that no one else will ever know. This is never the case. First, we will know and we have to live with ourselves. Temptation will always take us further than we want to go and cost us more than we want to pay. We realize this after we give in to temptation.

Second, God knows. Joseph was fully aware of this when he told Potiphar's wife that he did not want to sin against God. When we sin, it is God that we ultimately sin against. David echoed this when he said, "Against You — You alone — I have sinned and done this evil in Your sight" (Ps. 51:4). Joseph's pursuit of purity led him to the correct understanding that if he gave in to the offer, he would be sinning against God. If we give in to whatever our temptation is, we too would be sinning against God.

#### **B. He respected God's outcomes (v. 20)**

As we come to the end of this particular story, we would hope to find a happy ended. We would hope to see that Potiphar comes home and his wife confesses to her sin and Joseph is rewarded for his faithfulness. The exact opposite is the case. Yes, Potiphar comes home and yes his wife shares a story. But, Joseph ends up in prison.

How does Joseph respond? It seems like a fair question. The short answer is that he respects God's outcomes. Joseph had a host of negative things take place in and throughout his life. Yet in Genesis 50:20 he told his brothers who had treated him unfairly that what they planned for evil God used for good. He did not discount the difficult circumstances, but rather chose to trust in the goodness of God in spite of the difficult circumstances.

**Conclusion:** It can be easy to look at Joseph's life and say that what happened to him was not fair. He did the right thing in fleeing Potiphar's wife and refusing the temptation. Yet, the end result was time in jail. That is not fair.

If anyone understands something not being fair, it is God. It is not fair that He had to send His Son, who did no wrong, to suffer on our behalf. It is not fair that Jesus, who loved all people,

was rejected by those He loved. Instead of arguing over the fairness of the situation, let's emulate the life of Joseph who did not want to sin against God and was ultimately used by God in powerful ways.

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