

# Accused

## SESSION 10

**Genesis 39:7-21**

**Memory Verse: Genesis 39:21**

**Pure living brings honor from God.**

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What I've seen and heard on television in recent months has motivated me to shut off the tube on more than one occasion. Truth is, I've never cared for movies and shows where I know I'm going to hear foul language or sexual innuendos. In recent months, though, I have even encountered profane and suggestive language on game shows that used to be wholesome. So, since I'd rather not let such thoughts dominate my mind, I turn the set off.

Paul challenged the believers at Philippi to dwell on good stuff, the things that were worthy of their God and of their name as Christ followers (Phil. 4:8). As you prepare this week, reflect on the typical content of your thought life. Pray for the Lord's strength to help you filter out what's unhealthy and embrace what's pure. Spend some time praying for the adults in your group, too, asking God to help them to avoid the impure thoughts that lead to impure living.



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It is always good to do the right thing, and it is always right to do what is good. This may seem obvious, but we live in a world that often rejects these statements. People ask the question, “If something feels good, then how could it be wrong?” On the flip side, people often think that doing the right thing means depriving oneself of joy. The thinking is that doing what is good and what is right will get in the way of one’s own desires and agenda. God’s Word tells us that He will honor those who do what is good and right. This truth is evidenced in the life of Joseph. (PSG, p. 91)

**How does God honor those who live pure lives?**



## Understand the Context (Genesis 38:1–39:23)

The events of Genesis 38 starkly contrast those in chapter 39. Chapter 38 recounts the seduction of Judah by his daughter-in-law, Tamar. Judah had three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. Judah arranged a marriage between Er with Tamar. However, Er was wicked and the Lord “put him to death” (Gen. 38:7). As a result, the law of levirate marriage went into effect. This legal provision required a dead man’s brother to marry the deceased man’s childless widow and father a son. This son would assume the dead man’s name and inherit his part of the promised land (Deut. 25:5-10).

Judah’s second son, Onan, refused to fulfill the duty of a *levir*, a Latin word meaning “brother-in-law,” so he also died for his evil deeds (Gen. 38:9-10). Judah instructed Tamar to remain a widow until his third son Shelah grew up. However, when Shelah reached adulthood, Judah reneged on his promise.

When Tamar learned that Judah was traveling to Timnah, she ceased wearing her widow’s garments, covered her face, and stationed herself along the road. When Judah saw her, he assumed she was a prostitute. She agreed to sleep with him in exchange for a young goat. Tamar insisted, however, that Judah leave his signet ring, cord, and staff with her until she received the goat. When Judah later sent the goat by a friend, the friend could not find the woman.

About three months later, Judah received word that Tamar was pregnant, so he decreed that she be put to death. Tamar, however, made clear that she had become pregnant by the man who owned the signet ring, cord, and staff. When Judah recognized these

items as his own, he relented (38:26). Tamar gave birth to twins named Perez and Zerah.

In stark contrast to Judah’s immoral behavior, Joseph’s moral integrity shines brightly in chapter 39. After purchasing Joseph from his brothers, the Midianites/Ishmaelites sold him to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officers (37:28,36; 39:1). But chapter 39 begins with the notation that “the LORD was with Joseph” (39:2) and that theme played out across Joseph’s life.

In time, Potiphar placed all that he owned under Joseph’s authority. And, when Potiphar’s wife repeatedly attempted to entice Joseph to sleep with her, he consistently refused. Joseph identified such immoral behavior as an “immense evil” and a “sin against God” (39:9).

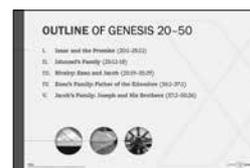
One day while Joseph was working in the house with none of the other servants present, Potiphar’s wife grabbed him by his garment. Joseph quickly fled, leaving the garment behind. Potiphar’s wife, however, wickedly turned circumstantial evidence against Joseph (39:16-18), accusing him of attempted rape.

As a result of his wife’s deception, Potiphar imprisoned Joseph. Even in these dark circumstances, though, Joseph remained faithful to the Lord. Because of his integrity, the warden granted Joseph a position of authority and influence in the prison.

**Read Genesis 39:7-21. How did Joseph deal with temptation? (PSG, p. 92)**



**PRIOR TO THE SESSION:** Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Genesis 20–50*) to reference during the session. Draw a two-column chart with a line across the top. Above one column, write *Judah* and above the other column write *Joseph*. Since Genesis 38 is not the focus for the session, complete the *Judah* column by recording information from *Understand the Context* (PSG, p. 92). The *Joseph* column will be completed throughout the session.



**INTRODUCE:** Guide the group to signal with a thumbs up or a thumbs down whether they have ever known someone who has done one of the following: gone on a diet, spent more for something than they budgeted, vented on social media, procrastinated, gossiped, or lied.

**DISCUSS:** Point out eating or overspending, along with speaking unkindly or untruthfully, all represent common temptations. Encourage adults to suggest other areas where people commonly face temptation. Allow a volunteer to read the introduction on page 91 of the PSG. Briefly note how it relates to facing temptation.

**ASK:** **How does God honor those who live pure lives?** (PSG, p. 91)

**TRANSITION:** *Temptation surrounds us; but, as believers, we are called to honor God with pure living. In today’s session we’ll see how Joseph determined to reject temptation, despite the cost.*

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## Group Activity Option

### Music

Play “Lord, I Need You” by Matt Maher. Encourage the group to join in singing the chorus. After playing the song, lead the group in a discussion of how Jesus is our defense and our righteousness. Emphasize that this includes those times when we face difficult temptations. Urge adults to examine Joseph’s example in today’s session and to identify things he could teach us about dealing with temptation God’s way.

## Tempted (Genesis 39:7-10)

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**7** After some time his master's wife looked longingly at Joseph and said, "Sleep with me." **8** But he refused. "Look," he said to his master's wife, "with me here my master does not concern himself with anything in his house, and he has put all that he owns under my authority. **9** No one in this house is greater than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. So how could I do this immense evil, and how could I sin against God?" **10** Although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her.

**(v. 7) After some time:** In the original language, this expression literally reads: "after these things." The rendering suggests a period of time had passed from when Joseph came into Potiphar's house and the events of Genesis 39. While the exact timing is unknown, it was long enough for the woman's passions to be aroused. Verse 6 has already introduced Joseph as a strong and attractive young man.

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### Key Background

#### Sleep with me

Potiphar's wife made her intentions clear to Joseph. Despite being a married woman, her lust drove her to make repeated adulterous offers to the young Hebrew slave. Scripture teaches that God's design for marriage is one man and one woman (Gen. 2:21-25). Adultery violates God's design for marriage. Even centuries before God gave Israel the Mosaic law at Sinai, Joseph understood that sex outside the covenant of marriage was wrong.

**(vv. 7-8) His master's wife:** This phrase refers to the unnamed **wife** of Potiphar. The term **master** could also be rendered "lord" or "owner." Thus, Joseph was a slave in Potiphar's household, and the woman who tempted Joseph was Potiphar's spouse.

**(v. 7) Looked longingly at:** This phrase literally means the woman's eyes were "lifted up." A similar expression appears in Genesis 13:10 to describe Lot's longing look at the Jordan plain when he chose to set up his tent near the wicked city of Sodom.

**(v. 8) Refused:** This verb appears in the Old Testament only in a form that expresses intense or strong rejection. The same verb occurred in Genesis 37:35 to describe Jacob's refusal to be comforted when his sons presented him with Joseph's robe that they had dipped in blood. In Exodus 7:14, the verb identifies Pharaoh's

refusal to let the Israelites go. And it depicts Israel's refusal to obey God's commands (see Ps. 78:10) or even to repent (Hos. 11:5).

**(v. 8) Under my authority:** This phrase literally means "in my hand." For the Hebrews, the hand symbolized power and **authority**. Thus, they used the term in a variety of idioms or expressions. For example in 1 Chronicles 29:24 the phrase "pledged their allegiance" is more literally "gave their hand under." In Deuteronomy 2:7 the expression "work of your hands" designates the activity in which the person is involved. And in Numbers 15:30 the word "defiantly" literally means "with a high hand."

**(v. 9) Immense evil:** The Hebrew word for **evil** contrasts the word "good" at the opposite end of the moral spectrum. It suggests any condition or action that is unacceptable in God's sight (Jer. 52:2; Mal. 2:17). Joseph correctly evaluated immoral behavior with his master's wife as a great transgression against God and others.

**(v. 9) Sin:** The Hebrew verb literally means "to miss the mark." It is the main word for sin in the Old Testament. By committing sin, people miss the goal or standard God has set for them. They fail to meet the requirements for holy living and thus fall short of spiritual wholeness or well-being.

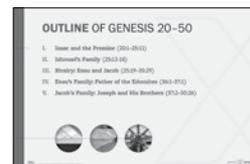
**(v. 10) Day after day:** This phrase emphasizes the repeated nature of the temptation. Potiphar's wife persisted in her attempts to lure Joseph into wrongdoing. The expression underscores the reality of the daily pressure to conform. If we are serious about our faith, Christians need to rely on God's Spirit when dealing with temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

# EXPLORE Genesis 37:7-10



**APPLICATION POINT:** Believers must consider the consequences of giving in to temptation.

**REVIEW:** Direct attention to “Joseph and His Brothers” on **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outline of Genesis 20–50*). Briefly recap the previous session and Joseph’s slavery in Egypt. Give each adult a copy of **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *Potiphar: All We Know*). Encourage the group to read the handout and briefly discuss some points that stick out to adults from the pack item.



**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read **Genesis 39:7-10** as the group listens for Joseph’s dilemma. Lead the group to talk about why this would have been a powerful temptation for Joseph.

**EXAMINE:** Encourage adults to scan the content for verses 7-10 on pages 93-94 of the PSG. Lead a brief discussion focusing on the reasons Joseph gave to resist Potiphar’s wife.



**ASK:** How do people often try to rationalize or make excuses for sin? (PSG, p. 94)

**MINI LECTURE:** Direct the group’s attention to the two columns: *Judah* and *Joseph*. Summarize the information from Genesis 38 related to Joseph’s brother, Judah. Highlight that while Joseph resisted temptation, Judah slept with his daughter-in-law after he had broken a promise to her. Encourage adults to consider the stark contrast between the two brothers. Under the Joseph column add the words *moral integrity*.

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## Group Activity Option

### Object Lesson: Fishing Lures

Prior to the session, gather a selection of fishing lures. Encourage a few volunteers to share a quick fishing story. Show adults the lures. Lead the group to talk about the purpose of lures. Share that the lures entice fish to go after the bait and bite the hook. *Many factors determine the lure that is most effective, but the purpose never changes: enticing the fish to take the bait and get caught.* Emphasize that temptations may take different forms, but they are all designed to lead us to take the bait and move away from God’s ideal.

## Trapped (Genesis 39:11-16)

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**11** Now one day he went into the house to do his work, and none of the household servants were there. **12** She grabbed him by his garment and said, “Sleep with me!” But leaving his garment in her hand, he escaped and ran outside. **13** When she saw that he had left his garment with her and had run outside, **14** she called her household servants. “Look,” she said to them, “my husband brought a Hebrew man to make fools of us. He came to me so he could sleep with me, and I screamed as loud as I could. **15** When he heard me screaming for help, he left his garment beside me and ran outside.” **16** She put Joseph’s garment beside her until his master came home.

**(v. 11) To do his work:** This phrase calls attention to the fact that Joseph did not go looking for temptation. Rather, it arose in the normal course of his required daily activities. The Hebrew term for **work**, like its English counterpart, can designate the activity of working, the required skills for such activity, or the results of working. In the context of Genesis 39:11, it refers to Joseph’s routine or habitual labor that his role as a servant to Potiphar required him to perform. Verse 11 reveals Joseph’s innocence in the situation and his vulnerability.

**(v. 11) None of the household servants:** This comment emphasizes that no one witnessed the attempted assault by Potiphar’s wife. She tried to get Joseph to engage in sexual wrongdoing when no one else was present. Despite Joseph’s best efforts to avoid contact with the woman, this exceptional situation left him susceptible to her advances. Later, it also made him susceptible to her accusations.

**(v. 12) She grabbed him by his garment:** The verb rendered **grabbed** also means “to seize.” It can involve taking hold of something before further action. In Deuteronomy 22:28, the verb identifies a man taking hold of a virgin to rape her. The word for **garment** refers to a robe of any kind. He passed this test with flying colors by leaving his garment and running outside.

**(v. 12) Escaped:** The Hebrew verb appears four times in verses 12-18. The term basically means “to flee.” It indicates quick movement away from someone or something. In many biblical contexts, the verb refers to flight from danger or enemies. Centuries later Paul commanded believers to do what Joseph literally did: “Flee sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18).

**(v. 14) Hebrew:** Potiphar’s wife applied this designation to Joseph in a derogatory sense. The term is derived from the name “Eber,” one of Shem’s descendants (Gen. 11:10-14). Scripture also identifies Abraham as

a descendant of Shem from Eber’s line (see 11:26 in its context). The label differentiates Israelites from foreigners. Its use seemed to disappear after David established the monarchy.

**(v. 14) To make fools of us:** The Hebrew verb can indicate laughter in disbelief or in joy. This was the case when Abraham and Sarah laughed after learning they would have a son in their old age (17:17; 18:12; 21:6). In a negative sense, as here, the verb can suggest scorn and derision. In the context of Genesis 39 the term also implies sexual abuse or misconduct.

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### Key Doctrine

#### The Family

Marriage is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. (See Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4.)

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**(v. 14) I screamed as loud as I could:** Although Potiphar’s wife was lying, her insistence that she screamed would be viewed as proof of innocence. Compare this account to Deuteronomy 22:23-27 where the Mosaic law addressed crying for rescue. The testimony of Potiphar’s wife along with the circumstantial evidence of Joseph’s garment sealed his apparent guilt.



**APPLICATION POINT:** Believers may need to flee from a situation to escape temptation.

**READ:** **Read aloud Genesis 39:11-16**, directing the group to identify three actions in these verses that trapped Joseph. (*An empty house, an item left behind, and a dishonest person*)

**EXAMINE:** Encourage adults to work in pairs to review the content for verses 11-16 on pages 95-96 of the PSG. Use the information on page 116 of the Leader Guide to highlight some of the key words and ideas in these verses.

**ASK:** **What makes fleeing a temptation so difficult?** (PSG, p. 96)

**RECORD:** Under the *Joseph* column record the words *fled temptation*. Emphasize how Joseph's commitment to flee temptation stands in contrast to Judah giving into temptation. Remind adults that we are not called to stand and fight every temptation that comes along.

**TRANSITION:** *Sometimes, our best response is to remove ourselves from the situation, to run away from temptation. For Joseph, that protected his integrity. His situation was about to get worse, but he still maintained his honor and his righteousness before God.*

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## Group Activity Option

### Drama

Direct adults to work in pairs to create a contemporary role play where one person tries to convince the other one to sin. (*NOTE: Encourage adults to avoid portraying sexual temptation such as what Joseph faced.*) Allow some of the pairs to act out their role plays. Emphasize the reality of temptation and the need to sometimes flee. Lead the group in a discussion about what makes temptation so hard to resist and what can be learned from Joseph's example.

## Trustworthy (Genesis 39:17-21)

**17** Then she told him the same story: “The Hebrew slave you brought to us came to make a fool of me, **18** but when I screamed for help, he left his garment beside me and ran outside.” **19** When his master heard the story his wife told him — “These are the things your slave did to me” — he was furious **20** and had him thrown into prison, where the king’s prisoners were confined. So Joseph was there in prison. **21** But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him. He granted him favor with the prison warden.

**(v. 17) Story:** This common Hebrew term can also be rendered “words.” In some contexts it means “things,” “matters,” or “acts.” In the Old Testament, it frequently identifies what God says. For example, the list we refer to as the Ten Commandments is literally “the Ten Words” in Hebrew (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4). The writer of the book of Hebrews reminded us of the powerful, living nature of God’s Word (Heb. 4:12). In contrast to the eternal truth of God’s words, the words of Potiphar’s wife remind us that human speech too often is untrustworthy and seeks its own agenda.

**(v. 17) You brought to us:** Potiphar’s wife pointed the finger at Potiphar in her trumped up charges against Joseph. To distract from her own guilt, she blamed her husband for bringing the slave into their household. She clearly indicated that her husband needed to take action regarding the situation. Her words call to mind Adam’s attempt to blame Eve—and even God—for his sin of eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:12).

**(v. 18) Left his garment . . . ran outside:** While this part of her story was technically true (v. 15), Potiphar’s wife craftily turned circumstantial evidence against Joseph. In her version of events, she presented herself as an innocent “damsel in distress.” This seized **garment** could be used to identify its owner as Joseph because such clothing could identify the individual’s status, rank, or office.

**(v. 19) Furious:** This phrase can more literally be rendered “his wrath was kindled” or “his anger burned.” The term for **furious** conveys the idea of one’s “nose” or “nostril.” The Hebrews likely observed that people’s noses tend to flare when they become angry. Thus, they realized that a person could express emotions through the nose or the act of breathing. This specific Hebrew word emphasizes the emotional aspect of anger. The Hebrew verb translated “kindled” compares growing anger to stoking a fire.

**(v. 20) Prison:** In Hebrew, this word appears eight times (all in Gen. 39–40). It relates to roundness, so

it could be translated “roundhouse” In context, the term designated a particular prison that confined the king’s prisoners. In Genesis 40:15, Joseph referred to it as a dungeon. Since “captains of the guard” is the same term used for Potiphar in 39:1, this could have been a small, private jail for political or royal prisoners attached to Potiphar’s house (see Gen. 40:3). Joseph going to prison as his “reward” for upright behavior must be understood against the backdrop of God’s larger purposes.

### Key Phrase

#### The LORD was with Joseph

This recurring comment (see Gen. 39:2) reminds us that a person can be doing God’s will and still experience calamity. Joseph remained faithful and refused to yield to temptation even when falsely accused and unfairly treated. Ultimately, the Lord remained with him and blessed him, vindicating his faithfulness.

**(v. 21) Kindness:** This significant Hebrew term, often written in English as *hesed*, previously occurred in the prayer of Abraham’s servant as he sought a wife for Isaac. (24:12,14,27). It conveys both compassion and faithfulness to one’s obligations. It is sometimes translated “faithfulness.” Bible scholars often view it as a covenant term. The word appears again in Joseph’s appeal to the chief cupbearer to mention his plight to Pharaoh who could release him from prison (40:14).

**(v. 21) Favor:** This word can be also be translated “grace.” In contrast to the verb from which it derives, this term focuses not on the giver of grace (the jailer) but on the one receiving the grace (Joseph). Often the word appears in the context of the dealings of someone in a superior position showing favor toward someone in a subordinate position. It was that way in Potiphar’s house (39:4), and it was the same here in prison.



**APPLICATION POINT:** Believers can demonstrate trust in God when falsely accused.

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read **Genesis 39:17-21** as the group listens for the consequences Joseph faced and how he handled those consequences.

**ASK:** Encourage the group to scan the content for verses 17-20 on page 97 of the PSG. Use that information, along with page 118 of the Leader Guide, to highlight what happened to Joseph. Share information about the prison and God's faithfulness.

**ASK:** **How does the way people deal with false accusations reveal their true character?** (PSG, p. 97)

**REVIEW:** Direct attention to the chart contrasting Judah and Joseph. Under the *Joseph* column add *trustworthy*. Note that Genesis 38–39 offer a side-by-side contrast of Judah's unethical behavior and the integrity demonstrated by Joseph. Emphasize the application point for this section of Scripture: *Believers can demonstrate trust in God when falsely accused*. Highlight how trusting God was the key difference between the two.

**TRANSITION:** *Sometimes, doing the right thing does not always guarantee positive outcomes in the short term. Joseph experienced that with his brothers and again with Potiphar's wife. Regardless, he was determined to trust God with the results.*

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## Group Activity Option

### Creative Writing

Prior to the session, gather paper and pencils. Read Genesis 39:17-21 aloud again. Invite the group to create a diary or journal entry from Joseph's point of view. Suggest they also refer to Genesis 39:22-23 for additional background. Affirm that faithfulness is not always comfortable. Note that Joseph found himself unjustly imprisoned and had a choice to make regarding how he would respond. Describe both his feelings and his actions. Allow time for volunteers to share.

## CHALLENGE

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- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 99 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers must consider the consequences of giving in to temptation.*
  - *Believers may need to flee from a situation to escape temptation.*
  - *Believers can demonstrate trust in God when falsely accused.*
- REVIEW:** Invite the group to share how these statements can be used to craft a strategy for recognizing and overcoming temptation.
- GUIDE:** Group adults into teams of two to four people to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 98). Allow time for teams to share.
- ASK:** **What are the consequences of giving into temptation, and what are the benefits to withstanding temptation?** (PSG, p. 99)
- PRAY:** Encourage the group to spend a moment reflecting on temptations in their lives. Close the Bible study with a prayer for God to strengthen each person. Ask Him to remind adults that He has provided His Holy Spirit to help face temptation.

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## After the Session

Reinforce the session by sending each adult in the group a text or email, challenging them to think of tangible ways they can support individuals struggling with temptation. Encourage the group to seek help from other believers when they are facing temptation. Emphasize that this kind of transparency requires a high level of trust. Challenge them to become the kind of people others can trust with such sensitive information, even as they work to identify people they can trust with their own issues.

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