

Tempted
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Allen Power

Genesis 39:3-12,19-21

Does God play favorites? Asked another way, does God provide His favor to everyone in the same way? After we look at the text we'll come back to this.

- When we last left Jacob's son Joseph, his brothers had sold him into slavery. The slave traders took him to Egypt and re-sold him to a prominent officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard named Potiphar.

Genesis 39:2–6 (ESV)

² The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. ⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵ From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field.

- Potiphar was so impressed by Joseph he put him in charge of his entire estate. Joseph handled everything.
- **What was the only thing Potiphar had to think about at home?** (39:6)
- Joseph was not only gifted and trustworthy, he was "*handsome in form and appearance,*" and Mrs. Potiphar was having a mid-life crisis!
- We might think of Dustin Hoffman's line in the movie, *The Graduate*: "*Mrs. Robinson, you're trying to seduce me. Aren't you?*"
- But Dustin Hoffman was no Joseph, and Mrs. Potiphar was more direct.

- Verse ten says “day after day” she aggressively tried to seduce him, but Joseph showed integrity and faithfulness to Potiphar but more importantly to God: *“How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”*
- I doubt that anyone in this group doesn’t know the ending of the story.
- She grabbed his garment (scholars speculate it was a kind of “kilt” and what she grabbed was the knot that fastened it around his waist) and Joseph ran from temptation leaving her holding the evidence for revenge.
- Mrs. Potiphar cries rape; she enlists the staff as witnesses; and when Captain Potiphar comes home she says, “This is YOUR fault! You brought this Hebrew servant into our home,” (she lies and plays the race card.)
- Potiphar’s “anger was kindled” and Joseph was seized and put in prison.
- Is this passage a lesson in resisting temptation? Of course.
- Is it a lesson in integrity? No doubt.
- Is it a lesson in leading a blameless life? Sure.
- All of those apply, but here is what God “highlighted in yellow” to me as I read this familiar passage:

Genesis 39:2 (ESV)

² The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man...

Genesis 39:21 (ESV)

²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

- Eight times in this chapter we read that Joseph had God’s favor.
- Back to our earlier question: Does God play favorites?
- Acts 10:34 (ESV) ³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,
- Romans 2:11 (ESV) Paul wrote: ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.
- 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV) ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

- Those verses show God does not play favorites in offering salvation; but we also asked, does God provide His favor to everyone in the same way?
- **What do you think it meant by a believer having the favor of God?**
- Who are some people that come to mind when we say, “the Lord was clearly with him or her?” **Were they more saved? What was different?**
- God does not play favorites in offering salvation, but “*when it comes to working through individuals for His purposes here on earth, God clearly singles out some over the rest.*”ⁱ We call that the favor of God.
 - Genesis 6:8 (ESV) ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.
 - Exodus 11:3 (ESV) ³ And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.
 - 1 Chronicles 11:9 (ESV) ⁹ And David became greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts was with him.
 - Luke 2:52 (ESV) ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.
- One writer put it this way, “*The best definition of the word favor is “demonstrated delight.” The favor of God can be described as “tangible evidence that a person has the approval of the Lord.”*”ⁱⁱ
- I took my own stab at a definition of God’s favor: God’s supernatural blessing that enables me to succeed in his purpose for my life.
- Big Idea – Two questions: Am I living my life in a way that seeks the favor of God in order to accomplish His purpose for me? At the end of my life could it be said of me, “...the Lord was with him/her?”
- This passage begs other questions: Why does God bestow His favor on certain people? Is it right to seek God’s favor? How do I seek it?
- Let’s look at this opportunity to have the favor of God on our lives.

1. God's Favor comes after faith –
 - Hebrews 11:6 (ESV) ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
 - Does God bless unbelievers? God's general benevolence (Ps. 145:9.)
 - However, God's favor is given to His children, followers of Christ.
 - So, the first step toward favor is salvation, which comes by faith through grace, which is defined as God's "unmerited favor."
2. God's Favor is for fruitfulness –
 - Brandon Cox writes: *"I don't see, in Scripture, God's favor granted to people simply for their own enjoyment, but rather so that the lives of others can be changed and God can be glorified."* ⁱⁱⁱ
 - God's favor on Joseph blessed Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:4-5)
 - God's favor isn't about prosperity for us. It is given to us to be used to bless others as we fulfill His purpose for our lives.
 - God's favor flourishes as we use the gifts and talents He has given us. Joseph used his gifts even in slavery and in prison.
 - Important point: God's favor doesn't mean an easy life. Oftentimes God's most favored servants have suffered hardship.
3. God's Favor demands faithfulness. -
 - Joseph had integrity and trustworthiness. He was faithful to those he worked for. Would my employer trust me with his or her checkbook, possessions, or spouse?
 - More importantly Joseph was faithful to God. God's favor is shown to those who are faithful and faithfulness means obedience.
 - John MacArthur writes: *"God's favor is the rich reward of obedience. God delights in granting special grace and favor to those whose hearts are set on pleasing Him."* ^{iv}
 - In Matthew 25:21 (ESV) Jesus gave us the goal to one day hear, ²¹ ... 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have

been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

- God's favor comes to those who are faithful and obedient.
4. God's Favor is given to those who are humble and teachable.
- Just look at the first six verses of Proverbs 3. *"...do not forget my teaching...keep my commandments...steadfast love and faithfulness...Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."*
 - Right in the middle of these verses, Proverbs 3:4 says do these things *"So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man."*
 - How about humility? Is that important? Proverbs 3:34: *"Toward the scorers he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor."*
 - One writer put it this way: *"God shows favor to the ones who delight in, connect with, and give honor to Him. Isaiah 66:2 says, "These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word."*^v
5. Is it okay to seek God's favor?
- Just look to the book of Psalms:
 - Psalm 119:58 (ESV) ⁵⁸ I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.
 - Psalm 84:11 (ESV) ¹¹ For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.
 - Psalm 90:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!
 - Psalm 86:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.
- An important clarification: These verses about living to please God and receive His favor are NOT about working for salvation. We are saved by grace through faith and not good deeds (Eph. 2:8-9.)

- Once we ARE followers of Christ, He calls us to live in a way that is pleasing to Him if we want His favor and power in our lives.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We defined God's favor as, God's supernatural blessing that enables me to succeed in his purpose for my life.
- We asked ourselves some questions: Am I living my life in a way that seeks the favor of God in order to accomplish His purpose for me? At the end of my life could it be said of me, "...the Lord was with him/her?"
- To bring home the point, think of the example of a good parent with a disobedient child. If the parents love their child will they reward bad behavior? Not if they want that child to be a useful member of society!
- When the child disobeys or refuses to do their best does the parent still love them? If they're good parents they do.
- Do the parents kick them out of the family for their bad behavior? No.
- The love for the child is unconditional but the favor (special rewards) would be withheld in response to bad behavior.
- What about us? If you're a follower of Christ you are forever in the family.
- Once we're in the family, the way to have God's favor in order to fulfill His purpose for our lives is to live to please and obey Him.
- 2 Chronicles 16:9 (ESV) ⁹ For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him...
- This week will you spend some time with God seeking His favor on your life and asking Him to show you How to live in obedience to please Him?

ⁱ <https://www.crosswalk.com/slideshows/what-is-god-s-favor-and-how-do-we-get-it.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/favor-of-God.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://pastors.com/defining-the-favor-of-god/>

^{iv} Strength for Today – INTEGRITY ENJOYS GOD'S FAVOR JUNE 6, 2016

^v <https://www.gotquestions.org/favor-of-God.html>