

Who is your favorite Superhero? Those old reliables – Superman, Batman and Spiderman are still popular, but they’ve taken a backseat to some of the newer ones like Iron Man, Captain America, Thor and Wonder Woman. One thing that hasn’t changed is that a Superhero is someone who doesn’t run away from trouble but meets it head on.

You should know, not all heroes stick around to take on the bad guys. In today’s OT lesson we meet someone who’s a hero for running away. Let’s find out why we, as Christians, will want to be less like the Avengers and more like **“Joseph: The Hero Who Ran Away.”**

Joseph was one of Jacob’s 12 sons. Joseph’s brothers hated him because of a special colorful coat given to him by their father. And then there were those dreams - the dreams where his brothers and his parents would bow down to him.

The brothers finally got their chance to get rid of Joseph. They sold him to slave traders heading to Egypt. There Joseph became the slave of Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. For a while things weren’t too bad for Joseph. He was respected by his master and quickly promoted to being in charge of his master’s house.

The only thing off limits to Joseph was Potiphar’s wife. But when Potiphar’s wife saw how handsome Joseph had become, she told him: **“Sleep with me!”** How did Joseph, our hero, respond? He refused every time she approached him.

Don’t expect others to praise you for wanting to live according to God’s will. Potiphar’s wife certainly didn’t thank Joseph. She was used to getting her way and refused to take “No” for an answer. One day she was alone with Joseph, grabbed him by his coat and whispered: **“Sleep with me!”** Now what would our hero do?

Sold into slavery by his brothers. Given up for dead by his father. He had to be lonely and now here was someone who paid attention to him and

appreciated him. Had she worn him down with her relentless invitations? If he continued to reject her, could he lose his job? Why not give in? Plenty of other slaves had done worse things. Maybe he could just flirt with her. Would that be so dangerous?

Yes, Joseph knew it would be dangerous. Sin for Joseph wasn’t just a *“bad habit”* or *“not such a good idea.”* It was a slap in the face of his gracious God. That’s why he ran, and not to another part of the house where she could try again. He ran out of the house, and as he did, she held on tightly to his coat.

That coat would be the evidence she needed to accuse Joseph of trying to force himself on her. Her plan worked. Potiphar fired Joseph and threw him into prison. Joseph may have lost his coat, his job and his freedom, but he kept a clean conscience. It may not seem like it, but Joseph was a hero for running away.

Why was Joseph so determined not to sleep with Potiphar’s wife? He explains to her and us: **“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?”**

Did you catch the 2 reasons Joseph gave for not sleeping with the boss’s wife? He didn’t want to damage his relationship with his boss, and the trust his boss had in him. But even more so, he didn’t want to a sin against his God and damage his relationship with his Creator.

That’s what we like about Joseph. He didn’t make up some excuse as to why he wouldn’t sleep with her. His first concern? **“How can I sin against God?”**

Wouldn’t that be a wonderful witness the next time you’re tempted to sin? Doesn’t this world need to hear that there are still people who not only believe in God, but also have a desire to obey him? And, it’s not impossible to do that. The God

who gave Joseph the strength to do that ... will give you the strength you need.

How do you stack up with Joseph? Do you flee temptation or flirt with it? Do you spend more time on excuses why your sin is ok, than planning your escape? If we're honest, we'd have to admit that we've found it easier to give in, rather than say: "*good night,*" when things heat up with that special someone. Or, say: "*I'm going home,*" when your friends ask you do something you know is not right with them. Running doesn't make you a coward. It makes you a hero, like Joseph.

But why run from sin when there doesn't always seem to be a benefit in it for you? Joseph ended up being unfairly accused and thrown into prison for doing the right thing. Notice how Joseph didn't feel sorry for himself or get angry with God. He made the best of this situation – to the best of his ability.

- You may not have gotten an "A" because you refused to cheat on an exam.
- You may never get to move in to that dream home because you refused to lie about the hours you put in at work.
- You may not get that great job because you didn't exaggerate your resume. That's OK. You can serve God faithfully where you are.

Joseph did that in Potiphar house even though he ended up there because of his brothers' jealousy. Joseph did that in prison even though he had been falsely accused.

In the end, God blessed Joseph. While in prison he developed some connections God would later use to move him from Pharaoh's prison all the way to Pharaoh's side.

It's the same for us. God always has your best interests in mind. You may have to suffer for a time for doing the right thing but in the end, somehow, some way you will be blessed. That's God's promise.

There are times when we may wonder, we have this amazing Savior who died for us. If Jesus

forgives our sins, why should we try so hard to obey God and fight temptation?

In OT times God made it clear that you couldn't sacrifice a lamb in the morning for a sin you were planning to commit in the afternoon. The forgiveness we receive in Holy Communion on a Sunday morning doesn't cover a sin we've planned to commit that afternoon. The writer to the Hebrews explain: "**If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume.**"

The sin he describes isn't some sudden and accidental sin, some sin of weakness. This is willful and deliberate sin, a repeated sin by those who know Jesus and God's saving truth.

King David's sins haunted him. He knew he couldn't make it through life without sinning. That's why he found so much comfort in God's promise of forgiveness. David said in the psalm we sang earlier: "**Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them.**"

God does not count our sins against us because he counted them against Jesus. Our friend Jesus took the blame for our sins. And with his forgiveness our Savior gives us the power to run away from temptation and sin.

Your favorite superhero might be Captain America, Spiderman or Wonder Women, but make sure you add Joseph to your list. Sure, he ran away but that's what makes him a hero. Follow in Joseph's footsteps by making it a habit to run away from temptation and into the loving arms of your Savior.