

Leaving Home for College?

by Bryan Gibson

This is a critical time in your life—on your own for the first time, without the direct supervision of your parents. Here are two very different choices you can make.

You can do what the prodigal son did, and just throw off all restraints (Luke 15:13, 30). And you'll have fun doing it—at least until the consequences catch up to you. You may eventually come to your senses, just like the prodigal son did (Luke 15:17-19), but think of all the damage you may do in the meantime, the hit you'll take to your reputation, the opportunities for good that you'll never get back.

Or, you can do what Joseph did when he left home—you can remember God, all the time, and specifically in the following ways.

In the difficulties you face. Joseph didn't leave home of his own accord; he was sold into slavery by his envious brothers (Genesis 37:28; 39:1). You wouldn't expect much from Joseph under these circumstances, but consider this: "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand" (Genesis 39:2-3). The Lord was with him—that's what made the difference, but the key thing here is that Joseph knew it. Joseph knew the Lord was with him, because he continued to trust and obey Him, even when times were tough.

In the responsibilities you have. Whether serving in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:4, 6), overseeing prisoners (Genesis 39:22-23), or tending to a widespread famine (Genesis 47:13-16), Joseph was faithful to God in meeting his responsibilities. So trustworthy, in fact, that his "bosses" didn't even feel the need to check up on him. You'll have responsibilities with school, with a job perhaps, and most importantly of all, with the local church you join. There's no reason why you can't be as trustworthy as Joseph.

In the temptations you face. Potiphar's wife tried to get Joseph to have sexual relations with her, but God was still on his mind. "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then I can do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:8-9). You'll face this very same temptation, plus a whole lot more, so remember God, and remember Joseph's response.

In the opportunities you have to speak to others. Think about all the different people who learned about God, through Joseph's speech and behavior—both Potiphar and his wife (Genesis 39:1-12), the jailer (Genesis 39:21-23), the butler and baker (Genesis 40-41), and even Pharaoh himself (Genesis 41:14-16)—just to name a few. So be like Joseph—stand up and speak up for the Lord. You'll probably never know just how many people you've influenced for good.