

Strong Hold

Getting a Grip on Godly Integrity

June 28, 2026



Today we're training our hearts to hold fast to our hope, our God, and our life!



So then: **How tight is your grip on your integrity?** How quickly do you let loose of your convictions when your aggressive temptations come calling?



Where'd we leave off? Oh yeah, with Joseph's *short shendyt* in Mrs. Grabby's hot little hands! We took tradition to task by simply noting that Joseph in Egypt's Old Kingdom would not have worn a 1600s pirate shirt, leotards, feathered cap, or heavy cloak. Because, the men of old-kingdom Egypt, of all classes, from kings to servants, had a universal style: very tall rabbits and very short skirts (called *shendyt*s), worn *commando-style* with a bare torso. Like a locker-room towel. So, we swapped the silly tradition of depicting Joseph's garment or wrap or cloth (the literal meanings of the word used), as anything 1600s European. Thus allowing us to grasp the impact of little Joe streaking outside and leaving Mrs. Grabby holding his wrappy and grasping at straws.



Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. [And] She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left [abandoned] his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. [For all to see] – Genesis 39:11-12 NAS



For Joseph to leave his incriminating kilt in her hand, he must've either given up in a short-shendyt tug-of-war, or refused to chase her around the room to retrieve it. Either way, he'll pay a steep price. Cuz he left his fate in the unfaithful hands of a loose woman with a loose grip on integrity. I don't say this just to be funny – the Lord is painting a contrast between Joseph's hands and hers. You see:



Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, Captain of the Guard, an Egyptian, bought [Joseph] ... [and] saw [in his attitude and actions] that the Lord was with him and ... made all that he did to prosper in his hand ... [so] all that [Potiphar] had he put into his hand. ... and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had ... [because] he left all that he had in Joseph's hand ... and [Joseph] said [to the Mrs.] "Behold, my master ... has committed all that he has to my hand ... And [with her hand] she caught him by his garment ... and he left his garment in her hand and fled and got outside. – Genesis 39:1-12 JUB



[Why? Because] My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go – Job 27:6 NKJ

[So then] Let us hold firmly to the hope that we have confessed – Hebrews 10:23 NCV

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. – Romans 12:9 ESV

Fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. – 1 Timothy 1:18-19 NIV

Love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. – Deuteronomy 30:20 NIV

[Who warns us to] “Let your heart hold fast My words ... and live.” – Proverbs 4:4 ESV

[So] Hold fast to instruction, never let her go ... for she is your life. – Proverbs 4:13 NAB

[In fact] She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her [wisdom and understanding (v. 3:13)]; [and] those who hold her fast will be blessed. – Proverbs 3:18 NIV

[But] When [the Mrs.] saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, [for all to see] she [displayed his shendyt for all to see and] called [screaming] to the men of her household [and played the race card to play on their prejudice] and said to them, “See, [Potiphar] has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport [fools] of us; [cuz I’m just one of y’all; we’re family, and] he came in to me to lie with me, and [that’s when] I screamed. [And] When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, [that’s when] he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside.” – Genesis 39:13-15 NAS

First, they must’ve thought, “**But your scream came after he fled outside.**” And second, they witnessed her aggressive day-after-day flirting, as well as his day-after-day resisting. And third, they probably had a pool going as to how long he could hold on and hold out. Cuz I doubt he’s her first. Ya gotta wonder about the guy he replaced. And, ya gotta feel a little sorry for the Mrs. I mean, **if feeding lust is your highest hope for fulfillment, you’ve been conned by your own deceitful heart.** That’s definitely a “Get behind me, Satan!” and get your desires in order moment!



When we left off last time, I gave you proof that God’s not a prude. Cuz **sex predates sin**, with His mandate to multiply. So, sexual holiness is not anti-sex! In fact, it’s **great sex governed by love and joy and glory and honor, rather than lust and appetite and shame and dishonor.** Paul quotes Adam and Eve’s “two shall become one” command to describe Christ and us! Because, marital sex, at its selfless best, is a God-given foreshadow of the eternal joy that awaits us!



Therefore a man shall ... hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And [they] were both naked and were not ashamed. – Genesis 2:24-25 ESV



For no one ever hated his own flesh, [writes Paul] but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body. “Therefore a man shall ... hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery ... refers to Christ and the church. – Ephesians 5:28-32 ESV



So, when we try to replace this infinitely greater, intimate joy, with carnal lust and selfish sex, it fails us miserably. One of the huge reasons we’re in such a mess down here, is because so many are lookin’ for love in all the wrong places. So, ya gotta feel a little sorry for Mrs. Grabby. **Freud said spiritual longings are just frustrated sexual desires.** Boy is that backward! **Frustrated sexual longings are actually spiritual desires.** Know how I know? Because 1) We never confuse fallible human sexual traits when we sing of our love for our Savior; but 2) We always confuse our Savior’s omnipotent traits when we sing of our love for our fellow fallible humans.



Have you noticed how **romantic love is always described in nonsensical eternal terms?** “**Longer than there’ve been fishes in the ocean; higher than any bird ever flew; longer than there’ve been stars up in the heavens, I’ve been in love with you.**” And we all go, “Ahh.” Why not, “Huh?!” Cuz that can only be true of our eternal Bridegroom-Savior whose face shines as the sun. And yet, everyone projects the almighty attributes of our One and only truly endless love onto our sexy fallible human foreshadows! “**You are the sunshine of my life. ... Forever you’ll stay in my heart.**” So, “**Fill my heart with song. Let me sing forevermore. You are all I long for, all I worship and adore.**” Because, “**You’re everything I hope for; you’re everything I need.**” Everyone unwittingly writes about His love, and sings about His love, cuz everyone’s lost without His love. Talk about a Freudian slip! Something C.S. Lewis said, that we often mention, is how **every creature is hardwired to instinctively desire what it most needs.** Ducklings desire water; there’s a pond. Piglets want to eat; there’s a sow. cats long to condescend; there’s us. But us, **the thing we’re hardwired to most desire** is the most unobtainable happily-ever-after down here, apart from Christ: **endless true love.** And that’s what Joseph chose to hold onto (when the Mrs. latched onto him): the only One with the power and desire to say, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” and mean it, literally! (Mt 28:20; Heb 13:5)

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:38-39 NIV

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Potiphar Schwarzenegger came home. You can’t tell, but he’s swingin’ two of the biggest rabbits you’ve ever seen! Hey, that was their style.

So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, “The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside.” [Unless you want Pharaoh’s court gossiping about the wife of the Palace Guard Captain chasing detestable slaves for satisfaction] So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, [blaming him] saying, “Your servant did to me after this manner,” that his anger was aroused. – Genesis 39:16-19 NKJ

Poor Potiphar. He’s been betrayed by either the man he put in charge or the Mrs. Reminds me of an old Henny Youngman joke: “My best friend ran away with my wife, and I really miss him!” This verse is called a setup. It avoids stating the object of Potiphar’s anger, while leading the hearer to assume it’s Joseph. But the following verse is called a punchline, because it reveals the surprise of who he believes by the action he takes! But after 4,000 years, we can miss the humor.

Then Joseph’s master [the Captain of the Palace Guard, keeper of the royal prison, and Pharaoh’s Chief Executioner] took him and [“Chopped off his head?” No.] put him into [“Some horrific torture device?” No.] the prison, [“Chained to a dungeon wall and left to starve?” No.] a place where the king’s [officials and royal] prisoners were [exclusively] confined. And he [a despised Hebrew] was there in the [royal] prison. – Genesis 39:20 NKJ

“To await his dreaded fate?” Nope. To run the place! **We miss the absurdity** of a foreign slave from a reviled race, accused of the capital crime of attempted rape, of a royal official’s wife, who isn’t executed or beaten or ... anything. And ancient Egypt wasn’t exactly soft on crime! An odd reaction if Potiphar’s anger burned against Joseph. But, **the reason he put all he had in Joseph’s hand, was cuz he saw firsthand the grip Joseph had on integrity.** So understand that:

The Lord was with Joseph and showed him [this] mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. [Who we’re told is Potiphar (Gen 40:3-4)] And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; [in Potiphar’s house (Gen 40:3)] whatever they did there, it was [Joseph’s] doing. The keeper of the prison did not [even bother to] look into anything that was under Joseph’s authority, because [he knew that he knew that] the Lord was with [Joseph]; and whatever [Joseph] did, the Lord made it prosper. [In his hand!] – Genesis 39:21-23 NKJ



Like helping investigate Pharaoh’s butler and baker. Remember that? (We’ve almost come full circle). Because, **internal investigations were carried out from Potiphar’s house.** And before Potiphar “heard the words his wife spoke,” he likely heard some choice words from Joseph and the men of the household. Especially regarding that scream that came after little Joe came out. And why he left his shendyt, and couldn’t retrieve it, and was forced to flee naked. And just one more thing: typically, clothes are torn off the victim, not the perpetrator! I said the safest place in a cougar cage is as far from the cougar as possible. But **what’s the one guaranteed safe space?** I asked this years ago, and a guy yelled out, “On the cougar!” Bless his heart. Nope. **A cage within the cage. Not to keep you in, but to keep you safe from whatever’s prowling and preying.** The Lord does that with us sometimes. And, knowing how she relentlessly pursued him, I’m guessin’ his most earnest prayer had been: “Lead me not into temptation!” Well, prayer answered! And though he’s bound, **he’s bound to realize that he’s finally free,** in the Lord’s protective custody.

But, if Potiphar thought Joseph was innocent, why imprison him? Apparently the Mrs. wasn’t the only one under Potiphar’s roof to play fast and loose with integrity. Turns out, in the 12th Dynasty, like the 21st century, **it was standard practice to keep up appearances at the cost of convictions.** And who wants the palace gossiping about their private life? Potiphar’s prison looks like punishment on the outside, while he continues to benefit from Joseph’s service on the inside. It’s a good plan except for one small thing: **it’s a sin against God, and Joseph, and his own integrity.** The very thing he does shows that he knows he shouldn’t’ve done what he did! “So, Joseph’s reward for keeping a godly grip on his integrity is prison?!” Nope. That’s just a consequence of the lack of integrity of others. **His reward is staying true to his convictions.** And if you don’t yet see how that’s the best reward, you can’t yet hope to get a grip on godly integrity.

Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. – Hebrews 4:14 NIV

[Cuz] The Lord is good, [and He’s] a stronghold in the day of trouble – Nahum 1:7 NKJ

“[And] [He said] no one can snatch them out of My hand.” – John 10:28 NIV