



Lesson 2

Joseph Suffers at Home (Genesis 37:3-30)

OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

BIBLE STUDY: Joseph's Brothers Hate him and Sell him into Slavery

Genesis 37:3-4 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

1.) Agree or disagree: Jacob should be blamed for showing favoritism to Joseph.

2.) Recall the wicked behavior of Jacob's other sons from the previous lesson (Reuben sleeping with Jacob's concubine; Simeon and Levi slaying the men of Shechem in revenge of their sister; Judah's fiasco with Tamar). How may this have influenced Jacob's favoritism of Joseph?

Genesis 37:5-11 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

3.) Imagine you were one of Jacob's brothers. How would you have reacted to his dreams?

4.) A sidenote on dreams... in the Old Testament we see God using visions and dreams to communicate with his people. What truths must we bear in mind and carefully weigh when it comes to dreams?

Jeremiah 23:25-29 "I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship. Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the LORD. "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken.

John 10:35 "The Scripture cannot be broken."

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

5.) Agree or disagree. Joseph's suffering for his dreams was persecution that Joseph had to endure for being a believer.

6.) Why do you think Jacob reacted as he did to Joseph's dream?

Genesis 37:12-17 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied. So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?" He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?" "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.

7.) What do you think of Jacob's plan to send Joseph to report on his brothers, and Joseph's insistence on doing so while wearing the richly ornamented robe?

Genesis 37:18-30 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. “Let’s not take his life,” he said. “Don’t shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don’t lay a hand on him.” Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed. So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. He went back to his brothers and said, “The boy isn’t there! Where can I turn now?”

8.) In their act of dealing with Joseph, do you see any evidence of faith on the part of Joseph’s brothers? What ulterior motives may have influenced Reuben have acted as he did?

9.) At this point, what were the prospects (humanly speaking) of these men being the foundation of God’s Old Testament church, the leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel?

Genesis 37:31-35 Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, “We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.” He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.”

Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “No,” he said, “in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.” So his father wept for him.

10.) What do you think of the brother’s cover story and Jacob’s reaction to it?

Genesis 37:36 Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard.

11.) What was still going on through this whole sordid ordeal?

12.) Put yourself in Joseph's place. What thoughts might have been going through your mind?

APPLICATION

1.) What practical lessons can we learn from the negative examples of Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers in this section?

CLOSING BENEDICTION