

Genesis 37:1-11 (NKJV)

- ¹ Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.
- ² This *is* the history of Jacob. **Joseph, being seventeen years old**, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah & the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; **and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father.**
- ³ **Now Israel (Jacob's new name) loved Joseph more than all his children**, because he *was* the son of his old age. **Also he made him a tunic of many colors.**
- ⁴ But **when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.**
- ⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more.
- ⁶ So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:
- ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."
- ⁸ And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" **So they hated him even more for his dreams** and for his words.
- ⁹ Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, & the eleven stars bowed down to me."
- ¹⁰ So he told *it* to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother & I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"
- ¹¹ And his brothers envied (*Amp, ESV, & NIV says jealous of*) him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Opening Scripture (above): [Genesis 37:1-11](#)

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Text: [Genesis 37:1-36](#); [Genesis 39:1-6](#)

Title: "The Tough, but Inspiring, Life of Joseph," *Pt. 1*

Introduction -

Joseph's life was the story about how frustrations in life can either make us bitter, or force us to calm down long enough to wonder what God is doing. Most of the time we have to endure what we are going through, while telling ourselves "There has to be something good that God is going to be making out of all of this."

Unfortunately, what God is going to do with this is not always clear until a long time later in our life. In the meantime, the key is to not focus on what looks really negative right now. Then also, try to keep our attitudes right, and keep doing the right things for God.

In Joseph's case, it wasn't just bad things, or frustrating things that were happening to him. It was actual people who caused the bad things, people who turned against him, people who tried to hurt him in some way, out of wrong motives.

And, Joseph didn't just go through one bad time. He faced it two different times. Both times he was also falsely accused of being a bad person, and then had to actually suffer greatly for those false accusations.

- 1. Joseph's father was named Jacob. He was the 2nd generation after Abraham. So, there was Abraham, then Isaac, and then Jacob. God later changed Jacob's name to Israel.**

In [Genesis 35:9](#)-10 God changed Jacob's name to Israel. Later on, that name was used to refer to God's people as "the children of Israel," or many times just "Israel."

- 2. Joseph was born 11th of 12 children. But, he was the first born of his father Jacob's true love, which was his wife Rachel.**

Rachel had been unable to have children, so Jacob married other wives who bore him 10 children. When Jacob and Rachel were older, God enabled Rachel to have 2 children - one was named Joseph, and the other was named Benjamin.

So, technically, Joseph had one younger brother, Benjamin, and 10 older, half brothers.

- 3. Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph for at least 3 reasons:**

- a. They could tell that their father, Jacob, loved Joseph the most.**

[Genesis 37:3](#) (NKJV)

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic (*coat, or long robe*) of many colors.

So, even though this was nice for Joseph, it was also frustrating for the brothers.

Making Joseph a special, many colored coat was not a smart decision on Jacob's part.

As a parent, you have to be careful that you never show favoritism to any of your children. For some parents it may be that:

- they like a certain personality quality of one of the kids,
- Or, maybe the child's personality is a lot like their own personality.
- Or, maybe they have the same interests or hobbies in life as that parent.
- Or, maybe the one child shows more love to you than the other children.

In the case of Jacob, it was because Joseph was born when Jacob was old, and came specifically from his true love, wife Rachel.

You have to love each child for how they are different.

Example: My older brother Steve, and I

How was it in your family?

Were you different than your mom or dad?

Were you different than your brother or sister?

Was there one brother or sister more like at least one of your parents?

Or, were you that one person most like at least one of your parents?

Were your parents good at making all of the kids feel loved equally?

As parents, when when we do things for one, we need to do things for all of them.

Joseph's father, Jacob, actually helped to create the jealousy between Joseph and his brothers by giving more attention to Joseph than his brothers.

Look again what the bible says in:

Genesis 37:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, **they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.**

Not only did the older brothers hate Joseph, they weren't even nice to him.

Even though Jacob helped create some of the jealousy, his sons still had the choice of whether they really wanted to "go down that path" in life.

There is a two-fold responsibility here:

1. Jacob, for showing favoritism
2. And, Jacob's sons for allowing that attitude of jealousy to get into them and stay in them to the point it turned into hatred.

Insight:

This is the way Satan works. He helps plant a feeling within you. **If you allow** that feeling to stay, and especially keep talking about it, it eventually can grow into full-blown hatred. You will see later in our story, where the brothers kept the hatred feeling going as they talked bad about Joseph among each other.

This is the kind of thing that Satan wants to happen. Had the brothers not kept the negative talk going, their feelings might have been more easily controlled by them. But, they kept it up, again and again saying bad stuff about Joseph.

So, again, in the life of Jacob and his sons, there are 2 responsibilities here:

1. Jacob, the Dad, should have never shown favoritism to Joseph. Jacob actually created a mess by doing so, and that mess helped cause Jacob to go through some real tough times himself.

But,

2. The brothers didn't have to become jealous, or to allow those jealous feelings to stay in their heart.

Satan plants evil thoughts into our minds. It is UP TO US, to either remove those evil thoughts, or to allow them to stay there. And, it is also up to us on whether we will continue "to add wood to the fire," so to speak.

The brothers chose to become jealous, and chose to turn against Joseph. And, they

even chose to keep talking to one another about it, and keep the wrong feelings going.

Another reason the brothers were jealous was:

b. They did not like Joseph sharing his dreams with them.

They immediately decided that Joseph was sharing his supposed dreams to make himself appear superior to them. They refused to see that Joseph was just an excited kid who wanted to share these dreams he was getting. They should have seen that maybe God was giving Joseph the dreams. But, they actually thought Joseph was making up this stuff.

They were already upset that their own father made Joseph superior to them, and now they felt like Joseph was rubbing it in.

One of these dreams Joseph had is recorded in [Genesis 37:5-8](#):

[Genesis 37:5-10](#) (NKJV)

- ⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; & they hated him even more.
- ⁶ So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:
- ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around & bowed down to my sheaf."
- ⁸ And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" **So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.**

This is why you have to clear your mind of hatred. If you allow it to stay there, you cannot see the other person correctly. You will misinterpret everything the other person says or does.

Have you experienced similar things from people who did not like you, whereby they now misinterpret everything you do, or say?

That is what Joseph's brothers did.

The dream Joseph shared with them was a prophetic dream from God about how his brothers would some day bow down to him to get food. But, the brothers hated him too much to realize it was truly a prophetic dream.

Had his brothers not turned on him so much, they could have asked him:

"What do you think that dream means? Why would God give you that dream?"

Instead, the Bible says "They hated him even more."

Sin and sinful attitudes bring darkness in our lives. You cannot have hatred in your

heart for someone, and expect to hear from God. It is not going to happen.

1 John 2:11 (NIV)

- ¹¹ But **whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.**

When a person has hatred in his heart, what they must do is ask God for forgiveness for allowing hatred to enter their heart & continue to stay in their heart. Then, they must refuse to discuss it any longer.

I have even seen many situations where something got resolved between two people, and then one of them went back and talked to someone about it and they got it stirred up again.

The talk has to stop, or the hatred is not going to go away.

Joseph had another dream. It is recorded in Genesis 37:9-11.

Genesis 37:9-11 (NKJV)

- ⁹ Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."
- ¹⁰ So he told *it* to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"
- ¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind*.

Again, this dream was about how his brothers, mom and dad would bow down to him someday.

Is it possible that Joseph was taking his dreams & purposely using them to try to look better than his brothers?

Yes, I guess that is possible. Some might argue that was what Joseph was doing by telling them the dreams. The Bible does not tell us why he shared the dreams with his brothers. However, if you think about it, he was just 17 years old, probably not realizing how his brothers might view him sharing the dreams. Plus, Joseph was just fascinated and excited by the dreams and wanted to share them with someone. He just picked the wrong people to do it with.

One might ask

"Why would God even give Joseph these dreams? Doesn't God know how this might affect the brothers if Joseph shared those dreams? What would be the purpose of giving Joseph dreams like this?"

My answer is Yes, God knew how it would effect the brothers. But, God had a bigger plan for later.

ALSO, as we will see in a later sermon, the dreams actually DID COME TRUE.

[Isaiah 55:9](#) says (NKJV)

⁹ "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

STOP making life all about other people and what you do not like that they did or said.

START making life about finding out what God is trying to teach YOU, and how God can make you more like Him from any negative things you experienced.

Most of the time, what we experience is a lot about our own chance to grow spiritually. Many times it has little to do with the other people, and their problems.

Find out what God is trying to teach you. ASK HIM. God had a higher purpose in all of this.

There is a 3rd reason Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph:

c. Joseph tattletaled on them, bringing a bad report to his father about them.

Joseph was tending flocks with at least 4 brothers. The Bible says they were the 2 sons of Jacob's other wives, Bilhah and Zilpah. Those sons would have been Dan, Naphthali, Gad, and Asher. So, when Joseph came home he brought back a bad report to Jacob, his father, about what the brothers were doing ([Gen. 37:2](#))

Insight:

You have to be careful coming off as a tattletale - the person who runs to others to tell them bad things about someone else. There is a time we may have to tell, but most of the time we probably ought to handle the matter in a better way.

Parents also have to be careful that they do not allow the kids to keep running to them with a negative report about their brothers and sisters.

So, today we saw 3 reasons why Joseph's brothers might have been jealous.

- a. They could tell that their father, Jacob, loved Joseph the most.
- b. They did not like Joseph sharing his dreams with them. They saw it as arrogant.
- c. Joseph tattletaled on them, bringing a bad report to his father about them.

4. The Bible tells us that Joseph was 17 yrs old ([Genesis 37:2](#)) when his brothers plotted to kill him.

Let's go on down in chapter 37, to verses 19-36:

[Genesis 37:19-36](#) (NKJV)

¹⁹ Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!

²⁰ Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit (*NIV-- cistern*); and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

²¹ But **Reuben** heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not

kill him."

- 22 And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit which *is* in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"--that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.
- 23 So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph *of* his tunic, the tunic of *many* colors that *was* on him.
- 24 Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit *was* empty; *there was* no water in it.
- 25 And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry *them* down to Egypt.
- 26 So **Judah** said to his brothers, "What profit *is there* if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?
- 27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh." And his brothers listened.
- 28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so *the brothers* pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.
- 29 Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph *was* not in the pit; & he tore his clothes.
- 30 And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad *is* no *more*; and I, where shall I go?" (*NLT - What do I do now?*)
- 31 So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood.
- 32 Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father & said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son's tunic or not?"
- 33 And he recognized it and said, "*It is* my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."
- 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.
- 35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.
- 36 Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh *and* captain of the guard.

Note: Reuben, the oldest brother, did not want them to kill Joseph. He told them to throw him in the cistern. (a cistern is a dug out area that is designed to hold water. In this case, the cistern was empty) Don't confuse the word "cistern" as the same word as your brothers and sisters.

Reuben's plan was to come back later and pull him out, and rescue him.

So, ONE out of the TEN brothers had listened to the garbage comments about Joseph, and refused to be a part of the evil plan. ONLY ONE.

2nd Note: A different brother, Judah, when Reuben wasn't around, suggested that they not kill Joseph, but rather sell him to some merchants. This was better than killing him,

but also showed Judah had hatred in his heart, possibly along with greed.

So, they threw Joseph into the cistern hole. However, some Ishmaelite merchants **just happened to come by** and the brothers decided to sell Joseph as a slave for 20 pieces of silver. The Merchants in turn, as soon as they arrived in Egypt, sold him as a slave to Potiphar, who was a Captain of of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Note: [Gen.42:21](#) gives us more insight as to the trauma that the brother's caused Joseph when he was thrown into the cistern, then a very short time later, sold him as a slave.

Look at what it says:

[Genesis 42:21](#) (NIV)

²¹ They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. **We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen;** that's why this distress has come upon us."

When you have hatred in your heart, there is darkness in you, and you do not hear God. AND, also you do not care about the other person you hate. LOVE IS GONE.

Joseph's emotions go from feeling the hatred of his brothers to him, to being traumatized in a cistern hole, to being sold as a slave.

5. He did not know it at that time, but God is going to bless Joseph "in the middle of the mess."

Illustration:

When I was with Osage Beach Police, they used me 3 times on suicidal talk downs. One time a man held a rifle up to his chin and he was going to shoot himself that way. God inspired me to tell him "I know things look bad for you now, but you have no idea what the future is going to be like. Everything could change dramatically for you in one week, two weeks, maybe a month from now. If you end it now, you will never know how wonderful life might become." It worked.

The story of how things started quickly to change for Joseph is told in [Gen. 39:1-6](#):

[Genesis 39:1-6](#) (NKJV)

¹ Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

Look at the wording of verses 2 to 6:

² **The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man;** and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

³ **And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand.**

⁴ **So Joseph found favor in his sight, & served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority.**

⁵ So it was, **from the time that he had made him overseer** of his house and all that

he had, that **the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house & in the field.**

⁶ Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, & he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

God blessed Potiphar's household because of Joseph.

So, Potiphar promoted Joseph to oversee his household, and life starts going well again for Joseph. His owner can also see clearly that God is helping Joseph.

So, God was with Joseph even through this terrible situation of being a slave.

Insight:

God will make good out of every negative experience you have **if you do not allow yourselves to become bitter** and angry at your situation. He has a plan, **IF you learn in your situation**, don't develop an attitude, and just keep doing the right things.

Conclusion -

Sometimes it is easier watching an example of how we are supposed to act, rather than just being told how we are supposed to act. I guess that is why we love the Old Testament stories. *Is that why you love the stories?*

They are stories that are easy to remember what happened to each person and how they handled it. Then, you can see for yourself whether the bible characters did the right or wrong thing, and what happened as a result of their attitudes and actions.

What did you learn this morning from Part 1 of "The Tough, but Inspiring, Life of Joseph?"

Did you learn that your negative feelings toward someone might start with Satan planting thoughts into your head, but you will be the one to continue those negative thoughts by allowing those feelings to fester?

Did you learn that you have to stop the negative talk?

Did you learn that hatred in your heart will get you totally off track with God, and keep you from hearing God in your life?

In fact, not only will you NOT hear God, you will be hearing the opposite. You will be hearing from Satan on a regular basis.

The Bible says "My thoughts are not your thoughts."

That is part of the problem with attitudes. Our thoughts need to be God's thoughts, not our own.

Did you learn that you have to ask forgiveness for any hatred in order to hear God again, and then refuse to allow those hatred thoughts to keep coming back?

Did you learn that the Christian life is all about OUR OWN growth and not about what other people do to us, or don't do for us?

Joseph's life was incredible. *Is your admiration for him extremely high?*