

Joseph SERMON 1 A BAD START 37:2-36

I'll be honest, Joseph is kind of a punk. He's the kind of kid I never liked in school. He was a tattletale, he saw himself as the center of the universe, and he was daddy's pet.

This section is a huge warning against favoritism. Dads and Moms, fight the urge to play your kids one against the other, and please love all of your kids. You don't have to love them the same, but you need to fully love all of them.

What's happened since Abraham? When Abraham grew old, he wanted to make sure that Isaac had a wife from his relatives and not from the people of Canaan. So Abraham's servant took the journey to Haran which was about a 2 month journey from Canaan. There he met Rebekah who was the granddaughter of one of Abraham's brothers, Nahor. They were married, again (we'll see this many times) Rebekah struggled with infertility. Isaac prayed and she conceived twins.

Jacob and Esau were born and even though Esau was the firstborn, God chose Jacob to be the son of promise, the heir through whom the Messiah would come. Jacob also went back to Mesopotamia to find a wife and through the deception of his uncle, he wound up working 14 years for two wives: Leah and Rachael. Between his two wives and their two servants, Jacob had 12 children. 10 of the children came from Leah and the servants, and the last two boys came from Rachael, the woman Jacob truly loved. This is where we pick up the story in chapter 37.

Joseph is the second youngest of the sons of Jacob. He is Jacob's favorite, and he is a punk.

Our first exposure to Joseph is in 37:2

[Genesis 37:2 \(NASB95\)](#)

²These are *the records of the generations of Jacob*. Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was *still* a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

Everything seems quiet, but this is a troubled family. It is a family filled with favoritism, arrogance and kissing up, and envy. Next week all this explodes in painful violence.

Joseph was now 17 and gets sent out with his brothers in the pasture. He can't wait to get back to bring a bad report about his brothers.

What an interesting introduction to Joseph. Can you imagine? Daaaaaad, do you know what my half brothers were doing? bla bla bla

Genesis does not record this to show what a faithful son Joseph is, nor is it praising him for his stand for the truth:

[Proverbs 18:8 \(NASB95\)](#)

⁸The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.

Proverbs 16:28 ^(NASB95)

²⁸ A perverse man spreads strife, And a slanderer separates intimate friends.

Proverbs 26:20 ^(NASB95)

²⁰ For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.

Joseph turns out to be an amazing guy, but early in his life, he was self-centered manipulative, and had an inflated view of himself. His dad didn't help much!

In verse 3, we see Jacob, who is now Israel, making the situation worse.

Genesis 37:3 ^(NASB95)

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.

Not only did Israel have feelings of favoritism, he made a spectacle of it by giving his son

A multicolored tunic was considered a mark of great honor and distinction.

I don't think Jacob had a clue as to how hurtful his actions were to his other children – he was completely blind to the hurt that he was causing them, and the destructive seeds he was sowing into his family.

It doesn't take long for the seeds to develop

Genesis 37:4 ^(NASB95)

⁴ His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

It got so bad that his brothers couldn't even spend peaceably to him. Literally they did not say, "shalom" "peace be to you." (Gen 43:23). They couldn't even bring themselves to give Joseph the normal expression of good wishes. In that culture, the greeting was a sacred duty and to withhold this greeting was a clear signal of their hostility.

How clueless was Joseph?

Genesis 37:5-8 ^(NASB95)

⁵ Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; ⁷ for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸ Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Joseph is sooo clueless. I think when he was telling the dream, he thought his brothers would say, *wow Joe – that's so cool. You're right, some day we're going to bow down to you!*

Notice, twice it says *they hated him even more*. (5 & 8) this is moving way beyond the normal rivalry of brothers, this is moving to vile hatred.

Still Joseph is clueless. You would think he would take a hint and think, *maybe I'll run this by dad first, but nooooo.*

Genesis 37:9-11 ^(NASB95)

⁹ Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

¹⁰ He related *it* to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come

to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying *in mind*.

His brothers couldn't wait to get out of the house so they take off for Shechem. This is where the cluelessness of Jacob and Joseph take on absurd proportions. Jacob asks Joseph to check up on his brothers **and bring a report back to me!** Earth to Jacob. Your older sons hate Jacob with a passion! Have you missed this one?

And Joseph, I will go! I can just hear Joseph stand up straight, salute his beloved pop and say with a giggly voice, Oh dad, I go find those wascally brothers and tell you all the bad things they are doing. (dripping with sarcasm)

18-36 – the hatred of the brothers boils over into an act that would tear the family apart. At first they are ready to kill him. Can you imagine those feelings going on in the home and neither Joseph nor his dad are even aware of them?

Can you imagine Joseph's shock? He walks up to his brothers, says, *Hi, there you are. Hope you haven't been lazy, I'd hate to have to tell dad on you.* But his brothers grab him, strip off his robe and throw him in the pit. What do they do next? They sit down to eat. I'm pretty sure they had the biggest smile on their face as they heard Joseph screaming in terror. When they first saw Joseph coming, they said, *here comes the "master of dreams."* They couldn't stand the sight of him.

Reuben, the eldest, was able to talk them out of directly killing him by suggesting it would be easier to let him die in the pit. Reuben's plan was to come back later and save Joseph.

I love what follows, they get a pang of conscience. Let's not kill our brother, after all he is our brother, our own flesh. . . . instead, let's sell him into slavery and make some money off him! Reuben must have been gone when they decided this and so couldn't intercede.

The brothers made 20 shekels of silver off the sale, and Joseph was carried off to Egypt. They dipped Joseph's coat in blood and worked out a lie to tell their father. What they didn't count on was the depth of Jacob's grief. They tried to comfort him, but Jacob was utterly inconsolable, and Joseph winds up becoming a slave to a man named Potiphar.

Lessons of Life

Favoritism is one of the most destructive forces in a family. You don't have to treat all your children the same, but you must love all your children! Sometimes, there is a kind of weird reverse favoritism where one child needs more attention because he/she is more troubled, and the good kid is left alone for being good!

One of the principles that I've noticed about family life is that things develop so subtly that you don't see the danger of what you're doing until it's too late. Take time as mom and dad to evaluate your parenting.

Don't reward tattling. More often than not, the child who is the tattler is doing it to curry favor with you. It is a move of manipulation. You may like it because you are finding out stuff you didn't know, but don't reward the child for telling on his/her siblings.

Be an observer of your family. Look for danger signs of envy or anger that is getting out of control.