



Joseph Sold Into Slavery

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Genesis 37



Joseph's eleven brothers lived their lives their own way. They did not depend on God's grace; they were not able to love or forgive Joseph. They sinned against their brother and against God. But God was with Joseph, and his amazing adventure began out of an empty well.

Day #1: Favorite Son

In Genesis 37, we meet Joseph when he is 17 years old. Do you know a teenager who is about the same age as Joseph?

Joseph was the second youngest of 12 brothers. He also had one sister. That is a really large family! Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. This caused plenty of trouble between Joseph and his brothers.

Jacob and his sons were shepherds. They earned money by raising animals, such as sheep, goats, and cows, and selling them. Sometimes when Joseph was out taking care of animals with his brothers, he would tell on them if they misbehaved. As you might guess, his brothers did not like that at all! Sometimes Joseph was allowed to stay home while his brothers went out to tend the flocks. This made his brothers even angrier with Joseph.

Jacob even gave Joseph a special gift. It was a robe made of expensive dyed fabric. This was too fancy for a shepherd to wear. When Joseph wore his robe, his brothers thought Joseph was saying he was better than them. The colorful robe made his brothers see RED!

* Have you ever seen your brother or sister, or even a classmate, being "favored" by an adult? How did this make you feel? It usually leads to feelings of jealousy or envy.

We should be happy for our friends and family who receive blessings. Their blessings do not cause us any harm. In truth, the feelings of envy are actually pride. Our pride says, "I deserve that more than he does!" This is how the angel Lucifer felt about the glory of God (Isaiah 14:13-14). Lucifer's pride and envy caused him to lose everything!

Pride and envy are part of our natural selves. Only God's grace can take away our pride and envy.

Day #1 continued:



God's saving grace has appeared to all people. It teaches us to say no to godless ways and sinful longings.
- Titus 2:11-12a

When you see someone being favored, pray right away for the grace to take away your pride and to be happy for that person.

Day #2: Bitterness

Mom or Dad: Grab some unsweetened cocoa powder if you have it. Cocoa powder is used to make chocolate. How would you describe chocolate? It is sweet, creamy and delicious! Now take a taste of the cocoa powder. How does it taste? It is bitter! There is nothing good or enjoyable about eating this bitter powder. Bitterness is a taste, but it is also a feeling. It was the feeling that Joseph's brothers felt toward Joseph.

The more things went well for Joseph, the angrier his brothers became. The brothers were jealous of Joseph. They did not ask God to take away their bad feelings. Their envy grew and grew. This kind of anger is called bitterness. The Bible explains what happens when we allow bitter feelings to grow in our hearts.



Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many. - Hebrews 12:15b NLT

The Bible compares bitter feelings to the root of a plant. When a seed is put into the ground, the first thing that starts to grow is the root. From there, a seedling springs up from the earth. As the plant grows taller, the roots grow down deeper into the soil. The roots anchor the plant and cause it to grow. If your roots are made of bitterness, that bitterness will grow into a tree of sin! We will see that this is exactly what happened with Joseph's brothers.



* Go outside and pull up a weed. Look at the roots. Remember to go to the Lord any time you feel bitter toward someone. Ask Him to take away the root of bitterness so it will not grow and produce sin in your life.

Day #3: Two Dreams

Joseph seemed to have the perfect life. He was the favorite son of a wealthy man. But God knew that things were about to change for Joseph. God gave Joseph two special gifts. They were not gifts that he could touch or hold, but they were just what Joseph needed. They were two dreams.

Day #3 continued:

First, Joseph dreamed that he was out in a field with his brothers. Suddenly, the bundle of wheat that Joseph had picked stood up straight, and the bundles of wheat that his brothers had picked all bowed down to it. Later, Joseph dreamed that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars all bowed down to him.

When he told his brothers about the dreams, they were furious. They laughed at him and they made it clear that they would never bow down to their little brother!

But these dreams were from God. One day they would come true. These dreams were God's promise to Joseph that one day, he would be rewarded and his brothers would bow down to him. By His grace, God gave this vision of the future to Joseph so he would remain strong and encouraged during the hard times that were about to come.

 Have you ever received a gift that was absolutely perfect for you? What was it and why was it special for you? The Lord knows you better than anyone. He knows what your future holds, and He knows exactly what you need. By His grace, He will give you just what you need to encourage you and help you through difficult times.

 *Your Father knows what you need even before you ask Him.* - Matthew 6:8b

Day #4: Thrown Away

One day, Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers when they were out taking care of the flocks. While he was still a long way off, they saw him coming, because he was wearing his very colorful robe!

"Here comes that dreamer!" they said to one another. "Come. Let's kill him. Let's throw him into one of these empty wells. Let's say that a wild animal ate him up. Then we'll see whether his dreams will come true." - Genesis 37:19-20

The brothers' root of bitterness had truly grown into a tree of sin! They were actually planning to kill their own brother! The Bible puts it this way:

 *For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.* - Acts 8:23

Just as a prisoner wears handcuffs, the brothers' sin of bitterness made them bound to sin. Joseph's oldest brother, Reuben, spoke out against their plan. He talked his brothers out of killing Joseph. He convinced them to throw him down into an empty well instead. Reuben was planning to come back and rescue Joseph when his brothers weren't around.

When Joseph got to where his brothers were, they

Day #4 continued:

tore off his special robe and they threw him into an empty well. Joseph begged his brothers not to leave him there to die but they did not care (Genesis 42:21).

 Are you holding onto any bitterness? If so, close your eyes and picture handcuffs on your wrists. Bitterness causes you to be a prisoner of sin. Now ask God to take away all bitterness. Picture those handcuffs springing open and falling to the ground. Thank God that His grace is enough to break the bonds of every sin in your life.

Day #5: Sold

Reuben's quick thinking kept his brother alive, but Joseph was not out of danger. After his brothers had thrown him into the empty well, Reuben went back to tending the flocks and the rest of the brothers sat down to eat lunch. Just then, a caravan of traveling salesmen passed by. One of Joseph's brothers, Judah, had another idea.

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and try to cover up what we've done? Come. Let's sell him to these traders. Let's not harm him ourselves. After all, he's our brother. He's our own flesh and blood." Judah's brothers agreed with him. - Genesis 37:26-27

Judah saw this as an opportunity to get rid of his pesky brother and make some money at the same time. So they pulled Joseph up out of the well and sold him as a slave.

The brothers took Jacob's fine robe, smeared goat's blood on it, and took it to their father. They led him to believe that Joseph was killed by a wild animal. There is absolutely no greater pain than for a parent to lose a child. Jacob was sick with grief and no one could cheer him up. His sons' sin and lies broke his heart (Proverbs 17:25).

Meanwhile, Joseph's captors took him to Egypt. A very important, powerful Egyptian man named Potiphar bought Joseph to be his slave. This is the beginning of an AMAZING adventure for Joseph. He had been betrayed by his brothers and sold as a slave in a foreign land, but God was with him!

 ***The Lord was with Joseph.*** - Genesis 39:3

 Discuss things that God did for Joseph when his brothers were against him. (God gave him the two dreams to hold onto, God prompted Reuben to speak up for Joseph, God provided a dry well, God sent the traders by at the right time so Joseph did not die in the well, God sent an important man to buy him in Egypt.)

Even in your worst times, you can trust that God is with you, and He is working things together for your good (Romans 8:28).