

NOT YOUR AVERAGE JOES

A study of the lives of Joseph, Jonah, and Job

Joseph - Genesis 37

Lesson 1

Joseph, being seventeen years old. Thus begins one of the remarkable life stories of the Bible and all literature. "He was loved and hated, favored and abused, tempted and trusted, exalted and abased. Yet at no point in the one-hundred-and-ten-year life of Joseph did he ever seem to get his eyes off God or cease to trust Him. Adversity did not harden his character. Prosperity did not ruin him. He was the same in private as in public. He was a truly great man." (Boice)

OBSERVATION: Read Genesis 37

1. Read through this week's verses preferably using the New King James Version Bible. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?
2. Genesis 37 is fraught with emotions. As you re-read the chapter, make a list of the emotions mentioned. Record the number of times the emotion is expressed next to each word.
3. Since Joseph is the main character of this portion of our study, *Not Your Average Joes*, scan the chapter and make a list of what the text reveals about him.

JOSEPH'S ANCESTRY:

1. Using Genesis 25:24-34 and Genesis 27, summarize each of the following relationships:

Jacob and Isaac

Jacob and Rebekah

Jacob and Esau

- a. What dysfunctions do you observe in this family?

2. Arriving at Genesis 29, we find Jacob in the land of his uncle Laban. Read Genesis 29:30-30:8 and describe how favoritism affected the relationship between the two sisters, Leah and Rachel.

HATRED: Read Genesis 37:1-4

1. Although the next chapters of Genesis record the history of *Jacob*, the main character is clearly *Joseph*. How old was Joseph when the account of his life began?

- a. What was *Joseph* doing?

- b. Joseph's father, Jacob, had thirteen children (twelve sons and one daughter) through four women. Two were sisters, Leah being the oldest and Rachel, the youngest and most loved by Jacob. The other two were Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, and Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid. According to Genesis 37:2, who was Joseph with?

- 1.) What are the names of Bilhah's sons? See Genesis 30:6-8

- 2.) What are the names of Zilpah's sons? See Genesis 30:10-13

2. ...and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father (Genesis 37:2). Although we are not told what this *bad* report was, family dynamics have changed little over the years. What might we assume about Joseph and this *bad* report?

3. Using verse 3, record what you learn about Jacob (also known as Israel) and his relationship with Joseph?
 - a. There are many ways to show favoritism. List a few.
 - 1.) Verse 4 says that *his brothers saw that their father loved him more*. What was the visible sign of Jacob's favoritism toward Joseph?
 - a.) What might a parent learn about gifts from this example?
 - b. In what ways is this similar to Jacob's own childhood experience?

4. Record the response of Joseph's brothers to their father's favoritism of Joseph.
 - a. Describe the word *hate* as it might relate to the feelings of Joseph's brothers toward him.
 - 1.) What was one result of this *hatred*?
 - a.) In your own words, describe the inability to *speak peaceably*.
 - 2.) What are some other results of *hatred*?

ENVY: Read Genesis 37:5-11

1. What event caused Joseph's brothers to *hate him even more*?

2. Describe or draw the events of Joseph's dream.

3. Joseph's brothers rightly interpreted the dream to say Joseph would *reign and have dominion* over them. What was their reaction?

4. Joseph *dreamed another dream*. Describe or draw the events of this second dream.

5. This second dream was similar in interpretation as the first dream. This time *Jacob* joined in the rebuke. How did:
Joseph's brothers react?

Joseph's father react?
 - a. Where was Jacob's focus?
 - 1.) Why is it important to watch the reaction of our children to circumstances?

6. People are *favored* in many relationships and in many places. What are the dangers of being the recipient of favoritism?

VIOLENCE: Read Genesis 37:12-18

1. Jacob sent Joseph to be with his brothers who were *feeding their father's flock*. What did his brothers do when they *saw him afar off*?
 - a. What do you think is the significance of the phrase *even before he came near*?

2. Define the word *conspire*.

3. This was not a rash thought of the brothers. Considering that they *conspired*, what can you learn about them?
 - a. Righteous men have been *conspired against* throughout the Bible. Read the words of David in Psalm 37:12-15. What can we learn from David's reflections?

Challenge: Record another example from the Bible of a righteous person who was conspired against.

4. Record the words of Psalm 109:4.
 - a. What happens when we *give ourselves to prayer*?

DECEPTION: Read Genesis 37:19-36

1. Although Joseph's brothers conspired to kill him, his brother Reuben intervened. According to Genesis 37:21,22, what did Reuben say to them?
 - a. What was Reuben's intention? Verse 22

2. Before Reuben could return to rescue Joseph, the brothers (through Judah's counsel) sold Joseph to a company of Ishmaelites who were on their way to Egypt. After this, what did his brothers do? Verses 31-32

3. Sin has a way of multiplying once it is allowed to begin. Reflect upon the progression: *envy* → *conspiring* → *thoughts of murder* → *selling Joseph* → *deception*. What are your thoughts?

4. What was Jacob's reaction? Verses 33-35
 - a. The selfishness of Joseph's brothers led to great grief for their father. Yet, they did not confess or make any attempts to rescue Joseph. Why is it sometimes difficult to take steps to rectify a wrong?

- b. What steps should be taken when we realize we have done something that has caused harm to another? Challenge: Use Scripture to support your answer.

5. Thoughtfully record the words of the last verse of Genesis 37.

REVIEW: Read Genesis 37

1. Joseph's ancestors seem to have passed on poor examples. In what ways has this lesson challenged you regarding those you influence?

2. Using Genesis 37, share some ways Joseph or his circumstances are similar to Jesus.

3. How has this lesson impacted you regarding the effects of harboring *hatred* or *envy*?

*But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts,
do not boast and lie against the truth.
This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.
For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.
- James 3:14-16*