

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

STUDY NUMBER ONE – GENESIS 37:1-36

INTRODUCTION:

When you study the book of Genesis there are four high points: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

In this study, we will focus on the fourth of these great Patriarchs.

Many people believe that the promises went from Abraham to Isaac and from Jacob and then to Joseph.

But that is not the way it goes as you are going to learn in this particular series of studies.

It moves from Abraham to Isaac and then to Jacob and then to Judah, the fourth born son of Jacob is the one who carries on the Messianic promises.

Joseph is probably one of the most lovable characters in the Old Testament.

There is only one time that you really see him selfish.

There is only one time where you see him weak so you can relate to him and that is when he is in prison he knows he is there unjustly and he has done a favor for the cupbearer and he just says please remember me when you get out.

I mean that's the only time you ever see him really kind of bemoaning the fact that he is having a rough time in his life.

There is more biographical material on this person probably than any other person in the Old Testament apart from the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament and so we have an outstanding character to study.

In ABRAHAM we see DIVINE POWER displayed in the giving of a son to a barren set of parents in their old age.

In ISAAC we see a DIVINE CHOICE. It is Jacob and not Esau.

And then when we come to JOSEPH we see GOD'S GREAT PLAN and PURPOSE as it unfolds.

In ABRAHAM you see the POWER OF GOD.

In ISAAC you see the PROVISION OF GOD.

In JACOB the PURPOSE OF GOD.

And in JOSEPH the PLAN OF GOD.

**When I think of Joseph, I think of two verses.
I think of one in the Old Testament and I think of one
in the New:**

The one in the Old Testament is

Isaiah 40:31

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary; they will walk, and not be faint.”

In the book, The Rebirth of America by the Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation he says,

“For thousands of years, the eagle has been admired for its grandeur, and its grace in flight, and its great size and awesome power.

The soaring eagle is a stirring picture of the true meaning of liberty.

Assisted by his powerful wings, the eagle glides effortlessly to altitudes of over 2,400 feet and is capable of using his wings to carry other eagles to safety.

Turbulent winds only cause him to fly higher and faster.

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The eagle's keen eyesight enables him to be sensitive to approaching danger and to protect himself and his family.

The eagle displays the sense of responsibility that is a companion of genuine liberty. He mates for life and returns to the same nest each year, making necessary repairs and additions. He takes an active role in providing for his family and in teaching his young to fly.”

Joseph is the epitome of that.

Paul Powell who is a pastor in Tyler wrote a book called *When the Hurt Won't Go Away* on the life of Job. When he is writing on Isaiah 40:31 he said something that was very interesting.

“Some people think that Isaiah's order is all turned around in these verses. They say that soaring should be last. Not so! God knew what He was talking about when He led Isaiah to set things in this order. The most difficult discipline is not to soar like an eagle or to run like a racer, but to keep on keeping on.

This passage is a promise of grace for all the gears of life – the high gear of flying, the middle gear of running, and the low gear of walking.

God is faithful and His grace sufficient.”

If we were to turn to the New Testament I would have to say that Romans 8:28 is the great verse that illustrates the life of Joseph.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

It is a timeless principle.

But sometimes we don't understand what God is doing but He is at work.

And sometimes we don't understand because it seems like everything is adverse and everything is going contrary to that purpose.

But a wonderful thing about the life of Joseph, as we through section after section of it, you are going to be amazed to see how back of all of that is purpose.

Now what I am asking of you is as we go through this series of studies, “Can you have the same confidence that God has some purpose behind what you are going through?”

I hope you will see the fact that God is at work:
through adversity,
through our bodies,
and our souls,
and our spirits.

**In the weeks ahead we see the tests supplied to Joseph's life:
in the PIT,
in POTIPHAR'S house,
and in the PRISON.**

**We also learn something else and that is,
When God chooses you, He also will work in your life
in preparation for the fulfillment of the purpose and
plan that He has for your life.**

**Now let me give you a couple of verses
that will help us understand
what is going on
as we get ready to look
at study number one.**

Genesis 15:13, 14

This is way back earlier in the book of Genesis.

And God said to Abraham, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions."

Now what is God saying to Abraham?

Basically He is saying the land is going to be yours, the land of Canaan.

And there is going to be a seed that is going to come from you.

You are going to be the father of many nations.

Okay, those two things.

But there is also some other strange clause here, in it

God says I want to tell you something Abraham, your seed is going to reside in a land that is not theirs for over four hundred years, then they are going to come out of that land and I am going to judge the nation that has held them in bondage.

Now all we have to see is that God is fulfilling His eternal purpose in everything that happens in the life of Joseph.

He is actually letting Joseph serve as a contribution toward that ultimate purpose.

Now in spite of the fact that Joseph is called of God he is going to face horrendous experiences of adversity.

As you know you can hardly turn your television set on to a Christian television station and they will promise you health, wealth, and prosperity if you will send in \$50 bucks to support their TV ministry.

This is what Paul Powell has to say along that line.

“In spite of the current deluge of “health-and-wealth theology,” the fact of the matter is that Jesus promised His followers only three things in this life: they would be always in trouble, never alone and ever at peace.

Isn't that great.

Three things when you get right down to it.

You are always going to be in trouble, you are never going to be alone, and you are always going to be at peace, that is if you are aligned with His purpose.

The Christian faith was never intended to be merely an absence of human suffering; it is, rather, comfort in the midst of the storm.

God is working out His purposes, revealing His grace, blessing with His presence.

**We get sick, we get divorces, we lose our jobs,
our kids go bad like everybody else's.**

But we don't have to jump off tall buildings!

**We have a Savior who has answers, help, and
a purpose.**

**Though God does not exempt us from suffering and He
does not explain to us why our suffering comes,
He does enter into our experiences with us and
helps us through them.**

**God doesn't save us from trouble;
He saves us in trouble.**

**God didn't save Daniel from the lion's den;
He saved Daniel in the lion's den.**

**He shut the mouths of the lions and
kept them from devouring Daniel.**

**God did not save the three Hebrew children
from the fiery furnace;
He saved them in the fiery furnace.**

**He entered into the furnace with them and
He became their shield to keep the fire
from consuming them.**

And God didn't route David around the valley of the shadow of death; He became David's Shepherd and walked with him through it.

In the same way God does not save us from sorrow and suffering.

But He loves us and enters into life's experiences to help us and to sustain us.

Paul declares, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

The value of Joseph's life. Well:

- 1. It explains the development of the Hebrew nation in the land of Egypt.**
- 2. He gives proof of Divine Providence.**
- 3. It is an example of personal character.**
- 4. And there are many similarities to the life of the Lord Jesus.**

If I were to try to characterize his life for you today I would tell you that:

In the midst of all the ADVERSITY he is a man who can be tremendously patient, he can resign himself to God's purpose knowing that it is going to eventually unfold.

In TEMPTATION, he is firm, inflexible. “Daniel purposed in his heart. . . .” Joseph too is blessed.

In EXALTATION he is natural with simplicity, integrity, humility, and gentleness.

It really is a story from RAGS TO RICHES, from the PIT TO THE PALACE.

What we want to look at now is this first episode in his life and if you will turn with me to Genesis chapter 37 we will get into it.

Four F’s, they give us the picture of Joseph:

- 1. FORGIVENESS**
- 2. FORGETFULNESS**
- 3. FRUITFULNESS**
- 4. And he is a FIGURE of the person of Christ.**

One writer said there are over 400 parallels between Joseph and the life of Jesus.

You will see some of them.

FORGIVENESS, he is the epitome of it.

FORGETFULNESS, after he forgave, he forgot.

He is a man who is FRUITFUL in the midst of his adversity.

And he is indeed the FIGURE of Jesus Christ.

Let's get into it. It is going to be fun. Verse 1.

v. 1 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

Now Jacob is getting older.

He is 108 years of age here as the scene of our study opens today.

He only has 39 years left of his earthly pilgrimage.

And he is staying in Hebron which is about 35 to 40 miles south of Jerusalem.

It is the location of his family.

v. 2 This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

Now the key figures in the ongoing promises of the seed are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but why all this study of Joseph?

Joseph fits into the purpose to get the seed into Egypt, not the ongoing of the seed.

That is going to be Judah.

So we need to recognize that here that as the story of Joseph is told it is for a purpose.

It is to explain how the seed gets into a land that is not theirs for 400 years.

Now Joseph has a tremendous contribution to make.

As Joseph enters the scene, he is a teenager.

He is 17 years of age. He is much loved.

He is the firstborn son to Jacob by means of his much-loved wife, Rachel.

Rachel has been barren for a long time and she has the privilege of only mothering 2 children.

One of them is Joseph and the other one is Benjamin.

And when Benjamin is born, she dies in childbirth.

Now evidently Joseph though he is very young is given some administrative responsibility here over some of his brothers who are older than he is.

These four brothers involved in this circumstance are sons that had been born to the two handmaids of Jacob.

Rachel had a handmaid by the name of Bilhah and Leah had a handmaid by the name of Zilpah.

And those two handmaids had two children each. Bilhah had Dan and Naphtali and Zilpah had Gad and Asher so those are the four boys that are involved.

It might be good for me just to take a minute to review the whole family of Jacob because it is a huge mess.

It certainly cures anybody's ideas of polygamy.

It is the first real messy picture of what multiple women will do in the life of a man.

I mean it is an incredible picture of that.

God had a plan in monogamy.

We can certainly understand that when you see that mess.

What happened was Jacob stole the blessing of his brother Esau from his blind father Isaac.

Rebekah, his mother who loved him the most, sent him off to Uncle Laban's house wife hunting.

And when he got to Uncle Laban's house he fell in love with Rachel.

And entered into a contract of working for seven years because he loved her so much.

And on that wedding night seven years later, Sneaky, Tricky Laban, the old uncle, put Leah, the less loved girl, the one with the glasses you know, put her in the bed that night.

She had eye problems or something but that is what the scripture tells us.

The next morning, Jacob just goes up in smoke because Leah is now his wife and not Rachel.

So Laban says, "Well work seven more years and you can have Rachel."

So this is the plan but the babies start coming and guess who is having the babies?

Leah has four of them right out of the shoot.

I mean during that seven years that Jacob is working she has Reuben number one.

And she is thinking that through having so many children her husband, is going to love her but that does not happen.

Then comes Simeon number two right after that.

And then comes Levi number three right after that and then here comes Judah number four.

Judah means “Praise the Lord” and so she is saying praise the Lord this is number four.

Now Rachel does not have any.

One day Rachel storms into Jacob’s presence and says “give me children or I die” and Jacob just blew up.

He said “me, give you children!

The problem is not with me. Guess what?

Leah has had four.” You know.

So now Rachel can make a decision.

She can send her handmaid in and raise up a seed so she sends in Bilhah.

And it is at this point that Bilhah has two of those boys.

She has Dan and Naphtali.

Now Leah has stopped bearing kids.

So there are six of them now.

**And she decides well since I can't have them
I am going to send Zilpah in
which she should not have even done
but she did.**

**And so Zilpah goes in and now we have two more
that are born.**

We have Gad and Asher.

Now we have eight kids all under six years of age.

Can you imagine living in a tent with that many?

Well right after that just to make matters worse.

To show you what poor Rachel went through.

Leah started having kids again.

**Leah has Issachar and Zebulun and then
she threw in a daughter by the name of Dinah
on top of that.**

So here is poor Rachel without any babies.

Now can you imagine with that many kids running around the tent, 11 of them, that when Joseph is born, he is somewhat loved.

You see Jacob sees it as a miracle and it is.

God at that time let Rachel have a baby and it just blows Jacob away.

I mean he was committed to her, she was his love, and she finally has a baby.

So Joseph is born into this unique environment.

Shortly after Rachel had Joseph she prayed that she could have another baby.

And on the way to Bethlehem she had another baby and died in childbirth.

They buried her there in a very, very lonely place just a little ways from the city of Bethlehem.

Now when it comes time for Joseph to be given some responsibility he gets it.

And who are the others that are going to suffer for it?

Dan and Naphtali and Gad and Asher.

It's one thing working for somebody that's older than you but to work for somebody younger than you and he's your baby brother on top of that, wow!

You know these four fellows probably were out of joint in the first place.

But now put yourself in Joseph's shoes. He is 17.

He has just received his driver's license.

And just received his social security number.

This is his first job.

He wants to get a good reference so that it will reflect well on his resume and get some better jobs later on.

So he is serious about his first job.

And he wants to do a real good job.

Now he finds out that these boys are not an asset to their daddy.

Their conduct and their involvement is not a tribute.

Now Joseph has got to think, what am I going to do?

Should I as a good administrator go and report their behavior to my superior or what should I do?

**And finally he says,
“Dad they are messing around!**

They are doing some drinking and some drugs and some dirty books and I know you would want to know about this.”

And Joseph, like Daniel, purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself and so standing with his conviction he is honest with his father and he tells him this.

v. 3 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.

Now in the old King James it says, “coat of many colors” it is really a richly ornamented robe that is a sign of dignity, of royalty, of setting him apart.

In modern terms we speak of the FAVORITE CHILD or being the TEACHER’S PET.

Well this was obviously an indication that he was something special because he received something that the other 11 boys did not get.

It was a special mark.

**Because he was the son of his dad's old age
Jacob was playing favorites.**

**Now why do you think Jacob is playing favorites
with Joseph?**

**I think he is because he wants to give Joseph
something that he never had himself.**

**When he and his brother Esau were born,
Esau had all of Isaac's affections.**

**Guess who ended up as momma's boy in the kitchen
always cooking chili? Jacob.**

**He never did anything that made his father really love
him.**

**And I think Jacob wanted to give to his
much-loved boy something that he never had.**

So he is playing favorites here.

**Jacob is letting Joseph have the experience
of favoritism in this situation.**

**He loved him because he was a son
of old age.**

And it is usually said that the parents have a tendency to spoil the youngest child.

“He made a richly ornamented robe for him” so the robe marked him off.

It is preferred status, superior position, it's a regal robe.

It is probably a coat that reached to his wrists and also to his ankles.

The modern day equivalent might be guys that achieve something in the athletic world wear a letterman's jacket.

It is a mark of status.

They have done something superior.

v. 4 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.

Well you can just imagine what went on in that tent.

They are very, very mad at him.

They can't even talk civilly to him.

v. 5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

Can you imagine the picture?

When you start to hate somebody you kind of build a little hatred ledger.

You know how it goes,
that's one and then
that's two, and then
there is three, and then
that is four, and then
all of the sudden all heck just breaks loose.

And what happened way back then
all of the sudden it all comes out at once.

Well there is a hatred ledger of four things
that these brothers have against Joseph.

1. The father's love is the first one.
2. The report of the bad behavior you know, tattle-tell, telling on us, dirty guy.
3. Coat which he has had made for him.
4. And now he has had some dreams.
And you can just imagine why they hate him because of the dreams. Look at this.

v. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had:

You just can't believe how naïve Joseph is.

Most likely Joseph has no ulterior motives, he is just telling them about his dream.

v. 7 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."

Wow! Talk about the robe.

Talk about the administrative responsibilities.

That rubbed some salt in an open wound didn't it?

v. 8 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.

Two big questions:

- 1. Do you intend to rule over us?**
- 2. Will you actually reign over us?**

You can just hear the brothers:

"Well, look who's coming.

The guy who's too cool for us!"

Dan and Naphtali and Gad and Asher had already had enough of that stuff.

They could not stand his leadership anymore.

Well we want to notice the fact that something else happens in verse 9.

v. 9 Now 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."

Why do you think God is giving these dreams to Joseph?

I think God gives dreams and God gives time in the Word that is rich to prepare us for what is coming.

I think these dreams are designed as sustaining strength.

God knows in His big program, Joseph has a lot to learn and he has got a long way to travel before these dreams are ever fulfilled.

And God is allowing these dreams to Joseph simply to prepare him with sustaining strength for what he is going to have to face ahead.

The implications of the dream are pretty clear aren't they?

Country boy works his way up, rose to become the President of the land.

v. 10 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?"

Would you notice something very unusual about that verse?

"Will your mother and I . . . come and bow down . . . before you?"

Who is his mother? Rachel, she died.

Sometimes you may feel like you are unloved and you are rejected and you are hurt by what is going on in your life.

Leah had to travel an awful lonely territory but who changed Benjamin's diapers?

**Who washed Joseph's face?
And who took Rachel's place? Leah.**

You see it was God’s purpose all along that Leah be the one in Jacob’s life and not Rachel.

Because it was through Leah that Judah came and we are going to see that in the end it is by Leah that Jacob is buried.

Now she has become his mother, his adopted mother yes, and Jacob confronts him and says, “your mother and I are going to come down with your brothers and bow before you?”

And “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?’”

It seems like he is rejecting it but he is not. Next verse.

v. 11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Who do you think of when you think of someone pondering something in the mind?

You think of Mary don’t you?

She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Jacob knows that maybe God is saying something.

v. 12 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem,

Now I love old Jacob.

He knows that when there is a temperature around the house and it is rising rapidly, what you have to do is separate the problems.

So why not send the boys out on a constructive project of ranching.

Go pasture some of the flocks near Shechem.

Shechem is 60 miles north of Hebron so that's quite a distance from the house and it is no small cattle drive to get the herds up there.

Now Shechem is a city with bad memories.

Did you ever have a city of bad memories when something bad happened in that city and it just kind of ruins your taste for that city for the rest of your life?

Well it was five years ago in Genesis 34 that Dinah, Leah's daughter, was raped at Shechem High School by a guy.

It was one of the local citizens.

And as a result of that the young man wanted to marry her.

Simeon and Levi tricked him and went up there and slew the whole male population and had to leave Shechem.

Needless to say that made them very unpopular in the area.

And for these boys to go back into Shechem five years later, they are on a dangerous mission.

v. 13 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.

Isn't it interesting how sometimes you make a decision so innocent and it is the decision that is going to affect the rest of your life?

**Here is old dad saying, Joseph,
I need to have you take a little 60 mile trip north and
check on the boys and
see how they are doing and take some food along.**

And what does Joseph say? “Very well,’ he replied.”

**You can be impressed by his promptness of obedience
in submission to his father’s authority.**

Those are the two things God blesses in your life:

- 1. Submission to authority.**
- 2. And obedience to His Word.**

And immediately Joseph obeys.

**Sometimes we make innocent decisions like this and
a split second changes our lives.**

**I knew an orthopedic surgeon and
on a ski trip with his family,
pulling the elastic cord across his car carrier on the top
and it snapped on the other side and
put out his eye and he lost his orthopedic practice.**

**Those things happen so quick and it seems like
they happen to everybody else and not to us.**

This is the last time that Jacob is going to see his much-loved son by the decision he has just made for the next 20 years.

v. 14 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.” So he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem,

v. 15 a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, “What are you looking for?”

Isn't it wonderful how the Lord just brings people into your life at the perfect time?

Here he is wandering around the fields of Shechem looking for the boys.

Things probably got very hot in Shechem just after five years.

So the boys moved north to locate some good pasture land.

And now they are 16 miles away in Dothan as we are going to learn.

v. 16 He replied, “I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?”

v. 17 “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.

What do you admire about that?

Well he could have turned around and said “Well I went to Shechem and I didn’t find them so I did what I was supposed to do.”

Are you that kind of an individual?

Don’t you admire the ingenuity of Joseph in this situation?

**He comes there.
He finds out.**

**He has been going for 60 miles.
Probably a 3-day trip.**

And the guy says I heard them say they were going to move north to Dothan.

And so instead of just stopping and going on home and saying “I couldn’t find them” he takes the extra 16 miles and all the trouble to find them.

**And you would think
that a boy coming with jugs of iced tea and
hot dogs and potato chips
and all the good stuff from home
would be well received.**

However, there's that hatred ledger.

**What happens is when they see that robe
even though it isn't RED
it's like a bull seeing red.**

**v. 18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he
reached them, they plotted to kill him.**

**Imagination the surprise and the shock of Joseph
after making all these sacrifices
to bring food and drink to them.**

**And they are having a holy huddle
trying to decide how they are going to put him away?**

They want to kill him.

**v. 19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each
other.**

**Under stress, you will always find out
what it is that really irritates somebody.**

As soon as they see him coming,

**“Here comes that dreamer!”
It is the dreams.**

**They don't like the dreams and
they do not like the coat.**

**They can't do anything about the love
so what are they going to do?**

**Well you guys can slay the dreamer
but you are not going to touch the dream.**

**Although you are seeking to defeat God's purposes
it is going to be fulfilled.**

God is going to work it all out.

**When you are dealing with God,
you always win and you never lose.**

**God has a wonderful ability
of taking out of horrible circumstances
that seem unexplainable and impossible,
things that become wonderful.**

**v. 20 “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.”**

How inconsistent this all seems to the dreams,

doesn't it?

Here he is, Joseph has to have the confidence that God is working something out in all of this.

v. 21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said.

Now why does Reuben speak?

Remember Reuben is the oldest.

He is the firstborn and he is responsible, ultimately before his father as to what happens to the rest of the boys.

"Let's not take his life."

Now what is that?

In back of that is protective providence besides being the firstborn, isn't it?

It is God wanting to fulfill His promises.

Can I ask you this question?

If in fact had these boys killed him and

threw him into the pit.

Could God have gotten him into Egypt and fulfilled His purpose?

How big is your God?

Abraham's God was so big that when God says, "take your son, your only son Isaac and go over here on Mount Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice."

After three days journey when he got ready to climb up the mountain and his son turned to him and he said "Dad, we have the fire and wood but where is the sacrifice?"

Abraham said, "the Lord is going to provide a sacrifice" and then he turned to the other men that he left at the bottom and he said "the boy and I are going to go and worship Him and we will return to you."

He knew that on that mountain that if he plunged his knife into the heart of that son in obedience, God would raise that boy from the dead.

And that is why Abraham, in faith,

made Hebrews chapter 11.

God has a purpose with Joseph that will be fully accomplished.

v. 22 “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.

v. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe – the richly ornamented robe he was wearing --

The two things they hated:

1. His dreams.
2. And the preferred status so they stripped that off of him.

And immediately upon doing that . . .

v. 24 And they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

Alright, put yourself in his shoes.

You just had these great dreams, you are 17, and you have never been away from home before in your life. And you believe in God.

**Now all of the sudden you find yourself
in a horrible pit.**

Stripped of your coat.

Brothers who hate you.

And you probably are beginning to believe the worst.

Now can you believe verse 25?

v. 25 As they sat down to eat their meal,

**I looked at that and I thought,
where did they get their meal?**

**It was just brought to them by royal express
all the way from Hebron by a brother
who loved them.**

**I wonder who asked the blessing on that meal
while their brother is crying in the pit over there?**

**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.**

Isn't that great how God does that?

Oh, we need a caravan of Ishmaelites to come by here at 11:46 just as the boys are sitting down to eat.

They have just come from Gilead, it is 25 miles up here in the north and they have a 250 mile trip to get down to Egypt.

They are delivering their wares but notice they come by just at the right time.

Do you think God works like that?

I know He works like that.

Bringing circumstances and events together.

And so here they come, perfectly on schedule on their way down to Egypt.

Now God does not prevent us going through these difficult circumstances but He takes us through them.

v. 26 Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?”

Here comes the counter-proposal now.

v. 27 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.

Have you ever read anything that is more of a mixture of MORALITY and IMMORALITY?

"Come, let's sell him," don't kill him, he's our brother.

I mean that's glorified doubletalk.

CONVICTION and CONFORMITY all put together.

Let's just sell him, put him into slavery.

v. 28 So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekel of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

What do you think the boys said as soon as the caravan started to move away from where they stood?

"Bye dreamer.

They knew very well what they were doing.

Joseph doesn't have clue what God is doing in his life right now but he will.

Joseph has to get down to Egypt to fulfill His plan for God.

This is all part of God's big plan.

Some have been troubled in the text by the words Midianites and Ishmaelites.

As though it is a conflict in the text.

These people are Ishmaelites, descendants of Ishmael and they are from the land of Midian.

We use the same term today.

We would say there are Jews from New York who come to Dallas to sell their clothing.

We would say there are Ishmaelites who come from Midian and they are on their way down to the land of Egypt.

v. 29 When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes.

Evidently during this little transition something happened with the flock.

There may have been a stampede or something.

Reuben gave attention to that and was away while the other boys were negotiating with the traders about the sale.

**And when he returns
he does not find him.**

**v. 30 He went back to his brothers and said, “The boy
isn’t there! Where can I turn now?”**

**v. 31 Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat
and dipped the robe in the blood.**

**v. 32 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.”**

**v. 33 He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s robe!
Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph
has surely been torn to pieces.”**

**Principle: False assumptions lead to unnecessary
anxiety.**

**If Jacob really believed that the promise
was going to go through Joseph.**

And he was going to have a part in this.

**Then he is entertaining thoughts
that are impossible in God’s purposes and plans.**

**Jacobs forgets the dreams, he believes the worst,
his son is killed by a ferocious animal.**

Principle: To bring it right down to where we live.

When we look only, at the present circumstances we are most generally going to come up with the wrong conclusion.

v. 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.

v. 35 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.

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

Tune in next week for the next exciting episode of “As the World Turns.”

This study, found its way into a Texas prison.

And an inmate was due to be released and he asked the Warden if he could stay in an extra couple of days to find out what happened to Joseph.

That’s the honest truth.

Here are the lessons out of this study to wrap it up for today.

LESSON #1: The Father's PROMISE, POWER, and PURPOSE are all at work in this study. We are just going to have to see it.

LESSON #2: We have been made aware of the overruling power of a sovereign God. It is wonderful in its counsel and mighty in its operation. God is at work.

LESSON #3: One sin begets another. Envy is turned to hatred, hatred is changed to murder and then murder leads to lying.

LESSON #4: Just because God gives a promise it does not mean that He is not going to do a work in our lives to prepare us for the reception of that promise. He gives a promise and then he prepares us for the reception of it.

LESSON #5: The dreams were designed to sustain in the time of trial.

LESSON #6: All things do work together for good to them that love God we just need to hang on for a while.

LESSON #7: Be sure your sins will find you out. Jacob is bearing the fruit of his own deception in this experience as we have seen.

LESSON #8: Joseph is an example of submission to his father's authority and obedience to his command. And that is what God wants from you today.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

STUDY NUMBER ONE - GENESIS 37:1-36 NOTES

v. 1 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

v. 2 This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

v. 3 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.

v. 4 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.

v. 5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

v. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had:

v. 7 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."

v. 8 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.

v. 9 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."

v.10 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?"

v.11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the thing in mind.

v.12 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem,

v.13 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.

v.14 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." So he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem,

v.15 a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

v.16 He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"

v.17 "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.

v.18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

v.19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other.

v.20 "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."

v.21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said.

v.22 "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.

v.23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—

v.24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

v.25 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.

v.26 Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?”

v.27 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.

v.28 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.

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v.32 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.”

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v.35 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.

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

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The Father's promise, power, and purpose are all at work in this study.

LESSON #2: We have been made aware of the overruling power of a sovereign God which is wonderful in its counsel and mighty in its operation.

LESSON #3: One sin begets another. We have seen envy change to hatred, and hatred change to murder, and murder lead to falsehood.

LESSON #4: Just because God gives a promise it does not mean that He is not going to do a work in our lives to prepare us for the reception of the promise.

LESSON #5: The dreams were designed to sustain in the time of trial.

LESSON #6: All things work together for good to them that love God and who are called according to His purpose.

LESSON #7: Be sure your sins will find you out. Jacob is bearing the fruit of his own deception in this experience.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 37:1-36 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Describe the first things we know about Joseph, according to verses 2 & 3.

3. What is the brothers' response to Jacob's love for Joseph, according to verse 4?

4. Describe the dreams of Joseph and the interpretation of them in verses 5-10.

5. How do his brothers feel about him, according to verses 11 & 19?

6. What do they decide to do to Joseph?

7. What do his brothers do to him when he arrives on the scene?

8. What do the boys tell their father about Joseph, and what is Jacob's response to the news?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?
