

## Joseph, Sermon #1

Genesis 37

Today we begin our summer series on the life of Joseph—beginning in Genesis 37, it runs all the way through to the end of the book, Genesis 50.

The story of Joseph is the last great story in the Book of Genesis—eight major stories: Creation, Fall, Flood, Nations, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and then Joseph

Genesis 1-11 – early history of the human race

Genesis 12 – focus on one nation—Israel

Israel was to inhabit a promised land and out of its womb, the Messiah would come.

And that nation was to be an example, a lighthouse

When we read Genesis—there was a continual threat to the nation's existence.

And, Joseph was used by God to provide and protect His nation of Israel.

I've entitled our opening message "An Introduction to Joseph"

Genesis 37:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Genesis 37:1-11

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

## An Introduction to Joseph

### #1 – Historically

When you have in a home one father, four different mothers, and twelve sons, one daughter, you have the ingredients for multiple problems—jealousies, baby race, etc.

### Genesis 29

<u>Leah</u>	<u>Rachel</u>
Reuben	Joseph
Simeon	Benjamin
Levi	
Judah	
Issachar	
Zebulun	
Dinah	
<u>Zilpah</u>	<u>Bilhah</u>
Gad	Dan
Asher	Naphtali

Genesis 37 unfolds the destructive dynamics of a family that knew the true and living God and yet sinned against Him and each other by what they said and did. The presence of Joseph in the home didn't *create* problems so much as *revealed* them.

Joseph was sold into slavery—Potiphar's home—falsely accused—prison—baker and the butler—second to Pharaoh (pit to the palace)—interpreted the dream—seven good years, followed by seven bad years

★International food crisis★

Genesis 37:2—Joseph was seventeen

Genesis 41:46 – Joseph was 30 when he stood before Pharaoh

In Genesis 45:11 – + 9

39 years old in Genesis 45:11—when Jacob and all his family moved to Egypt to a place called Goshen (go-shun)

In Genesis 50:26 – 110

The Nation of Israel was 71 years under Joseph's care

**Secondly**, theologically – Providence of God

How God brought Joseph—from his home to Egypt and second to Pharaoh

Genesis 45:4-8

We see the Providence of God—how God works behind the scenes

Romans 8:28, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”*

Genesis 50:20

Divine Providence should be a source of great joy to the believer.

**Thirdly**, personal character of Joseph

In all of Joseph's trials—Joseph trusted God.

Genesis 41:50-52 – Joseph's life can be divided into two parts—first part of life, toil and affliction; second part of life, forgetting and fruitfulness

Genesis 50:24-25 – dying breath—he trusts God

Joseph had faith to trust God in spite of the circumstances—he faced harsh home, pit, sold, falsely accused.

Proverbs 20:24, *“Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?”*

As God sovereignly works, man is often unable to understand why he is being led down a certain path.

And, Joseph had a rough path.

Yet, we see the integrity of Joseph in all circumstances—not one complaint, not one cry, “Why me, Lord?”

With this kind of faith, there will be a lot we will learn from Joseph over the summer.

Amen!

Genesis 37:1-11

In these opening verses, God gave us three selected incidents.

This is all we know of Joseph in the first 17 years of his life.

These three incidents essentially tell us of

#1 – Joseph’s character – vs. 1-2

#2 – his relationship with his father, Jacob – vs. 3-4

#3 – God’s choice of him for leadership – vs. 5-11

God recorded these three incidents out of all the incidents in this young man’s life.

What is the purpose of these?

These three incidents are given to us to show us the cause of Joseph’s toil and affliction—the first part of his life.

Running through these three incidents is the relationship of Joseph and his brothers.

Vs. 4 – they hated him – this is the first indication of their attitude toward Joseph

Vs. 5e – they hated him yet the more

Vs. 8 – they hated him yet the more

Vs. 11 – they envied him

Four times the Bible tells us the relationship between those brothers and Joseph.

What we see in the first eleven verses as attitudes erupt into actions in the next section of this story—when they cast him into the pit and sell him into slavery.

These events are here to show us the human causes of Joseph’s years of toil and affliction and how this all came about that he was sold by his brothers.

These incidents actually show us that among the family of God, there are clashes.

These incidents give us a number of reasons for clashes between people who ought to have every reason to be closely tied together.

And, as we note each one of these incidents, we will note an irritation that could cause division.

An irritation itself never causes division—it's always the response to the irritation.  
How many of you were irritated by something this past week?

## **I. The Irritation of Rebuked Sin**

Vs. 2 – four of Joseph's brothers are out herding the sheep and Joseph goes out for a period time and Joseph notes their evil deeds.

We are not told what they did—these men were capable of anything.

Joseph now has a choice to make—he makes a proper choice and that is the source of irritation.

Joseph told his dad what his brothers were doing (vs.2e)—we call him a tattler.

Joseph had integrity.

Whatever his brothers were doing was terribly wicked.

The men immediately knew who the informer was.

In any Godly person, there is a heart not to participate in evil, but there is also a secondary decision of whether to tolerate it or not—or to say something.

We live in a time of poor loyalty—if we squeal, we are called a rat.

To whom does our loyalty belong?

Will I let friends keep me from doing what is right?

Will I let fear keep me from doing what is right?

Leviticus 5:1

Sweeping sin under the carpet—if God allows me to be in a place to hear or see, then I  
 ★become responsible for my knowledge—when a person has to rebuke  
 someone of sin or has to go to a higher authority that is an irritation to me—if I'm  
 guilty of the sin, I have one of two choices—I can either reckon with my failure,  
 confess my failure, make it right/restitution OR I can allow the irritation of  
 someone else's righteous behavior regarding me to cause me to respond with  
 hostility.

That was how the brothers responded.

Do we like to be rebuked, to be told? No one likes to be faced with their sin.

The acid test to my commitment to righteousness is do I respond correctly when I am  
 rebuked?

When we do not respond properly to the irritation of someone else being righteous in  
 regards to us, this causes division among God's people.

We can count on this—every one of us is fallible; every one of us is going to face  
 rebuke.

We must all count on it—that in the future, someone will have to confront us about some  
 failure on our part.

We must respond properly to keep the unity in our families, in our church.

Many people have not responded to rebuke and are floating from church to church.

They left the place of rebuke and have floundered spiritually since.

**II. The second cause of division** given to us is in verses 3-4 of Genesis 37—we are  
 given insight into the relationship of Joseph and his dad, Jacob.

**Vs. 3a**

Is that proper? Is that favoritism wise?

Joseph was the favorite son

If you were one of the other brothers, how would you feel? Particularly, when Joseph was born of Rachel, whom Jacob wanted to marry all along Jacob's favoritism was unwise—in fact, Jacob himself was a victim of favoritism as a child.

Having experienced the sad consequences of favoritism in his boyhood home, Jacob knew that to play favorites would cause trouble in his family.

You remember his mother, Rebekah, loved him while his dad, Issac, loved Esau. Rebekah instructed Jacob on how to deceive Isaac—the family was split, Jacob had to run for his life, and Rebekah never saw Jacob alive again.

He should have learned a lesson from that but he didn't and carried the same pattern right into his own family.

The ten brothers were receiving an unjust treatment in their relationship with their father.

This was a second cause of division among God's people.

It is the cause of personal experience of injustice—the failure of someone else to meet his obligation to me.

These brothers looking at the love Jacob gave Joseph and looking at this coat (vs. 3e) The intent of this special garment was a symbol of his authority and favored position in the family.

Joseph's "coat" reached to the ankles and had long sleeves.

Sleeves set him off from the others.

And certainly a coat of many colors would set him apart, also.

It was the rich garment of a ruler and not what the well-dressed shepherd needed out in the fields.

Special gift, these brethren (vs. 4)

The favoritism of Jacob acted like a fuel on the flame on the passions and there was eruption in their souls toward Joseph.

Naturally, the brothers hated him for being the favorite of his father.  
They couldn't even speak peaceably to him.

The irritation is when someone fails in his obligation to me, but that will not create the  
division between us provided I respond properly.

But if I respond improperly, then there will be a separation between us, hard feelings—I  
won't speak to him when I see him, speak evil of him.

This can cause division among God's people.

People are going to fail us—remember that, and we are going to fail others.

Who are we to put our eyes on? The Lord

This world is not fair; we do not get to choose our parents or the family we grow up in.

When there's an injustice, we must not let that root of bitterness spring up in our hearts  
and defile us and others.

This can be a great cause of division and the devil loves nothing more than get  
someone to fail because then it gives the second party just cause for being  
upset.

This attitude in Joseph's brothers came out in actions later on.

And, if we allow an attitude like this to fester in our heart toward any person in our  
church or family, the infection will eventually pop and ooze out.

We need to be careful how we respond to the injustice of others.

**III. There is a third cause of division** among brethren.

It is the cause of God's sovereign blessing on another believer.

Who decided Joseph was to be chief among the brothers? Jacob? No.

God did; God decided that.

The irritation in this case was that the youngest brother was chosen to rule over the  
older brothers.

Remember, all these brothers were within seven years of each other—11 boys in 7 years.

And, consider the natural rivalry of siblings.

Their hatred of Joseph was their lack of submission to God.

Do not let the choice of God affect our spirit toward another brother or sister in Christ. Looks/physical appearance, intelligence, health, height (some things were already decided for us)—test with our children (athletic); test with our promotions.

This is a tremendous problem for the Lord's people.

What heightens the problem is the kind of nation we live in.

Jonathan was a great example of this—King Saul speaking to his son said, don't you know that you have let David take your spot?

You won't be king and have a kingdom.

Jonathan said—here, take my royal robe, my sword, shield, and David, when you're on the throne, will you be good to my family?

Jonathan was as Godly as David, but David was God's choice and Jonathan accepted it.

There will be irritations between us.

Some will be caused by someone who does right.

Some will be caused by an injustice towards us.

Some will be caused by the sovereign choice of God.

We must be careful not to allow these frictions that come to destroy the unity of our families or our church.

An Introduction to Joseph

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Hatred is a terrible sin because it generates other sins.

Proverbs 10:12, *"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins."*

Cause of strife in Jacob's family: sibling rivalry, parents' favoritism, unjust treatment

The fascinating story of Joseph . . .

Acts 7:9, *"And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him."*

Trusting God with the circumstances of my life and having integrity and faith to face them

Has God spoken to our hearts about this?

Let us respond correctly.

What we saw in Joseph, we see in Jesus

I Peter 1:22-24a