

September 6, 2020

“Biased Love”
Lesson 1 of Unit

Gen. 37:2-11, 23-24a, 28

Intro

This first unit of our Fall Quarter begins with a look at Joseph. But it is really a look at a family. What happens to Joseph in this week’s study is also a study in how his father Jacob was raised.

Jacob was the 2nd born twin on Isaac and Rebekah, Esau being the elder. Jacob’s parents also showed favoritism to their sons; Genesis 25:28 says that “Isaac...loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Our text suggests that instead of “home sweet home”, the motto of this family might have been “family feud.” It does seem to fit.

The sibling jealousy and rivalry present in the lives of Jacob and Esau is in full gear with Joseph and his brothers.

Read Genesis 37:1-28

1. In vs. 2, what job is Joseph engaged in? What was Jacob’s profession (see Gen. 30:25-43)? What might we infer about why Jacob is having Joseph involved in this task?
2. Who were the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah (vs. 2)? See Gen. 35:25-26. Knowing that Joseph and Benjamin were born by Rachel, how many of his sons were born by Leah?
3. What action of Joseph’s is reported at the end of vs. 2? No matter what the report is, what does this phrase seem to say about Joseph?
4. How does Jacob increase his sons’ dislike for Joseph further in vs. 3? Why does he do this? What impact does this have on the brothers in vs. 4?
5. What is Joseph’s dream in vs. 6-7 which he tells his brothers? What does that dream suggest for the future? What is the brothers’ reaction in vs. 5 and 8?

6. What is Joseph's second dream (vs. 9)? Why might this second dream have been especially important to Joseph? As Joseph is his favorite, why does Jacob rebuke him in vs. 10? What different reactions do the brothers have from the father in vs. 11?
7. Why do the brothers strip Joseph's coat/robe off of him in vs. 23? What do the brothers do in vs. 24 and vs. 28, and what does this say about them and about Jacob's parenting choices?

Application: This story is about the impact of favoritism on the whole family. For Joseph, he is the recipient of favored behaviors, and enjoys it (who wouldn't?). We see the anger and frustration of the siblings who know they aren't the favorites, and the actions they take because of it.

But this is also the story of God's plans and purposes being accomplished. God had already told Abraham that his family would live in Egypt for 400 years (Genesis 15). So Joseph is being used by God to prepare the way for a famine that is many years in the future.

We can struggle at times to see what God is doing in our lives. Frequently we don't see the whole picture until after all the events have occurred. It's helpful to remember Paul's words Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from God's love, or prevent Him from making His plans for us come to be—not even our imperfect families! (Or our imperfect selves!!!)

Prayer: Father God, help us this week to love like you do, to love all the same, and to be aware of any tendency in ourselves toward favoritism. In Jesus' name, Amen.