

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

THE DREAM:

WHEN GOD SHOWS YOU MORE THAN YOU'RE READY FOR

GENESIS 37:1-11

Joseph's Family

Genesis 37:1 *“Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. **2**This is the history of Jacob....”*

- Joseph was born into a family that can be described as “very dysfunctional”
- In Joseph's family there was:
 - *Deception* - Jacob deceived his father Isaac, Jacob's uncle, Laban deceived him about marrying Rachel, and Jacob's sons deceived him about Joseph's death
 - *Favoritism* – Jacob openly favored Joseph more than his brothers
 - That's dangerous parenting
 - Sibling rivalry - Joseph's brothers didn't just dislike him, they hated him
 - *Multiple mothers and divided loyalty* – Jacob had 4 wives
 - Jacob had two primary wives Leah and Rachel, and two secondary wives/concubines Zilpah and Bilhah
 - The Bible reports Jacob's polygamous family structure *descriptively*, not *prescriptively*
 - *Avoidance of confrontation* – Jacob saw the tension between his sons and didn't address it
 - He allowed the hatred between his sons to grow unchallenged
 - The dysfunction in Joseph's family helps explain *why* Joseph's dream created so much hatred and tension
 - Joseph's dream came from a divided home filled with jealousy and envy, competition and unresolved family wounds
 - God gave Joseph a dream in an environment that looked completely opposite of the dream
 - Sometimes God gives you a dream in a dysfunctional environment *to prove* that dysfunctions can't stop your destiny
 - God specializes in pulling purpose out of places that appear unlikely
 - Joseph's story proves you can come from a “messy place” and still walk in *miraculous purpose!*
 - God's dream for your life is not limited by the dysfunction you were born into

Joseph's Coat

2*This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. **3**Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. **4**But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.*

- We're introduced to Joseph as a 17-year-old, he's just a teenager

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- The writer of Genesis wants us to see Joseph as *young, inexperienced and still developing*
- Joseph brought to his father a *bad report* about what his brothers were doing
- Joseph tells his father probably because he was *spiritually sensitive* to right vs. wrong, but at the same time *emotionally immature*
- You can be *spiritually gifted* and still be “emotionally immature”
- Jacob/Israel loved Joseph more than all his children
- Jacob got Joseph a special gift, a beautiful robe/tunic, KJV calls it a coat of many colors
 - Some scholars call it a *coat with sleeves*
- This was an outward display of Joseph’s favor with his father
- The coat was also a sign of identity
- Before God shows you what you will *do*, He will show you *who you are*
- The coat signified a position of favor, privilege, and elevated status in the family
- Joseph wore the coat *before* he had the *character* to carry the calling
- Favor attracts attention, but it also attracts opposition
- This coat added fuel to the flames of strife and bitterness already existing
- Every time Joseph wore the coat, the brothers were reminded:
 - Joseph was favored
 - Joseph was preferred
 - Joseph was treated differently
- The coat made the brothers realize Joseph was not a “working shepherd”, he’s different
- The coat did not create dysfunction, it just put a *spotlight* on it
- And as a result, when Joseph’s brothers saw how their father loved Joseph more than them, they hated him and they could not speak a kind word to him
- Youth combined with favoritism can produce self-righteousness, insensitivity, and overconfidence
- Joseph may not have intended harm, but he likely lacked awareness of how his actions deepened resentment
- What we see in Joseph’s life, we can also experience in families, churches, and workplaces
- If these comparisons are not addressed and corrected they can produce division, bitterness, and conflict
- Yet even in that dysfunction, God was beginning *the process* that would shape Joseph into the man He intended him to become

Joseph’s Dream

5Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. 6So he said to them, “Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: 7There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.”8And his

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brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

9*Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." **10**So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" **11**And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

- In the midst of all this dysfunction, God gives Joseph a dream
- Biblically, a dream is divine communication received while a person is asleep
- Dreams are typically future-oriented
- A dream often gives a glimpse of what the future looks like
- Joseph receives a dream from God and *immediately* shares it with his brothers.
- The issue was not the dream, but Joseph's handling of it.
- He speaks truth, without discernment.
- The dream points to Joseph's future leadership, his authority and God's sovereign plan
- God often reveals destiny before developing the character to sustain it.
- The dream was from God, but Joseph was not yet ready for what God revealed.
- This dream prophetically shows the famine, Joseph's elevation to prime minister in Egypt and his brothers eventually coming to him for food
- Joseph shares the dream in a way that centers on himself.
- **"Shalt thou indeed reign over us?..."**, The brothers immediately understand the meaning of the dream
- Joseph's brother reject the dream
- The brothers' hatred deepens because:
 - the dream threatens their status
 - Joseph already appears favored
 - he appears destined for leadership
- Joseph receives a second dream with the sun, moon, and 11 stars bowing before him
- Joseph shares the dream honestly, with excitement, but still showing his pride and immaturity
- And Joseph's father rebuked him
- Jacob rebukes Joseph publicly but privately considers the matter.
- Joseph's brothers envied him envy is resentment over what someone else has
- Joseph's brothers envied:
 - Joseph's favor
 - Joseph's dreams
 - Joseph's position with his father
- Joseph spoke truthfully, but unwisely

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God is Developing the Dreamer Before Fulfilling the Dream

- Genesis 37:5–11 is not just about Joseph receiving dreams.
- It is about God *beginning the process* of transforming a gifted, immature young man into a humble, wise, and faithful leader who could carry the weight of destiny
- God is in the process of developing humility, integrity, patience, faithfulness, and leadership in Joseph
- If Joseph gets to the palace before his character is fully developed:
 - Power could corrupt him
 - Pride could destroy him
 - Revenge could consume him
- Sometimes we pray; Lord, increase me, Lord, elevate me
- But God answers with “First, let Me develop you
- Just remember God is *preparing and developing* you for what He promised