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INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to begin a three-part study in the life of Joseph. We are going to talk about “Joseph’s Misery” and how he suffered as a young person. Then next week we’re going to talk about “Joseph’s Mystery.” The mystery is sometimes even good people who love Jesus suffer. Joseph spent many, many years in prison even though he was faithful to God—and that’s a mystery. In the third message we’re going to talk about the end of Joseph’s life, “Joseph’s Ministry.”

It is interesting that the first eleven chapters in book of Genesis covers thousands of years and then beginning in the twelfth chapter the Bible focuses on four characters: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. An entire one fourth of the book of Genesis is devoted to the life of Joseph. Why is that? I think God has a design in the way he put the Bible together. I think every word of it is inspired of God, but we have to remember who wrote the book of Genesis. Moses wrote the book of Genesis. That’s why when Jesus was talking about the Old Testament prophecies, Jesus said to those two disciples on the road to Emmaus, “Moses wrote of me.” He started with Moses, meaning Genesis, and ran through the entire Bible. Moses wrote the book of Genesis under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Moses grew up in Egypt, but who taught Moses his history? Probably his mother, Jochebed, who also was hired by the Pharaoh to be the nanny of her actual son. Because they were slaves, the story of Joseph was terribly important to all the Hebrews in slavery, because Joseph was their hero. We’re going to see that the life of Joseph parallels the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph is one of those characters in the Bible who (most of the time) was totally faithful to God. He was one who was rejected by his own brothers, just like Jesus was rejected. We’re going to see that Joseph was particularly loved by his earthly father, just as Jesus was particularly loved by his heavenly father. So, we see some real parallels between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus.

Tonight I want to study the life lessons in the four sections of Genesis 37. Let’s read the first four verses and then talk about the first life lesson.

Genesis 37:1-4. “Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. 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. [they were actually the concubines of Jacob] and he brought their father a bad report about them. Now Israel [that of course is Jacob’s new name] 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. 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.

What you see here is a picture of a divided family. Today we talk about “blended” families. This was a divided family and a blended family and there hadn’t any been any divorce and remarriage. The problem was Jacob had children by four different wives and this created a deeply divided family. Anybody today who is in a blended family or has gone through some

deep family problems can relate to the problems that existed in this household. This was one Jacob pretty much created for himself. You have heard me say from the very beginning God always intended for one woman to be married to one man. It was never God’s perfect plan for a man to have two or three or four wives like Jacob or a thousand wives like Solomon. God always intended one husband for one wife for all time. What God has joined together let not man put asunder. Anytime you depart from God’s perfect plan for your life or for marriage many times you have to suffer the consequences.

LIFE LESSON #1: A PARENT WHO SHOWS FAVORITISM IS HARMING THE CHILD

Here’s life lesson number one: A parent who shows favoritism is really harming the child. A parent who shows favoritism is really harming that child. Do you know why it says, “He loved Joseph more?” It says, “because he was a son in his old age.” Those of us who know the true story, know there is more to it than that. He was the first son of Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel, and because of that he loved Joseph more. To understand the family problems that existed look at 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 to read a statement that is a commentary on Jacob’s family. “The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (he was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father’s marriage bed, his rights as a firstborn were given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel so he could not be listed in the genealogical record in accordance with his birthright, and though Judah was the strongest of his brothers and a ruler came from him, [Jesus was in the line of Judah not in Joseph’s] the rights of the firstborn belonged to Joseph.” In Genesis 37, you see the scenario. Here are all of these older brothers, the sons of Leah, the sons of those two concubines and here comes young whippersnapper, 17-year-old Joseph and he is known to be the highly favored son and they suspected all along that somehow Jacob was going to finagle and so Joseph would be the one to get the birthright! Because Jacob showed such favoritism to this son, Joseph, it led to a lot of problems in Joseph’s early life. You can imagine he had a terrible relationship with his brothers.

Be careful that you don’t show favoritism to any of your children. Ask God to give you the strength to love all of your children equally. I understand some children receive your love more easily than others. There may be a child you have upon which you lavish love and that child accepts your love. On the other hand, you may have a rebellious child who rejects that love and doesn’t want to receive that love. You just need to try to love that child a little bit more so that in the perception of those children, there is no concept whatsoever of any favoritism being shown. When I was growing up, on Sunday nights after I went home we used to watch a television show called “The Smothers Brothers.” One of the lines from the Smothers Brothers’ show is that he turned and said, “Mother always liked you best!” I think there are probably some people today who are growing up still dealing with some problems because they feel like they were less loved than one of their siblings. So parents don’t make the mistake Jacob made! You’re harming your child if you show favoritism toward that child.

LIFE LESSON #2: ONE WHO BOASTS OF SUPERIORITY HAS FEW FRIENDS

Genesis 37:5-11. “Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, ‘Listen to this dream I had: 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.’ 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. 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 [he had eleven brothers] were bowing down to me.’ 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 [that’s the sun and moon] and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?’ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.”

What’s the life lesson we can learn from that? A person who boasts of superiority has few friends. I have heard some people say you cannot find one mark on Joseph’s character. Well, the only person in the word of God you can’t find any mark on their character is Jesus Christ. Everybody else including all of us here tonight all have character flaws and I believe Joseph had one. He didn’t have many, but he had a little arrogance even as a 17-year-old. I believe these dreams came from God and all of us know if you go to the end of the book of Genesis they all came true. We’re going to see in a couple of weeks that very thing happened. His eleven brothers come to Egypt looking for food and they bow down before him. Even his father and mother come down to Egypt and because Joseph has been elevated to a place of authority, they are subject to him so it happened. Don’t blame God for giving him those dreams, but I fault Joseph for sharing the dreams. Sometimes when God gives you dreams, you don’t have any business sharing it with anybody else. Sometimes God speaks to your heart about some things and you need to use wisdom and discretion, because the only thing Joseph did by telling these dreams was he was insinuating, “I am better than you, and one day you’re going to bow down before me.” Even though all of that was true he would have been better served had he not ever said anything like that. Did you notice what his father did when he told him that story about the stars and moon? He rebuked him. “Son, don’t talk about that!” What did the sheaves represent? Well the sheaves represented human authority. God did give Joseph human authority. He became Prime Minister of the greatest civilization of the ancient world at that time. What did the stars represent? They represented divine blessings and God blessed Joseph in a powerful way. If you have any position of human authority, don’t lord it over anybody else. If God has blessed you, don’t you dare throw that up into somebody’s face who has not been as blessed as you have. All you are doing is creating more problems.

LIFE LESSON #3: A JEALOUS HEART CAN LEAD TO VIOLENT HATRED

Here’s the third lesson and I’m not going to tell you all of the story, but let’s just begin reading in verse 12.

Genesis 37:12-18. “Now his brothers had gone to graze their father’s flocks near Shechem, 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. 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.’ Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, ‘What are

you looking for?’ He replied, ‘I’m looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?’ ‘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. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.”

Have you ever noticed when there is anger and hatred, the anger and hatred is multiplied when it is shared in a group? It doesn’t stretch my imagination too far to think these brothers had been sitting around the campfire at night, angry at Joseph and talking about him and how much their dad had showed favoritism to him. They couldn’t stand it one bit and so when they saw him coming, they said, “Let’s kill him!”

Here’s the life lesson: A jealous heart can lead to violent hatred. There is a reference in Proverbs 14:30. Proverbs 14:30 says, “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”

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OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes