

ISSUE OF LOVE

Bible Background – GENESIS 37

Printed Text – GENESIS 37:2-11, 23-24, 28

²This is the account of Jacob and his family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks. He worked for his half-brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

³Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe.

⁴But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

⁵One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever.

⁶"Listen to this dream," he said.

⁷"We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"

⁸His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated

him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them.

⁹Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"

¹⁰This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. "What kind of dream is that?" he asked. "Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?"

¹¹But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

²³So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing.

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

²⁸So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces^[a] of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

Storge (pronounced stor-JAY) is a Greek word for one of the four types of love mentioned in the Bible, the others being *agape*, *eros*, and *philio*. Storge is the natural and instinctual love shared within the family unit. The bond between parents and children as well as the love shared between siblings are examples of this type of love. But, when there is rivalry within that family structure, jealousy and hatred can be introduced into the dynamic that can overtake the commitment to love. This lesson study introduces the story of Joseph and his brothers and how generational rivalry and

jealousy created very toxic and bitter relationships. When we at times allow bitter envy to infect our own relationships we should repent and allow the commitment to love to reverse tendencies toward conflict and override bitterness and animosity.

Background: Genesis 29-30 tells the story of Jacob’s marriage to both Leah and Rachel. Jacob always declared that he loved Rachel. The competition of the two sisters for the love of this man created a rivalry that was always evident in the home and was passed down to their children. When Rachel was unable to bear sons for Jacob and when Leah thought that her time of childbearing was over, they each gave Jacob a maidservant to bear children for Jacob in their stead. These maidservants were Zilpah and Bilhah. This practice was common and is reminiscent of Sarah giving Hagar to bear a son to Abraham (Genesis 16). That union similarly produced rivalry between the women, between their children, and between the nations that sprang from them for generations to come. Joseph and his brothers inherited their mothers’ rivalry. Israel (Jacob) clearly favored Joseph above the rest, and this provoked the brothers, egged on by Joseph’s tattling and bragging about his divinely inspired dreams. Therefore, the brothers seize an opportunity to do away with their younger brother. When Joseph comes to them while they are far from their father’s land, they plot to kill him. Reuben convinces them to change their minds and throw him in a cistern instead, thinking he can come back later to save Joseph and win favor with Jacob. While Reuben is gone, however the brothers change their minds again and sell Joseph into slavery; they are pleased to get rid of the object of their jealousy in any way possible.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 14

The Provocation

Genesis 37:2-4: The biographical stories of the patriarchs of the Hebrew people continues with this account in the lives of Jacob (renamed Israel) and his twelve sons. Joseph, Israel’s eleventh son is introduced as a seventeen year old who is hated by his half-brothers. The cause for their resentment of Joseph is revealed in this passage. As a child born during his old age and being the firstborn of his favorite wife, Rachel, Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his other sons. Jacob demonstrated this by presenting a very ornate and elaborately embroidered garment (coat of many colors) to Joseph. To the brothers, this special gift could have gone a long way to help fuel the brothers’ jealousy. Joseph also “tattled” on the brothers with whom he was shepherding the flock by giving Jacob a bad report on them. The brothers hated Joseph so much that none of them was able to speak to him with a civil tongue.

◆ *How is favoritism shown in modern families?*

Joseph Tells His Dreams

Genesis 37:5-11: Now, to compound the hatred and envy they already harbored for the younger brother, Joseph had a couple of dreams that he foolishly decided to share with them. The first dream he shared with his brothers only: all of them were binding sheaves in the field when Joseph’s sheaf stood upright (Heb. *natsab*, “to be set over or to be appointed”) and the brothers’ sheaves bowed in submission to his sheaf. This angered them even more to hear their brother’s prophetic

September 6, 2020 – Bible Study Guide 1

dream. Their own interpretation was that he would be placed in authority over them and their position would be that of subordination. They were indignant and their hatred toward him intensified.

And then there was a second prophetic dream. This one he told to his brothers and repeated the narrative to his father, with his brothers present. In this dream, the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed to him in total submission. They all interpreted this as his parents and brothers would all be in submission to Joseph. The brothers were livid and his father rebuked him because he too, was offended. However, as the brothers' jealousy deepened, Israel did give heed to and pondered the outcome of Joseph's dream.

- ◆ *Do you think that Joseph was bragging in relating his dreams to his family?*
- ◆ *Were the brothers prevented from recognizing any value in Joseph's dreams because of their attitude toward him?*

Joseph's Brothers Act

Genesis 37:23-24, 28: Sometime after Joseph shared his dreams with the family, the brothers were caring for their father's flock a few days travel from home. Israel sent Joseph to check on them. As he went, he discovered that they had moved to another location. They spotted him and watched as he approached, plotting a scheme to kill him. Their initial plan was to kill him and throw him in a nearby empty cistern. His brother, Reuben tried to dissuade them from killing him. He suggested that they simply grab him and throw him in the dry cistern. He had planned to rescue him later and bring him home.

So, when Joseph arrived, they stripped him of his coat, threw him in the cistern and set down to eat. Now the cistern was large and impossible to escape, so leaving him would have also resulted in his death from starvation or dehydration. But on seeing a caravan of Ishmaelite traders, Judah convinced the brothers to take advantage of the opportunity and sell Joseph to them. And they did, for twenty pieces of silver. Joseph was taken to Egypt and his coat was dipped in goat's blood as evidence to deceive Jacob that his young son had been killed by wild animals. Believing Joseph was dead, Jacob was inconsolable and mourned (v. 35).

- ◆ *How might this outcome been different if Joseph and his brothers had been guided by love instead of hatred, greed, and pride?*

Conclusion

Lives, relationships, marriages, and families have been destroyed due to jealousy. There are many reasons why people are envious of others. Whatever the cause, the result is always negative. Usually, however, it boils down to wanting something that someone else has. But our God has provided all that we need so sufficiently, that we should never be jealous of what someone else has. The most precious gift he has given is Jesus Christ, available to everyone. Throughout this week, be intentional; notice and rebuke any feelings of jealousy you may have.

September 6, 2020 – Bible Study Guide 1

Sources:

Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation, Carol Stream, Illinois.

Ogbonnaya, A. O. (Ed.). (2020). *Wisdom. Precepts for Living*, 22(Summer Quarter), 10 - 20. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.

Zavada, Jack. (2020, August 27). What Is Storge? Retrieved September 4, 2020 from <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-storge-love-700698>

Lesson for Next Week – September 13, 2020 – Study Guide 2

GOD REWARDS OBEDIENCE

Bible Background ♦ GENESIS 41:14-57

Printed Text ♦ GENESIS 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52

Devotional Reading ♦ 1 PETER 5:5-11