

Joseph's Trials



God considered the example of Joseph to be so important that his story takes up more space in Genesis than Creation, Abraham, Worldwide Flood, and the Tower of Babel combined. God wants to teach us through Joseph's trials. Genesis 37:1-2 *"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, and he brought their father a bad report about them."*

These sons had done many wicked things and even murdered Shechem and every male in the city to avenge their sister Dinah. It is not surprising that Joseph brings back an unfavorable report. The sons of Bilhah are Dan and Naphtali, while Zilpah had Gad and Asher. These brothers were jealous of Joseph since the four were the sons of handmaids. This envy fuels the wicked acts done to Joseph by these brothers.

Joseph had separated himself from these brothers because of their evil deeds. If they had asked him to join them in drinking wine and getting drunk, he would have said *No*. If they tried to influence him to be immoral, he would have left their fellowship. If they would have pressured him to disgrace their father by joining in their sins, he would have refused.

Joseph was not sinless because *"all have sinned,"* but the Bible does not mention any

specific sin. There are a few people in the Bible where no sins are mentioned. Daniel, Jonathan, and Enoch—with only a few verses on him, but Joseph takes up one-fourth of Genesis and no mention of any sin. Even though a teenager and facing many temptations young people do, he lived a righteous life, and stood for what was right in the face of much pressure.

Genesis 37:3 *"Now Israel 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."* There was favoritism in the family that caused serious problems in the home. Jacob should have learned from his father showing favoritism to his brother Esau, how damaging that can be in a family. We should not have favorites because *"God does not show favoritism"* Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11.

This *coat of many colors* was a full-length robe with long sleeves and denoted a position of authority. Shepherds wore garments of coarse material, but this full-length robe was meant for a prince. The long sleeves enabled the wearer to carry documents or writing materials inside with a drawstring at the wrist.

This tunic meant that Jacob had given Joseph a position of authority over his older brothers. He would be their boss, even though he was only seventeen, and the eleventh of twelve sons. That position was the right of Ruben the first-born, who knew why it was not given to him. Ruben had committed an immoral act with Bilhah Genesis 36 which forfeited his first-born rights Genesis 49.

Jacob would recall that Esau had forsaken his birthright Hebrews 12:16 *"See to it that no one is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son."* The first-born did not always enjoy birthright privileges. The next in line would be Simeon or

Levi but both of them were involved in the murder of Shechem to avenge their sister. Judah would be next in line, but the Bible mentions some serious sin in his life.

God would not have excluded them permanently from their inheritance rights, if there had been a genuine confession and repentance, but we do not hear of them doing that. There is also the issue of being spiritually ready and God wanted the right individuals in positions of leadership.

It could be said that Joseph was Jacob's firstborn since Rachel was his first chosen wife. Hagar had Ishmael before Sarah had Isaac, but Ishmael did not receive the firstborn rights. Romans 9:13 *"Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated;'"* Malachi 1:2-3. Jacob was simply following God's direction and choices in giving Joseph a position of authority.

Genesis 37:4 *"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."* Anger and hate are grievous sins that must be confessed, repented of, and forsaken. They must not reside in our heart. We have to be honest and admit the sin, if we resent anyone for any reason. Such sins must be placed before God in prayer and asking for forgiveness.

Jesus connected hate and anger with murder. Matthew 5:21-22 *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."*

It is a serious sin to slander someone by calling them a fool, worthless, etc. 1 John 4:20 *"If*

someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen?" 1 John 2:11 "Whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him." Love for others is a fruit of loving God with all our heart.

Genesis 37:5-7 "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."

The sheaves predict a serious famine, and refers to how Joseph's plan saved Egypt, the Israelites, and the known world from starvation. 9-11 "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 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 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."

The Hebrew word for anger, jealousy, or envy is used 120 times in the O.T. Jealousy is being upset with a person over some blessing they have, while envy is being upset and desiring what they have. Envy leads to coveting Exodus 20:17 Commandment #10. A common cause of serious problems where people

interact and work together is envy. Someone will be liked more than we are, promoted ahead of us, or receive an increase in salary while we are overlooked. Satan exploits such things to defile many with suspicion, envy, and jealousy.

The apostle Paul puts jealousy and envy on his vice list and those who practice such sins do not inherit the kingdom of God Galatians 5:21-22. Jealousy and envy are as serious as murder in the sight of God since they keep us out of the kingdom. Confession and repentance is the key to cleansing and forgiveness. We must not allow bitterness, jealousy, or resentment to get worse Hebrews 12:15.

Joseph's brothers were not dealing with jealousy in a scriptural way, so it had already escalated to envy and hatred—putting Joseph in danger as they were ready to strike out in violence. Envy and jealousy have often consumed people to the point of tragic results. Those sins begin by focusing on ourselves instead of on God. It is all about Him and not about us.

When we count our blessings, jealousy disappears. Rachel was so jealous of her sister having children, that she contemplated suicide. Jacob had to say to her, "Am I in the place of God?" Genesis 30:2. Envy leaves God out of the picture when He is to be the center of our life.

Cain slew his brother, and King Saul tried to murder David because of jealousy. In this account of Joseph, envy is allowed to grow until the results are disastrous. To have victory over jealousy and envy is to admit them first. Then we are to thank God for His many blessings and to believe in faith that He has many more for us, as we remain in His will.

Rejoicing with those whom God has blessed, is just doing what we should as a believer Luke 17:10. We could never repay God for what He has already given us, and we can have

victory over jealousy by getting on our knees and confessing it in prayer. We need to love others, and to get our eyes off ourselves.

Everyone has the privilege of placing before God any sin they are struggling with at the moment. All the serious sins of the sin nature Galatians 5:19-21 are changed to the opposite of the divine nature 22-23. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control [restraint]. Against such things there is no law."

The Spirit of God is to control our feelings and responses. Whatever we struggle with, can be used to whittle our image to that of His Son. Wherever we are, we can serve God from that position, if we will consecrate our life to Him.

It is all about Jesus, and all about the change God can make in our heart, if we will allow Him as Joseph did. The result will be the same and our reply can be Joseph's Genesis 50:20, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."



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