

February 7/8, 2004

Study Questions

Fear or Faith (Part 2): A Study in the Life of Joseph

Favored Son/Hated Brother

Genesis 37:1-36

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Opening Discussion

1. Have you ever gone through seasons in your life when it seemed like things were falling apart and God was nowhere to be found? Looking back today, are you able to see God at work in your life and circumstances in ways you couldn't see then?
2. How do you respond when you are treated unfairly for doing what is right? Do you ever get angry with God when you do right and He allows you to be treated unfairly? What are our expectations of God when we do right?
3. How do you respond when others are given favored treatment over you? Are you ever guilty of favoring one person over another? What causes us to treat people this way?

Bible Study

1. Read Genesis 37:1-36
2. We are introduced to Joseph as a 17 year-old son of Jacob. From our study of the life of Jacob, review some of the things Joseph had experienced at home. For a frame of reference, he was about 11 when Dinah was raped and Simeon and Levi slaughtered the people of Shechem.

Given what we know about the conflict between Rachel and Leah, describe the environment at home between Joseph and his brothers.

4. Joseph was the favored son identified by his special tunic. This caused his brothers to hate him. Then God gave him two dreams which caused his brothers to hate him all the more. Doesn't it seem like God was throwing gas on the fire to give Joseph these two dreams, knowing how his brothers felt about him? Why did He do this to Joseph?
4. Genesis 37:15-17 record a man helping Joseph find his brothers. What's the point of these verses?

Is this God's provision for Joseph? If so, why would God lead Joseph into such danger?

5. Did Reuben do what he did because of his concern for Joseph or to try to earn his father's favor after the incident with Bilhah (35:22)?
6. Why does the writer tell us the brothers "sat down to eat" immediately after they threw Joseph in the pit? (v. 25) Why is this important?

7. How might Jacob's response to his son's report of Joseph's tragedy been different if he had remembered Joseph's dreams? He immediately assumes the worst with no thought of God's intervention.
8. Notice the way the final verses in the chapter are recorded. Jacob is weeping for his son he thought was dead, while Joseph is actually being sold into slavery in Egypt. There is the perception versus the reality. While Jacob believes the story of Joseph is over, we as readers know it's just beginning. What might we learn from this as it relates to the circumstances in our lives? Like Jacob, how might our responses to life circumstances be different if we view them through eyes of faith?

Application

1. Who do you identify with in this story and why?

What does this story teach you?

2. Does doing right always mean you will be treated right in return?

Are you struggling with feelings that God has let you down in some area of life? How might this story help you sort out those feelings?

3. How does this story help you process the unfair circumstances in your life? How do unfair circumstances stretch and test your faith? What hope did Joseph have without faith?