

## EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

### Message #79

### Genesis 37:2-11

You will notice that verse 2 begins with the words: “These are the generations of Jacob” and then immediately begins to develop the remarkable story of Joseph. Although there are glimpses of the various family members in Jacob’s family, it is quite obvious that the key character is Joseph.

Ever since the fall at Eden, there have been family hatreds and problems. It was true with Cain and Abel, with Sarah and Hagar, with Isaac and Ishmael and with Esau and Jacob. But never is there more family envy and jealousy and hatred, or more pressures or problems than those aimed at Joseph. Yet tucked away near the end of his life are these words, “God meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:20). As Dr. S. L. Johnson said, “The life of Joseph, of whom more is told than of any of the patriarchs, is a story of divine sovereignty (*Genesis*, Study #53, p. 1).

**REGARDLESS OF ONE’S AGE, WHEN GOD CHOOSES ONE TO BECOME A GREAT LEADER FOR HIMSELF, THAT ONE WILL ENCOUNTER THE JEALOUSY AND HATRED OF THE OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS, BUT ONE WHO STAYS FAITHFUL WILL BE USED BY GOD TO ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS.**

**FACT #1-** Joseph was seventeen. 37:2

Joseph will not become a great, powerful acknowledged leader until he is thirty. (Gen. 41:46), but God began His powerful work when he was seventeen. Seventeen year olds become great leaders by age thirty, by staying faithful to God, even when facing terrible, hostile circumstances. There are two things about Joseph that are impressive: 1) He never complained; 2) He never compromised. This seventeen year old had solid character that God dramatically used.

**FACT #2** - Joseph was faithful. 37:2

**(Area of Faithfulness #1)** - Joseph was faithful in his work life. 37:2a

Obviously, Joseph was given the responsibility of caring for Jacob’s flock, with his other brothers, specifically Dan and Naphtali, sons of Bilhah (30:6, 8; 35:25), and Gad and Asher, sons of Zilpah (30:11, 13; 35:26). It is worth noting that since Joseph is the son of Rachel (30:24; 35:24), this entire episode perhaps could have been avoided had Jacob refused to physically get involved with Bilhah and Zilpah. The point to observe is that Joseph was given a somewhat menial job like feeding sheep and he did it well.

**(Area of Faithfulness #2)** - Joseph was faithful in his moral life. 37:2b

It is clear that the other four boys were not taking care of the flock properly, but were getting involved in things that were bad, which means something wicked and evil. Joseph never lost his moral compass and even though all others were participating in evil, Joseph maintained purity.

**FACT #3** - Joseph was favoured. 37:3-4

Israel (Jacob) favored Joseph and loved him more than his other children for four reasons:

- 1) He was Rachel's son, his dear wife who had just died (35:19).
- 2) His birth had not caused the death of his wife, like Benjamin's had (35:18 / 44:20).
- 3) In Jacob's old age, Joseph was his most faithful and reliable son (37:2).
- 4) In Jacob's old age, Joseph was his most recent and his last son of a living Rachel (37:3).

When the text says "Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons ..." that word "love" means that of all of his children, Joseph was the son in whom Jacob found his greatest delight and desire (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 773). The "tunic" (v. 3), was a long garment with long sleeves Worn by people of nobility (Ibid., p. 683).

- 1) Favoritism is given by godly people to those who are most faithful - in this life and in eternity.
- 2) When external signs of favoritism are shown, it will be noticed by other family members.
- 3) When other family members see the favoritism, they may become hateful of one favored.
- 4) Hate is often detected by avoiding communication or by argumentative communication.

**FACT #4** - Joseph received revelation. 37:5-11

The "dream" was direct revelation from God, so Joseph, at age seventeen, was receiving revelation of God. God's truth will always offend those not right with God. Martin Luther said this is true in the church, in society and the home. God's truth offends those not right with Him.

**Dream #1** - The agricultural dream. 37:5-8

The dream was that all of them were binding bundles of grain and when Joseph's bundle stood up, the others bowed down in honor and submission. It is interesting that they interpret the dream themselves (37:8) and they take it and interpret it literally.

**Dream #2** - The astronomical dream. 37:9-11

Joseph's second dream is that the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to him, which Jacob interprets to mean that both he and his mother (who is already dead) and his eleven brothers will bow down before him.

Joseph is favored by Jacob, getting revelations from God, standing for righteousness at age seventeen. If you are going to become a great leader for God, you will face your share of hardships.

**Practical Insight:**

1. **Regardless of age, do your best at every assignment.**
2. **Regardless of who the association is, stand for righteousness and tell the truth.**
3. **Regardless of how positive or negative the message, communicate God's revelation.**