

Dreams, Rivalry, and Slavery

(Genesis 37:1-36)

Yearly Theme: *“Love Does...”*

Series Title: *Hard Knock Life*

September 1st, 2019

Something to think about:

T. E. Lawrence once said, “All men dream but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds awake to the day to find it was all vanity. But the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for the many act out their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible...”

There’s a story of a man who had some dreams that made his brothers pretty mad. Though they were real dreams – dreams that would someday come true – this man’s brothers were incensed by the audacity of their brother and his dreams. This man’s name was Joseph...

Turn in your Bibles to: Genesis 37:1-36

Of these 36 verses, what’s the key point this morning?...

Key Point: “All wrongs derive from selfish motives.”

Let’s take a closer look at the sequence of events that led to Joseph’s demise:

- **Joseph’s dreams brought contempt.**

Joseph’s dreams (though true) cost him greatly. They were the “straw” that brought contempt from his brothers.

- **Joseph’s brothers’ rivalry resulted in selfish reaction.**

As with Joseph’s brothers, selfish motives can lead us to plot and scheme in order to get rid of that which is causing us frustration. When this happens, all rational thought is kicked to the curb, and something very

sinister begins to control us and forces us to come to illogical and irrational conclusions.

- **Joseph’s enslavement brought more contempt and lies.**

Selfish motives put to action are always dependent upon lies and deception to keep up appearances of innocence.

Something to take home:

The one thing that ultimately lacks when selfish motives take over in our hearts, minds, and lives is: *LOVE*. Paul reminds us that...

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT), ⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

“Do you know who is the most difficult person to love? It is easy to love friends and not too difficult to love those less fortunate than ourselves. It certainly isn't easy loving enemies, but sometimes the person most difficult to love is the one who is MORE fortunate than we are. The one who receives the promotion we deserved. The one who gets the recognition we desired, the honor we sought or the affections of the lover we had hoped to win. It is easy to resent those who seem to be more fortunate.”¹

Do you struggle with selfish ambition and motives? Do you desire to have what others who are more “successful” than you have? Do you desire the recognition and accolades that others close to you receive? How do you respond to the dreams and promotion of others?

Take time to look inward this week and evaluate what frustrates and angers you. Is your frustration and anger rooted in Righteousness or Selfishness? Never react out of selfishness. The child of God only reacts out of righteousness.

Key Point: “All wrongs derive from selfish motives.”

¹ Steve Goodier, *Life Support*, <http://www.LifeSupportSystem.com>

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KICK STARTERS:

- ⇒ How do you define “selfishness?”
- ⇒ What’s the difference between selfishness and righteousness?

SCRIPTURE: (Before studying this material, consider listening to the corresponding message online at: <http://www.northmaincog.org/media/sermon-media>)

Genesis 37:1-36 (NLT)

¹ So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived as a foreigner.
² This 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.
³ Jacob 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. ⁴ But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn’t say a kind word to him.
⁵ One 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!”
⁸ His 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.
⁹ Soon 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!”
¹⁰ This 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?” ¹¹ But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.
¹² Soon after this, Joseph’s brothers went to pasture their father’s flocks at Shechem. ¹³ When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, “Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them.”
“I’m ready to go,” Joseph replied.
¹⁴ “Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along,” Jacob said. “Then come back and bring me a report.” So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.
¹⁵ When he arrived there, a man from the area noticed him wandering around the countryside. “What are you looking for?” he asked.
¹⁶ “I’m looking for my brothers,” Joseph replied. “Do you know where they are pasturing their sheep?”
¹⁷ “Yes,” the man told him. “They have moved on from here, but I heard them say, ‘Let’s go on to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.
¹⁸ When Joseph’s brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him.
¹⁹ “Here comes the dreamer!” they said. ²⁰ “Come on, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, ‘A wild animal has eaten him.’ Then we’ll see what becomes of his dreams!”
²¹ But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph’s rescue. “Let’s not kill him,” he said. ²² “Why should we shed any blood? Let’s just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he’ll die without our laying a hand on him.” Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.
²³ So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. ²⁴ Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵ Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt.
²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain by killing our brother? His blood would just give us a guilty conscience. ²⁷ Instead of hurting him, let’s sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!” And his brothers agreed.
²⁸ So 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 of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.
²⁹ Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the cistern. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes

in grief. ³⁰ Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, “The boy is gone! What will I do now?”
³¹ Then the brothers killed a young goat and dipped Joseph’s robe in its blood. ³² They sent the beautiful robe to their father with this message: “Look at what we found. Doesn’t this robe belong to your son?”
³³ Their father recognized it immediately. “Yes,” he said, “it is my son’s robe. A wild animal must have eaten him. Joseph has clearly been torn to pieces!” ³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes and dressed himself in burlap. He mourned deeply for his son for a long time. ³⁵ His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “I will go to my grave mourning for my son,” he would say, and then he would weep.
³⁶ Meanwhile, the Midianite traders arrived in Egypt, where they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. What’s the main plot of this passage of Scripture?

2. How did Jacob feel about Joseph (v. 3)? How did Joseph’s brothers feel about him (v. 4)? Why the contrast? Would you feel like Joseph’s brothers felt? Why, or why not?

3. What are Joseph’s dreams about (vv. 5-11)? What was the reaction from Joseph’s brothers about his dreams (v. 8)? What was Joseph’s father’s reaction to his dreams (vv. 10-11)? Why do you suppose Jacob pondered what Joseph’s dreams were about?

4. When Joseph came to check on his brothers, what was their first response after seeing him coming in the distance (v. 18-20)? What/Who changed their plans and why (vv. 21-22)? Why does jealousy and selfishness drive people to do horrific things?

5. With a change of plans in place, what did Joseph’s brothers do to him (vv. 23-28)? How many pieces of silver did they sell Joseph for? (Point of interest: How many pieces of silver did Judas betray Jesus for? Matthew 26:14-15)

6. What deception did Joseph’s brothers concoct to tell their father about what had happened to him (vv. 31)? Why do you suppose they called Joseph “your son” rather than “our brother?” How lying and deceiving drive a wedge in relationships?

6. What happens to Joseph after he is sold to the Midianite traders (v. 36)? Is it possible that God uses difficult/tragic circumstances in our lives to bring about something amazing? How can we begin to look at our problems as opportunities for greatness rather than elements of destruction?

SELF-EVALUATION/APPLICATION:

- ⇒ **DO YOU STRUGGLE** with envy and selfish motives? Do you desire to have what others who are more “successful” than you have? Do you desire the recognition and accolades that others close to you receive? How do you respond to the dreams and promotion of others?
- ⇒ Take time to look inward this week and evaluate what frustrates and angers you. Is your frustration and anger rooted in Righteousness or Selfishness? Never react out of selfishness. The child of God only reacts out of righteousness.
- ⇒ **MEMORY VERSES:** *Genesis 37:3-4 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7*