

A Study in Genesis: Favorite Sons, Dreamers, and Grace

Scripture Focus: Genesis 37:1-36

Joseph was 17 years old when he had two dreams that enraged his brothers and puzzled his father. Joseph did not keep the dreams to himself, even though it was clear he was his father's favorite and as a result, his brothers hated him. (vv. 2-4) The dreams and the telling only made matters worse. (vv. 5-11)

- What do you make of the dreams and Joseph's willingness to share?
- Are you surprised that Jacob is not sensitive to the position he is putting Joseph in with his brothers by so obviously favoring him?

Jacob sent Joseph on an errand to find his brothers near Shechem, of all places. (vv. 12-14) Joseph eventually found them at Dothan, 13 miles north of Shechem. As Joseph approached, the brothers made fun of him referring to him as "this dreamer." A plan was hatched to kill Joseph but when the oldest brother Rueben heard of it, a less extreme course of action ensued. Nonetheless, Joseph ended up thrown into a pit, minus his robe, but then eventually sold off for 20 pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, thanks to Judah's persuasion, and taken to Egypt. Then as it usually happens, an additional wrongdoing was necessary to cover up the initial wrongdoing. Joseph's robe was presented to his father, covered in blood, and he was told a story of death by wild animal that tore Jacob's heart apart. (vv. 31-35)

- The family dynamics among Jacob's children were obviously problematic, to say the least. What might have contributed? Who's at fault?
- To what extent are you surprised by Jacob's reaction to the news concerning Joseph?
- Do you believe God is preserving Joseph's life or are circumstances just allowing it? Is this a question of the providence of God? In addition, what of God's grace in all of this?