



2- Heal a Family / Build a Nation

09/20/2009 - Jim Johnson – Gen. 37:12-28

In the first message we learned that it was God's intention to fulfill His promise to Abraham by making of him and his descendents a great nation. Jacob was the grandson through whom this promise was to be fulfilled, but his family was a mess. In fact Gen. 37:12-28 gives evidence of a disintegrating family.

A. The first marker of family disintegration: _____ 12-14.

The brothers resented Joseph. As a result it seems that his brothers went to Shechem while Joseph stayed home. He should have been with them (37:2) but they chose instead to disassociate from him. (12-13a) When families begin to unravel, this kind of dissociation is a first sign. Being together is painful so one learns to spend as little time with each other as possible. Jacob had promoted Joseph over his brothers (as signaled by the multicolored coat.) He therefore sent Joseph to check on his brothers. (13b-14)

B. The second marker of family disintegration: _____ . – 15-17

Joseph arrived but could not find his brothers. They had moved to Dothan without telling anyone. This was most likely in order to evade Joseph. They expected him to make occasional trips to check on things so they hid from him. - A person can't disassociate themselves forever. There are times when people in a family must be together: a family meal, portrait, or reunion. In a sickly family, this requires a person to go into an evasion mode, in order to keep from being together. Excuses abound.

C. The third marker of family disintegration: _____ . – 18-24

As Joseph approached the camp, bitterness was stirred in the brothers. They were galled by his ambition to rule them. They agreed that they would kill him and then throw him into a pit where his body would not be found and then report to Jacob that he had been eaten by a beast. (18-20) Reuben had a reason to resent Joseph more than the others, for as the first born, he should have been put in authority, and yet as the firstborn he knew that he could not kill Joseph. He used his influence to modify the plan and determined to come back later and rescue Joseph. (21-22) Once in camp, the brothers ripped off his tunic as if they were taking the authority that Joseph was imposing on them off. They then forced him into a dry cistern from which Joseph could not escape. (23-24) Those boys tried to dissociate themselves, and even evade Joseph, but eventually they came face to face with him and they found no escape except to aggressively strike out and hurt him.

D. The fourth marker of family disintegration: _____ . 25-28

While Joseph was in the pit, a caravan of Ishmaelites traders came to the crossroads. They were headed to Egypt. Brother Judah suggested that they sell him rather than kill him. They all embraced the idea. (25-28) Ironically, Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites who were third cousins to Joseph and his brothers. Joseph was expelled. He was driven out of his family. This is eventually what happens in a disintegrating family. A person reaches a point where they can't get along with the others yet does not want to leave their home, friends, and church so they do everything they can to expel the other person.

ANALYSIS

A. What was going on with _____ ?

Jacob didn't have a clue. He was not aware of the problems he had created through his favoritism. He was not aware of the fierce rivalry that existed between his children. He had no idea that Reuben and

Judah and Simeon and the rest of the boys felt like illegitimate sons - unappreciated and unloved. A simple conversation with his boys could have given him tremendous insight, but it didn't happen. Jacob was much too self-focused to be able to care for anyone else.

Parents: Do not make that same mistake. We need to love our kids by listening to them and concerning ourselves with what they think and how they feel. We can do it now, with our kids at home, and even the kids that are now grown up and out of the house.

B. What was going on with the _____?

The boys had no one to listen or to sympathize with them. Dad didn't care and Joseph was oblivious. If they would have had the freedom to talk about their hurts they might have processed their anger in better ways. Instead, their anger had been bottled up and was ready to explode at the least provocation. Joseph finally knew how they felt. Once they ganged up on Joseph, we find them in a very different mood. The big brother in Reuben surfaced. He wanted to spare Joseph and release him back to dad. Judah suddenly developed a conscience. He redirected the maliciousness of his brothers and once they all cooled down – they decided to sell him rather than kill him. Once they knew that Joseph knew how they felt - they were less controlled by their rage, and more by their good sense. What can we learn from the sons of Jacob? When we are angry or hurt, we need to talk about it with that person that hurt us. (Eph. 4:25-27) A good honest, but loving conversation removes the rage and allows good sense and spiritual thinking to take its place.

C. What was going on with _____?

When Joseph met his brothers at Dothan, the boy with the lofty sense of self worth was humbled. His ego was lowered with his body into that pit. There he took the first steps towards becoming a real human being; an authentic person, someone who shared in the pains of life; someone that others could relate to and feel near to.

D. What about the _____?

Joseph was given 2 dreams, and each dream portrayed him as being in authority over his brothers and the master of the house. Yet the very next event to occur took him in the opposite direction. Rather than being over his brothers, he was thrown in a pit beneath his brothers. Rather than being master of the house, he was sold as a slave. Yet God was at work doing two things for Joseph. He was refining him, so that he would one day have the character needed to be a great ruler, and He was moving him into position so that he would be near and ready when the opportunity presented itself.

The first step forward often takes us _____.

There is character that needs to be developed, skills to be learned, maturity that has to take root, self-centeredness that needs to be rooted out before we embrace the future that God has for us. Unfortunately, such things often come to us through the rough and tumble experiences of life.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Who do you most identify with in this story and why?
2. What insights have you received from that character?
3. What do you believe that God ultimately wants to do with you and your life?
4. Does it appear that you are currently going forward or backward in your journey?