



3- Heal a Family / Build a Nation

09/27/2009 - Jim Johnson – Gen. 37:29-36

In Genesis 37:1-28 we read of a favored son, who inflamed the jealousies of his brothers. The brothers responded by assaulting Joseph and then selling him off as a slave. What were they hoping to achieve by getting rid of the boy? Was it relief from their emotional pain? Or, maybe to feel good about themselves again? Certainly to be loved by their father Jacob and probably to kill Joseph's dream. What they got instead were 4 surprises.

A. The first surprise. 29-30

It was Reuben that suggested they put Joseph in the pit rather than kill him. He planned to return and rescue Joseph & return him to his father. Joseph was sold off before he could rescue him. On the positive side, his problem with Joseph had been solved. His emotional pain was relieved. On the other hand...

Reuben was overcome with _____.

He didn't sell the boy – but he could have intervened earlier and more forcefully – and said, "No brothers - we can not do these things to Joseph." A new and more terrible emotional pain took its place. He tore his robe which signified the deepest level of anguish.

B. The Second Surprise. 31-33

The boys took one of the goats from the herd and dipped the tunic in the blood. They had to create the impression that Joseph had been ravaged by the beast. They had to face their father and convince him that Joseph was dead. The boys wanted to relieve their burden of sin. Instead...

The brothers _____ their sin.

Instead of cleansing themselves, they added to their shame. They lied to the very man whose affections they coveted.

C. A third surprise. 34-35

They gave their report and then watched as Jacob writhed in pain. They did their best to comfort him. This was their chance to build some bridges. By their presence they were trying to say, "Dad, it will be OK, you still have 10 sons that love you, 10 sons that will become your joy and delight, 10 sons that want you and need you." But Jacob refused to be comforted. He was becoming fixated on the loss of Joseph. He pledged to mourn for his son until the day of his death. The boys got rid of Joseph in order to gain the affections of their father. Instead...

Jacob _____ on his lost son.

Jacob locked in on a moment in time. He forever fastened himself to that instant when he lost the only son he really loved. He was obsessed with Joseph and ambivalent toward the rest – only now the problem would be forever locked in time.

D. A fourth surprise. 34-35

The chapter ends with Joseph in Egypt being bought by Potiphar who was well connected to the Pharaoh's household. The brothers wanted to get rid of Joseph because of his dreams. They would never be willing to bow before his authority. They were killing his dream when in reality...

The brothers facilitated the _____ of the dream.

The dream would take place, and the brothers were expediting its fulfillment. They caused Joseph to be in the place where his ascension to power would begin. Joseph would be in authority over them some day, except now instead of being supportive brothers they had chosen to become adversaries. And Joseph would be expected to use his power to bring retribution for the injustices they had forced upon him.

A PERSONAL TRUTH

When we use sin to solve a problem, we end up creating one much _____.

The brothers had a legitimate problem. Their father shamelessly favored Joseph over all of them. They solved their problem by selling Joseph and lying to their dad to cover it. But everything they hoped to achieve through that betrayal was denied to them. That is the way that it works in God's economy. (Prov. 22:8; Prov. 5:21-22; Gal. 6:7)

Problems will always be with us. God, however, provides solutions to many of those problems and the strength to endure the others. Turn to Him with your problems, not to sin, for sin is never a good solution.

A FAMILY TRUTH

There were lots of garments ripping in this story. The clothing was used to symbolize the façades that we sometimes wear. The façade of authority was ripped from Joseph. The façade of the big brother was ripped from Reuben and the façade of the good father was ripped from Jacob.

Before there can be healing in the family the _____ has to come off, the façade has to be lifted, the masks must be removed.

We need to quit pretending, to get honest with God and each other and mostly get honest with ourselves about who we are, and how we relate to others. We need to tear off the facade that keep us from honestly speaking with each other and dealing with the issues.

A BONUS TRUTH

The OT way of atoning for one's sin was to take the life of a lamb or a goat, and sprinkle his blood upon an altar. (Numbers 7) When God looked upon such a sacrifice, He extended His mercy and grace. How ironic then that the brothers also shed the blood of the goat, but rather than present it to God as an offering for sin, they used it to perpetrate a deception that would last 20 years. Some of us need to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. May we have the wisdom to submit to His washing today!

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

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

1. Can you recall a time when you tried to solve a problem with a sinful solution? How did it come out?
2. How do you suppose the brothers felt after they had made their report to Jacob? What can we learn from it?
3. What can you do to promote a greater level of honesty in your family? Are you willing to start it?