

Heal a Family – Build a Nation

Lesson #1 – Genesis 37:1-12

***Based on the sermons by Jim Johnson
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Introduction: God's plan to redeem man from the fall begins in the Book of Genesis. God's plan took a major step forward through the life of a man named Abram, later renamed Abraham. Abram was a pagan idol worshipper in a place called Ur.

God promised Abram three things in particular (Gen, 12:1-3):

1. To make his descendants a "great nation."
2. To make Abram famous among the nations of the world.
3. To bless all the families of the world through him (through his descendant)
This last promise involved blessing the world through one of Abraham's distant descendants, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

God made these promises "unconditional," and yet He required Abram to act in faith in leaving his home in Ur and travel to a land of promise, Canaan, that he'd never seen before. Abram was faithful in following God's command to "go," and was declared "justified" in God's sight. Abram became the "father of faith" as a result of his obedience to God.

Questions:

What does it mean to you to be "called?"

Have you been "called" to go to a place, a person, a job, or a ministry that required you to leave your comfort zone?

What were some of the most pronounced emotional struggles you faced in obeying God? Was fear one of them?

What is the exact opposite response to faith?

The story continues: Abram obeyed the call to "go," and God changed his name (Gen. 17:5) to "Abraham, the father of many nations." Abraham fathered two boys Isaac (from which came the 12 tribes of the Jews), and Ishmael (from which came the Arab nations). God chose Isaac as the descendant of Abraham through whom ultimately came Jesus, the Messiah. These brothers have been at war ever since.

Isaac fathered two boys, Jacob and Esau. Jacob's name means "schemer," which is supported by his cheating his brother Esau out of his birthright. Esau was an easy target in that he did not guard his birthright more carefully. The family line was split again with the two brothers going their separate ways. Jacob was not a man of integrity. He 'reaped what he sowed' when he was cheated out of seven years of his life while pursuing his future wife, Rachel. Hard feelings existed between the brothers and their descendants from then on. This was a prime example of a dysfunctional family.

Questions:

How do you define a healthy family?

What are some of the things in these families that led to a dysfunctional family?

How does a father contribute or detract from a healthy family?

How does a mother contribute or detract from a healthy family?

*What do you see in this story that contributes to "generational sliding?"
(i.e. children impacted by the actions of the parents)*

What can you do as a parent to stop "generational sliding?"

The story of Joseph: Jacob started off on the wrong foot by "loving Joseph more than all his sons (Gen. 37:3)." He gave young Joseph a multicolored coat which indicated preferential treatment. Eleven other sons of Jacob saw this as favoritism and as potential submission to a brother they were jealous of. Joseph didn't handle the favoritism well, acting as if he knew everything and bragging about it to his brothers. Joseph was in fact destined for leadership but was not yet prepared for that role. His arrogance drove his brothers to trap him and sell him into slavery in Egypt.

Questions:

Does a parent do a child a favor by showing preferential treatment?

What are some things a parent can do to bring harmony among siblings?

What happens to the 'eleven brothers' in our sphere of influence when we speak out about our "privileges" as God's children?

What can we do as children of God to avoid the appearance of being a "preferred person?"

How do we instill the proper attitudes in our children in regard to those in their world?