

Heal a Family – Build a Nation

Lesson #2 – Genesis 37:12-28

**Based on the sermons by Jim Johnson
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Introduction: In the first lesson we learned that it was God’s intention to fulfill His promise to Abraham by making him a great nation. Jacob was the grandson through whom this promise was to be fulfilled, but his family was a mess. This dysfunctional behavior is seen in his twelve sons. Genesis 37:12-28 gives evidence of a disintegrating family.

Steps toward family disintegration: Joseph’s brothers.

Joseph is resented by his brothers. Jacob had promoted his son Joseph over his other sons, showing him favoritism and giving him more of his time and input than the other sons. Naturally, they became jealous and began to disassociate with Joseph.

Joseph’s brothers began to avoid him. The brothers first went to Shechem without Joseph. Then they moved to Dothan without telling anyone. They were hiding from Joseph and expressing their displeasure to Jacob by their actions. They were making excuses and being evasive toward Joseph.

Joseph’s brothers become bitter toward him. Jacob should have known that his firstborn son Reuben had a reason to resent Joseph. As with Esau his brother, Jacob’s favoritism toward Joseph had robbed Reuben of the authority that should have been his. Another birthright was stolen. The brothers saw injustice and arrogant ambition in Joseph’s actions. They became so embittered toward him that they began to devise a plan to get rid of him.

Joseph’s brothers carry out a plan to maintain and protect their own interests. The brothers decided together to throw Joseph into a pit, sell him to the Ishmaelites and be rid of him for good. They even conspire to lie to Jacob about his death.

Questions:

What are some things that we can do to keep a watch on wrongful attitudes?

What is really happening when emotions such as jealousy, avoidance, bitterness, and scheming become part of our thinking?

How do we check these wrongful motives? How do we stop this downward progression?

What can we do when these errant paradigms have taken root in our thinking?

Steps toward family disintegration: Jacob.

Jacob becomes a “checked out” parent. Jacob didn’t have a clue about the relational problems developing between his sons. He didn’t think through the impact his actions were having on all of his sons, not just the one. He failed to demonstrate approval and affirmative love toward all of his sons. He missed the problem because he failed to listen.

Jacob fails to listen to his sons. Jacob’s failure to listen to the complaints of his other eleven sons led to ever increasing resentment and bitterness within his own family. The brothers finally had had enough and their anger boiled over as demonstrated by their plot against Joseph. We see the effects of released anger during the serious “venting” directed toward Joseph from his brothers. The “venting” actually let some steam out of the bottle in that the decision to kill Joseph was altered to become a less deadly plot to sell him off and get him out of their way. Once Joseph knew how they felt about him, at least some of the steam went out of their anger.

Jacob’s actions lead to Joseph’s harm. It was Jacob’s favoritism that had instilled a sense of superiority in Joseph. Joseph took the first steps towards a healthy self image as his body was lowered into the pit. His ego needed a reality check long before this point. When it finally came, his arrogance almost cost him his life.

Questions:

What can we learn from the sons of Jacob?

How open are you to the feedback of others?

Is there someone you’ve failed to listen to who needed to say something you needed to hear?

What kind of “pits” has God put you into to mold your character?

Has God used the harmful words and actions of others to mold your character?

A Final Thought: Joseph was given two dreams from God. They both portrayed him as ruling and exercising authority over his brothers. Despite the fact that God would bring him to a position of leadership over his brothers, the route to that authority was a rough one.

Questions:

How do we keep God’s perspective in mind as He molds our character?

How willing are we in allowing God to do what is needed in fulfilling His plan for our lives?

How can events we perceive as negative be seen as purposeful when we’re in the pit?