

Date: January 25, 2026

Title: Dreams, Division, and Divine Purpose

Passage: Genesis 37:1-11

Key Truths :

- Genesis is not telling us how great Jacob's family was. Genesis is telling us how great God is - even when His people are not.
- God advances His purposes through brokenness - not because people deserve it, but because He is gracious.
- The hardships that come into your life that seem unexpected or undeserved are actually part of God's sovereign plan for your life: Your ultimate good and God's ultimate glory. You can trust God.
- "Truth spoken without humility often produces division instead of peace." We must learn as believers: that timing matters; that humility matters; and that God does not need our help to accomplish His purposes. Honesty is important but so is timing of when to speak and share.

Application Points:

- Your family's brokenness does not disqualify you - God works through weakness because He is gracious.
- Immaturity can undermine God's good gifts.
- Favoritism creates spiritual casualties. It misrepresents God. It breeds sin in the unfavored child. It corrupts the favored child. It fractures family fellowship.
- What to do if there has been favoritism? Repent. Apologize. Consider what to do to make things right to rebuild relationships.
- God often uses suffering to prepare us for sacrifice and serving.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- How has favoritism affected your life (whether your own experience growing up or your own family now)?
- If you are a parent, how can you mitigate the flesh's tendency to favor a child over others?
- What can you do to repair relationships in your family?
- What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have heard or seen?

Introduction

Sermon series: Genesis 37-50

Every family has its problems. We are all broken people. We all have issues.

Family of Jacob

- A family filled with divisions and brokenness.
 - God still uses this family to be part of His saving, redemptive plan.
- A story of real division but also of divine purpose.
- Genesis is not telling us how great Jacob's family was. Genesis is telling us how great God is - even when His people are not.
- God advances His purposes through brokenness - not because people deserve it, but because He is gracious.

Passage:

Genesis 37:1-11

Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

These are the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

EXPOSITION

Context of Passage:

Author of Genesis: Moses

- He had led the people of Israel for 400 years.
- They had forgotten about what God had done by rescuing them from slavery in Egypt.
- Book of Genesis written with a retrospective perspective of recapping history for God's people.

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- Adam and Eve were created in God's image. They were to rule over earth.

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

- But Satan came to trick Adam and Eve to sin against God.

Genesis 3:15

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

- Despite their sin, God provides a promise of an Anointed One (Messiah) to bring about salvation.

Genesis 12:2-3

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

- word of "nation" = organized community of people having a governmental social and structure
- word of "families" (different word) = smaller subset group of people = larger than a family but smaller than a tribe.

Genesis 17:16

I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

- Promise affirmed through Abraham.
- The Anointed One will be the Messiah.

Genesis 37-50

- Are these passages about Joseph?
- Observation: Also about Judah.

- Judah offered himself as a substitute for others
 - A picture of Christ.
- Observation: Also about us.
 - Jesus is the head while the church is His bride..
 - Joseph needed to be chiseled and molded for God's purposes.
 - Likewise, we are often molded for His purposes. He still uses us despite our brokenness.
- God is preparing His way for the ultimate King.

Dysfunctional Family

Genesis 37:1-2

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- Culture of polygamy
- But this was not God's design. He allowed it but never endorsed it.

Deuteronomy 17:17

And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

Matthew 19:4-5

He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

- Jesus affirmed God's design for marriage

Ephesians 5:23

For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

- God described the church as one bride.

Timothy/Titus

- Church leaders are to be husbands of one wife.

And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

- "Bad report" = In Hebrew, however, this particular phrase
 - has the connotations of a false or malicious report.
 - For example, the spies sent by Joshua brought the same kind of "bad report" (same word), back to the people of Israel from the land of Canaan, telling them that it was not worth fighting for.

Proverbs 10:18

The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

Jacob's sin of favoritism

Genesis 37:3-4

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons,

- Result of polygamy: division and favoritism among family members.
- "Coat of many colors" = in the only other place where this phrase occurs in the Bible it refers to a royal garment (2 Samuel 3:18)
- Jacob should have known better as he experienced favoritism and its broken effects.

because he was the son of his old age.

- "because Joseph was the son of his old age" = The same word is used of Isaac in Genesis 21:2.
- This suggests that Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers because he believed that he would be the child that God had promised, the one who would carry on the promised line of the Messiah, the promised seed of the woman, the Promised King.

Genesis 37:5-11

Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

- "his father kept the saying in mind" = Israel likely had in mind God's promise of the Messiah

Applications

Your family's brokenness does not disqualify you - God works through weakness because He is gracious.

- In Genesis, God still used the brokenness of people for His purposes.
- God welcomes you regardless of your background and pedigree.
- God is always in the business of changing lives. God can break the bad patterns of families and bring restoration.

Immaturity can undermine God's good gifts.

- "Truth spoken without humility often produces division instead of peace."
- We must learn as believers: that timing matters; that humility matters; and that God does not need our help to accomplish His purposes.
 - Honesty is not always a virtue. Timing and when it is done is also important.
- Example: "Can I tell you what I feel right now"?
 - Is it encouraging?
 - Is it done out of humility?
 - Is it the right time?

Favoritism creates spiritual casualties

How?

1. It misrepresents God

- it teaches a false theology in which love is earned, worth is comparative, and acceptance is conditional on performance.

2. It breeds sin in the unfavored child

- person becomes more envious, bitter, and resentful.

3. It corrupts the favored child

- pride and entitlement grow.

4. It fractures family fellowship.

Psalms 133:1

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

What to do if there has been favoritism?

- Repent
- Apologize
- Consider what to do to make things right to rebuild relationships.

God often uses suffering to prepare us for sacrifice and serving.

- God chooses to use painful experiences
- The hardships that come into your life that seem unexpected or undeserved are actually part of God's sovereign plan for your life: Your ultimate good and God's ultimate glory.

Romans 8:28-29

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

- "to be conformed to the image of His Son
- Temptations are universal but trials are tailor-made.
 - God's ultimate purpose is to make you more like Jesus.
- Key two truths:
 - God is sovereign and in control over all situations of your life. Nothing is accidental (Romans 8:28)
 - God is a good God. (Romans 8:29)
 - There is no shadow of evil in God. You can trust Him.

For Non-Christians:

- We are all dysfunctional and broken.
- Can you trust in the One who can redeem messes?
 - No matter how messed up your life feels right now, God can change it and redeem it and give you purpose.