

The Tough Road of God's Dream for Us

Աստուծոյ Ծրագիրը Կեանքի Քարքարոտ Ճամբուն Կրայ
A Sermon Series on the Life of Joseph

Gen. 37:5-33

Last week we started a new series about the life of Joseph: “Dysfunctional Families and God’s GRACE.”

Those events are not stories to entertain us (though there are some tough stories written). Those stories are real, and they were written in the Bible to teach us about **integrity and forgiveness**. They are there to teach that the **sovereign God** has a plan for **humanity’s salvation**.

Coming back to Joseph’s family dynamics:

Joseph had

three stepmothers,

ten stepbrothers,

a stepsister,

a brother,

and all living in the same area, probably different tents. **Talk about a dysfunctional family.**

Joseph grew up in this mess.

-Daddy’s favorite. (37:1-4)

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. (Gen 37:3 ESV)

Jacob’s favorite children were Joseph and Benjamin (born from his favorite wife Rachel). Although Joseph was shepherding with his brothers, he was also spying on his brothers. His mother Rachel had died while giving birth to Benjamin. His father gave him a garment, **a colorful one**, different than those of his brothers’. Colors indicated **royalty**. He wore “a tuxedo” when he went to the fields. He was 17, and he was told to keep his eyes on his brothers’ affairs. He did that and delivered a bad report to his father. How dangerous was his job?

The text tells us that his father favored him, but the text does not tell us if Joseph was spoiled. What about the brothers? Those brothers were not easy people.

Reuben (the firstborn) had sexual relationship with **Bilhah** his father's maidservant (Gen 35:22). This action had consequences. Jacob was silent about it. Later in chapter 49 we see he gives his verdict to his (*antranig*) firstborn son when he takes away his the firstborn rights (the leadership of the family) (Gen 49:3-4).

Simon and Levi had killed the whole tribe of Shechem. What a shame that they promised this tribe they would give their sister, but instead they killed everyone.

The Eight, the other brothers, looted Shechem, instead of rebuking their brothers Simon and Levi. Jacob was silent in all this.

As one can see, the circumstances around Joseph were not so favorable. We read:

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. (Gen 37:4 ESV)

-Dreams (37:5-11)

Please notice that in the Bible we see that God spoke to humanity through dreams. Dreams were considered a revelation from God. **These dreams also were significant to demonstrate God's sovereignty.** Joseph's dreams indicated that God had a plan for him.

Joseph had two dreams, which he shared with his family.

-The first dream: "**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.**"(37:7)

This probably hints the famine that will hit Egypt. Joseph was going to be in charge of distributing corn to the Egyptians and their neighbors. His brothers were not too excited about this dream: **Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?"** (37:8)

-The second dream made things tougher:

Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” (37:9) Now his father is angry with him; **Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?”** Joseph, this is too much. As we read, we see that this became a reality, and all came to Egypt and bow to him.

-Why did he tell his dream to his family?

The Bible does not tell us the reason but we are glad he did. (Later we will see how God used those dreams to reveal His plan). They did not like them. They also mocked Joseph. He shared his dream (the voice of God) and he ended up in trouble.

-How many times we see the same situation in the Bible. Sharing His Word does not mean everything will be OK. Just look at the life of Jesus. Just study the life of the prophets. What I am trying to say, sometimes sharing His Word can bring problem to our neighbors and friends. Let us not be troubled with that. God can work in those tensions.

-What is your dream? What did God put on your heart?

As a child, I had the dream of becoming an astronomer. I used to tell my father that I one day I would go to the moon. When I grew up and my interests changed, I dreamed to become a musician. I wanted to form a band to play in clubs. Dad was against it. When I was eighteen, I had a calling to become a pastor. This was strange. This was not my dream. God had a different plan for my life. I learned eventually to listen to Him (obeying my call).

What are your dreams? What were your dreams when you were growing up? Did life shape your dreams?

-Father Sends Joseph with a Mission! (37:12-14)

Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” And he said to him, “Here I am.” ¹⁴ So he said to him, “Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word.” So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

I don't know if Jacob realized what was he doing? Did he see the hatred and jealousy in the family toward Joseph? We don't know. The Bible does not tell us

he did. When Joseph revealed his second dream, Jacob was surprised and angered, but he kept it in his mind.

How about Joseph's obedience to his father? Did he feel that his brothers did not like him? I am sure he did. Jacob sends his son Joseph to Shechem (50 miles away). Part of Joseph's job was spying on his brothers and reporting to his father. No one trusted the other. Please notice that the brothers were in the **pastures of Shechem**. Do you remember the murders of Shechem? This time a new "killing" is on its way. It's the turn of this dreamer boy, Joseph.

-Searching For Brothers (37:15-17)

¹⁵ And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" ¹⁶ "I am seeking my brothers," he said. "Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." ¹⁷ And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

It is interesting that Joseph does not find his brothers. Why? Perhaps he did not know exactly where they were. Now we see an anonymous man who helps him find his brothers.

Is it interesting to see how ordinary things happened in Joseph's life? Who was this stranger? We don't know. I see God's hand in directing Joseph. I see God's providence in helping him find his brothers.

We don't need extraordinary events to see God's hand directing us. God can use anything to talk with us and guide us.

- Time to Get of This Dream Boy (37:18-20)

They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. ¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰ Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits.^[b] Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams."

Here we see how jealousy- the fear of Joseph's dreams becoming a reality- motivated the brothers to kill him. How sad it is that they did not receive God's revelation through the brother's dream. They thought killing the messenger would solve the problem. Really? Didn't the same happen with Jesus?

-The Pit (37:21-24)

But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." ²² And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him"—that he might rescue him

out of their hand to restore him to his father. ²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. ²⁴ And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

The killing plan is changed to throwing him in the pit, starving him to death.

Reuben appears in the picture. The firstborn, *antranig* boy, the one to take the lead of this family. What is going on in his head? Remember, Reuben was one who had plans for the family succession. When he did not have children from his marriage, he slept with one of his stepmothers Bilhah (35:22) to provide an offspring. He knew his sin. Maybe he was thinking he would be “clean of his sins” if he spared brother’s life? (finding ways to cover the sin)

-The killing is Changed Into Selling Him (37:25-28)

Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. ²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels³¹ of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

Judah appears in the story (we will talk about Judah next Sunday). He finds the best solution without bloodshed. How many times humanity thinks the wrong solutions seems right? Where is the firstborn? It seems Reuben was not there at this time. Judah suggests selling Joseph to some Egyptian merchants.

-Reuben Grieves (37:29-30)

When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes ³⁰ and returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?”

Reuben returned to the scene. He found his brother is sold. Reuben, the firstborn, tore his clothes at the scene (grief). Even his grief is selfish because he is only concerned about his own future, his dreams, not God’s dream for him.

-The Garment (37:31-33)

Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. ³² And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not." ³³ And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces."

The "royal" colorful garment was immersed in blood. What kind of blood? **Deceiving blood. Jacob the deceiver now became Jacob the deceived.** Oh, this garment, **the garment of "favoritism" became the garment of grief.** By the way, the story of the garment continued as Joseph wore another garment in Egypt when he was working for **Potiphar**. Potiphar's wife caught Joseph's garment in her hand and used it as evidence to put him unjustly in prison. (Gen 39:12)
Yet, later in life, Pharaoh gave him a **royal garment**, a robe to be a leader in Egypt. (Gen 41:42)

What can we learn:

-When we are in the "pit", when we are down, God is up to do something in our lives.

My sermon title is: **The Tough Road of God's Dream for us, not any dream, God's dream.**

When you look at the story, you do not expect to see Joseph in the "pit". He was, and God was there with him, helping him to come out and go forward in his life. Joseph did not realize that, but God was there. God's presence is not dependent on my perception.

I said earlier God has a plan for each of us. The important thing is to walk with God and to accept His will, His plan in our lives.

I have a dream. I should examine if that dream is God's dream for my life.

How do you think Joseph felt in the pit? The Bible does not tell us. I say terrible, puzzled. "Is this the dream that I saw coming from God?"

How many of us have dreamed of something then we realized God has something else in His plan?

I did not know that I would be a pastor. My dreams were different.

-David is in the "pit" as he writes this Psalm (psalm 55:1-8)

- 1 Listen to my prayer, O God,
do not ignore my plea;
- 2 hear me and answer me.
My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught
- 3 at the voice of the enemy,
at the stares of the wicked;
for they bring down suffering upon me
and revile me in their anger.
- 4 My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death assail me.
- 5 Fear and trembling have beset me;
horror has overwhelmed me.
- 6 I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest-
- 7 I would flee far away
and stay in the desert;
Selah
- 8 I would hurry to my place of shelter,
far from the tempest and storm."

-How about Jesus who knew his fathers' dream? He knew he came for that dream. Jesus pursued his Father's dream: the salvation of humanity. Yet He was rejected, humiliated, and crucified.

-Today my message to you is this. God has a dream for each of us. God has a plan for your life. Each of us was created in His image so we can serve Him. Blessed is the one who finds God in his/her life.

Yet, to follow God is costly. Christ came and shared his love through his grace. Grace is free, yet costly.

There is a tough road when we follow God's dream. The good news is God is with us helping us to fulfill His will.

Amen

Genesis 29—30; 35:16-26.

LEAH	ZIPAH (Leah's servant)	BILHAH (Rachel's servant)	RACHEL
Reuben (1)	Gad (7)	Dan (5)	Joseph (12)
Simeon (2)	Asher (8)	Naphtali (6)	Benjamin (13)
Levi (3)			
Judah (4)			
Issachar (9)			
Zebulun (10)			
Dinah (11)			