

The First Family

Date: 6.07.2026 | Joseph is Sold into Slavery
Scripture: Genesis 37

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

God is with us, even when hard things happen.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

Joseph's brothers treated him badly, but God was still with him.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

Even though Joseph was betrayed and sold by his brothers, God was still working in his life.

STUDENTS:

Joseph's brothers acted out of jealousy and sin, but God was still at work through these events to accomplish His greater plan.

ADULTS:

In Joseph's betrayal and suffering, human sin is clearly displayed, yet God's sovereign providence remains at work, orchestrating events to fulfill His purposes. This passage reminds us that God is present and active even in injustice, using it to accomplish His redemptive plan.

MEMORY VERSE

So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
Galatians 3:9



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

While the parallels between Joseph and Jesus are not developed explicitly in the NT, the Christian church traditionally recognizes key parallels between their lives. Joseph was loved by his father (Genesis 37:3; Mark 1:11), sent to his brothers who denied him and sold him for silver (Genesis 37:28; John 7:5; Matthew 26:15), suffered persecution and temptation (Genesis 37:18-36; 39:7-20; Matthew 4:1-11), and was ultimately exalted as lord over his brothers (Genesis 42:6; Philippians 2:9-10). - Reformation Study Bible note

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

The final chapters of Genesis shift focus to the story of Joseph, one of Jacob's twelve sons, and reveal how God continues to preserve and establish the covenant family He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (**Genesis 12:1-3; 26:2-5; 28:13-15**). Though Joseph's life is marked by betrayal, suffering, and hardship, these events are not outside of God's control. Instead, God uses every setback in Joseph's life to further His sovereign plan and preserve His people.

Joseph's story also introduces a pattern seen repeatedly throughout Scripture: God often elevates one of His people into positions of influence within pagan governments to preserve His covenant people and display His faithfulness. Joseph is the first major example of this pattern, later echoed in the lives of Moses (**Exodus 2:10**), David (**1 Samuel 16**), Daniel (**Daniel 1:21**), Esther (**Esther 2:17**), Mordecai (**Esther 10:3**), and Nehemiah (**Nehemiah 1:11**). Through Joseph, God is preparing the way for the survival of Israel.

Although Jacob had grown in dependence on God, he was still deeply flawed. Like his parents before him, Jacob repeated the sinful pattern of parental favoritism. Isaac favored Esau while Rebekah favored Jacob, and that division fueled hatred and conflict between the brothers (**Genesis 25:28; 27:41-42**). In the same way, Jacob now openly favors Joseph above his other sons (**Genesis 37:3-4**). This favoritism becomes the spark that ignites division within the family.

Joseph was the second youngest of Jacob's twelve sons, yet Jacob treated him with honor normally reserved for the firstborn. Joseph and Benjamin were the sons of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, whom he loved more than Leah (**Genesis 29:30**). Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin (**Genesis 35:16-20**), increasing Jacob's affection for her two sons. As a visible symbol of this favoritism, Jacob gave Joseph



an expensive robe—likely a richly ornamented garment representing status and privilege (*Genesis 37:3*). Every time Joseph's brothers saw the robe, they were reminded that Joseph held a place of honor they believed should have belonged to them. As a result, "they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him" (*Genesis 37:4*).

Family tension grew worse because of Joseph's own immaturity and pride. At 17, Joseph received two dreams from God (*Genesis 37:5–11*). In Genesis, dreams often function as divine revelation, revealing God's plan for Joseph. In the first dream, Joseph and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field when Joseph's sheaf stood upright. His brothers' sheaves bowed down to it (*Genesis 37:7*). His brothers immediately understood the implication: Joseph would one day rule over them (*Genesis 37:8*). In the second dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed before Joseph, indicating that not only his brothers but the entire family would bow before him (*Genesis 37:9–10*). Even Jacob rebuked Joseph for speaking so boldly. Yet Jacob also "kept the saying in mind" (*Genesis 37:11*), sensing there may be more to the dreams than youthful arrogance.

Though Joseph's dreams were truly from God, Joseph's handling of them appears prideful and lacking wisdom. His immaturity further alienated him from his brothers and intensified their jealousy. What God intended as revelation of His sovereign plan became, in Joseph's hands, fuel for family resentment. Yet despite Joseph's flaws, God's purposes would still stand. These dreams are later fulfilled when Joseph rises to power in Egypt, and his family bows before him during the famine (*Genesis 42:6, 9*).

The brothers' hatred eventually reached a breaking point. When Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers in the fields, they saw him approaching and plotted to kill him, mocking him as "this dreamer" (*Genesis 37:18–20*). The phrase in Hebrew conveys a sarcastic sense of "master of dreams." Their plan to murder Joseph reflects the deep corruption of sin within the human heart. It mirrors earlier acts of family violence in Genesis, such as Cain murdering Abel (*Genesis 4:8*) and Esau plotting Jacob's death (*Genesis 27:41*).

Reuben, the eldest brother, intervened and persuaded them not to kill Joseph outright, suggesting instead that they throw him into an empty pit (*Genesis 37:21–24*). Reuben secretly intended to rescue Joseph later. His motives are uncertain—he may have desired to regain favor with Jacob after dishonoring his father (*Genesis 35:22*), or he may simply have wanted to spare Joseph's life. However, while

Reuben was away, Judah proposed a different plan: sell Joseph to passing Ishmaelite traders rather than kill him (*Genesis 37:25–28*). Thus, Joseph was sold into slavery for silver and carried away to Egypt. This also reflects the longstanding hostility between the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac, first foretold by God (*Genesis 16:12*).

To cover their sin, the brothers slaughtered a goat, dipped Joseph's robe in the blood, and presented it to Jacob, allowing him to conclude that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (*Genesis 37:31–33*). This deception carries profound irony: Jacob, who once deceived his own father Isaac by using goatskins and his brother's garments (*Genesis 27*), is now deceived by his own sons through a goat and Joseph's garment. Sin's consequences often come full circle. Jacob's past deceit now returns to him in painful measure.

Genesis 37 closes with three tragic consequences of this sin. First, Joseph enters into slavery in Egypt (*Genesis 37:36; 39:1–6*). Second, Jacob spends the next twenty-two years grieving the loss of his beloved son (*Genesis 37:34–35*). Third, Joseph's brothers live with lingering guilt that haunts them for years to come (*Genesis 42:21–22; 44:16*). Sin never remains isolated—it brings suffering, grief, and long-lasting consequences to everyone involved.

Yet even in the darkness of betrayal, jealousy, and suffering, *Genesis 37* displays the sovereign providence. What Joseph's brothers intended for evil, God would later use for good to save many lives (*Genesis 50:20*). Joseph's suffering points forward to Jesus Christ, the greater and better Joseph. Like Joseph, Jesus was the beloved Son of His Father, hated by His own brothers, betrayed for silver, rejected though innocent, and handed over to suffering. But through that suffering, God accomplished salvation for His people. Joseph was sent ahead to preserve physical life; Jesus was sent ahead to secure eternal life.

Genesis 37 reminds us that God's plans cannot be thwarted by human sin, jealousy, betrayal, or suffering. Even when circumstances appear chaotic or unjust, God is working through them to accomplish His redemptive purposes. The same God who sovereignly guided Joseph's suffering toward salvation is the God who sovereignly used the suffering of Christ to bring salvation to the world.

TELL THE STORY

Genesis 37



The Biggest Story Storybook Bible - Joseph's Mean Brothers and What God Meant to Do

The Jesus Storybook Bible - The Forgiving Prince

Hey-Oh! Bible- Joseph's Coat

God had made a special promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their family would become a great nation and bless the whole world. Even when life seemed messy and hard, God was still keeping His promise.

Jacob had twelve sons, but he loved Joseph more than the others. Joseph was the son of Rachel, the wife Jacob loved most. To show his love, Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful, expensive robe. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father treated Joseph differently, they became jealous and angry.

Then Joseph had two dreams from God. In the dreams, Joseph's family bowed down to him. When Joseph told his brothers about the dreams, they hated him even more. They thought Joseph was proud and believed he wanted to rule over them.

One day, Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers while they were working in the fields. When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they made a terrible plan. They wanted to kill him. Reuben, the oldest brother, stopped them and told them to throw Joseph into an empty pit instead.

Later, while Reuben was gone, Judah suggested they sell Joseph to passing traders. The brothers sold Joseph for silver, and the traders took him far away to Egypt as a slave.

Then the brothers dipped Joseph's special robe in animal blood and brought it to Jacob. When Jacob saw it, he believed Joseph had died. Jacob was heartbroken and cried for his son.

This was a very sad and sinful moment in Joseph's family. Joseph's brothers were jealous, hateful, and dishonest. Jacob's favoritism had caused division, and everyone suffered because of sin.

But even in this terrible situation, God was still in control. Joseph's brothers meant to harm him, but God would use what they did for good. One day, God would use Joseph to save many people.

Joseph's story points us to Jesus. Like Joseph, Jesus was loved by His Father but hated and rejected by others. Jesus was betrayed and suffered even though He had done nothing wrong. But through His suffering, God brought salvation to the world.

God can use even painful and sinful situations for His good plan. Nothing can stop God's purposes.

REBUILD THE STORY

1. Who was Jacob's favorite son, and how did Jacob show his favoritism? *Genesis 37:3*
2. How did Joseph's brothers feel when they saw their father favor Joseph? *Genesis 37:4*
3. What was Joseph's first dream, and what did it mean?
Genesis 37:5-8
4. What was Joseph's second dream, and how did his family react?
Genesis 37:9-11
5. What did Joseph's brothers plan when they saw him coming to check on them? *Genesis 37:18-20*
6. How did Reuben change the brothers' plan? *Genesis 37:21-24*
7. What did the brothers eventually do with Joseph?
Genesis 37:25-28
8. How did the brothers deceive Jacob, and how did he respond?
Genesis 37:31-35



9. Why do you think favoritism in a family can cause so much hurt and conflict?

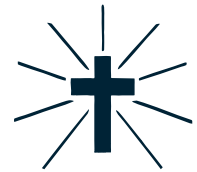
10. How did jealousy affect Joseph's brothers' choices? What can jealousy lead us to do if we do not deal with it?

11. Joseph was treated unfairly, even though God was with him. What does this teach us about trusting God during hard times?

12. Joseph's story points us to Jesus, who was also betrayed and suffered unfairly. How does knowing Jesus suffered help us when others hurt us?

GOSPEL EMPHASIS

Though Joseph's brothers sinned greatly by betraying him, their evil choices could not stop God's good plan. Throughout Genesis 37, we see that God is sovereign even when people act sinfully—He was working through Joseph's suffering to accomplish a greater purpose. Joseph's family was deeply broken, and their jealousy, favoritism, pride, and deceit remind us that the problem of sin is not just in Bible characters but in all of us. Yet even in the middle of Joseph's pain, the Lord was with him, showing that God does not abandon His people in suffering. Joseph's story points us to Jesus, the perfectly righteous Son who was also hated, betrayed, and sold for silver, yet whose suffering was used by God to bring salvation to many. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God used the greatest evil ever committed to accomplish the greatest good ever known—the rescue of sinners. Because of Christ, we can trust that God is with us in every hardship and that He can use even painful circumstances for His glory and our good.



WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use your Attributes of God poster as a guide.

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank You for always being with us! Thank You for using people who are far from You, even in their sin and darkness, for our good and Your glory. Help us remember we are never alone and that You are always at work!



THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Genesis 39