

The Story of Joseph, Favorite Son, Sold into Slavery!

Let me tell you a true story from Genesis, the first book of the Bible. This story about Joseph is a story of a non-traditional family with a lot of sibling rivalry, jealousy, and family stress, that you may have experienced yourself. No, it's not the Joseph that married Mary and was the earthly father of Jesus in the New Testament!! This is Joseph from the Old Testament in Genesis 37 to Genesis 50. It seems that Joseph's father was named Jacob (they also called Jacob "Israel", which is why the Jewish people are sometimes called the "Children of Israel"). Jacob had four wives (all at ONCE??)!! But I guess in those days it seemed okay to have several wives. Each wife had several children, for a total of 12 sons. I don't think the family got along very well, since there was a lot of jealousy among the wives and children. Oh, and there were definitely "favorite" wives and "favorite" children. Of all 12 boys, it turned out that Joseph was the very favorite son. Jacob gave Joseph a very special coat that was made of many different colors (like "Math in Living Color"??), and Joseph was wearing this coat very proudly around his brothers, sort of letting everyone know how special he was! Can you imagine what the brothers of Joseph thought when he was showing off his "special" coat that his father had given him?

Another time, it so happened that Joseph had a dream that all of his brothers would bow down to him. So, what did Joseph do? He went and explained the dream to his brothers. What do you think the brothers thought of Joseph's dream? Why, they were furious!! They couldn't stand the idea of them bowing down to

Joseph. That was even worse than seeing Joseph strut around in his fancy colored coat!! It really made them madder than ever. As it turns out, the Lord had given Joseph a gift of having meaningful dreams and of interpreting dreams. It turned out that Joseph was absolutely right on about this dream about his brothers, but he really ticked off his brothers by telling them about it.

Well, the brothers who were mostly bigger than Joseph were getting pretty sick of him, with his special coat and his dreams that made them look bad! They thought to themselves, “This Joseph thinks he’s better than everyone else!” Let me tell you, these were some MEAN and BAD brothers. One day when they were out in the countryside taking care of the sheep, they decided to get rid of Joseph for once and for all. They decided to kill him and take his bloody coat back to their father and tell him that a wild animal had killed him. The oldest brother Judah and another brother named Reuben really liked Joseph, and they didn’t want to see him get killed. Judah suggested that they take away his pretty coat and put him in a deep hole in the ground where he couldn’t get away. Judah and Reuben really planned to come back later and rescue Joseph and take him home to his father who loved him so much. So they threw him in this deep hole where he couldn’t escape. Well, before Judah could rescue him, a tribe of merchants came by on their way down to Egypt, which was a LONG way off. Some of the brothers got the wise idea to sell Joseph to them, and send Joseph completely out of the country, which they did. These brothers were so mean that they took Joseph’s coat and dipped it in animal blood. They took it back to Joseph’s father and told him that animals had killed him—(see?? They had liars and mean people back in those days too!!). Of course, the father was devastated—he thought his son

was killed. The father nearly cried his eyes out because of this mean trick. The brothers thought they had really pulled one over on the old man! They got rid of their brother, and they would never have to see him again. It looked like they really got away with it!

Joseph was then taken to Egypt where things did not go very well for him at first. He was accused of doing things he did not do, he was thrown into prison for at least two years. There he was away from his family, locked up in JAIL! But Joseph stayed faithful to God, and he did what was right, even in his worst days. Remember, I said that Joseph had a gift of understanding dreams? Well, every now and then, someone would have a dream, and Joseph could tell them what it meant. This went on, until one day the Pharaoh had a dream that he needed to have interpreted. Joseph gave a really good interpretation for Pharaoh, and Pharaoh really started liking Joseph. As a result of Joseph's interpretations of dreams, the Lord showed him that a famine was coming to all the land, and there would not be enough food to go around. Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he not only released him from prison, he made Joseph the #2 man in command, right next to the Pharaoh himself.

So Joseph stayed faithful to God, and God blessed Joseph in his hard times, even in prison. Because of the dreams, Joseph and Pharaoh knew to plant extra crops, and they stored up extra food. However, it wasn't just the Egyptians that were running out of food. Joseph's father and those mean brothers from back home also were running out of food. So they heard about the extra food that had been stored in Egypt, and Joseph's father sent those same mean brothers went down to Egypt looking for food. They certainly didn't know it was Joseph they would run into when they got to Egypt. When

Joseph saw his brothers in the food line, he recognized them, but they didn't recognize him. Joseph had grown up by now, and he was in charge of the whole food operation in Egypt!! So what do you think Joseph did? Did he "get even" with them now that he was in power? Or did he give them some food? Actually, he had a little bit of fun with them, and he played a couple of tricks on them. He made them go back and get his father so he could see his Dad again. Finally, Joseph forgave them, and he got his family back together. The family stayed in Egypt and they were prosperous for several more generations. Finally, a different Pharaoh came along that didn't like Joseph's descendants, who became slaves to the Egyptians. This was when Moses led the "Children of Israel" out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Of course, this story of Moses leading his family out of Egypt is yet another "TRUE Story from the Bible."

You may be able to see some things in this story that relate to your own situation. First of all, bad things sometimes happen to good people, and it is NOT their fault. We don't know why bad things happen, but God has a plan for our lives, and sometimes we just don't see it. Secondly, there are BAD people in the world who are very selfish and sometimes just plain mean! How do you tell the difference between "good" and "bad" people? The answer is LOVE. Do they treat you with love and respect? Or do they treat you with selfishness and scorn? I don't mean do they say, "I love you", because anyone can SAY they love you. What you have to see is how do they treat you! Do they choose what is best for you, or do they choose what is best for themselves? That is real love when they do what is best for YOU!

Thirdly, the father really loved Joseph, and it broke his heart when the mean brothers took Joseph away from him. Joseph's father was broken-hearted, and he really cried about this. If you notice that you have some people crying for you, those are the people who REALLY LOVE YOU. Yes!! Real men DO cry!! Fourth, Joseph didn't let his bad trip away from his family turn him into a bad or mean man! Instead, he trusted the Lord to get him out of that prison! It took a couple of years, but God not only got Joseph out of prison, but Joseph ended up with a very good life—all because he was faithful. This is true of you also. You know what is good and what is bad! Keep doing the good things and avoid the bad things, and you will have a much better life! Try to always be a truth-teller! Try to always keep your word when you say something. Be kind to people; don't be mean to them. Be faithful to do what is right! Finally, the wicked brothers thought they got away with it, but they did NOT! Eventually the truth was known to everybody, especially to the father.

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