

## Day Four

Pick up the story in Genesis 37:12-36.

What is your general impression of these brothers? Why?

We know that they were hostile toward Joseph because of Jacob's love for the young man (37:4). But something else is going on here. Why do they plan on killing him (37:18-20)?

If you were to share a vivid dream with a friend or family member, how do you think they might respond? Why?

What is implied about the brothers' attitude about Joseph's dreams by what they do when they find him alone and vulnerable?

These brothers would likely have been raised on the stories of "their fathers." They would have heard about God's dealings with Abraham and Isaac and their own father, Jacob. What can explain how they respond to Joseph and the dreams he had (that were, apparently, from the same God who spoke with the other patriarchs)?

Have you ever had one of those "I'm too upset to eat" kind of moments? With that in mind, what do you make of what is reported in 37:25-27?

Even in this early part of the life of Joseph, there seems to be a marked contrast between Joseph and his brothers. What is the difference? And, more importantly, what explains the difference?

## Day Five

If you thought God was speaking to you about what He was going to do through you for His glory, what kind of reception would you hope to receive from those "nearest and dearest" to you?

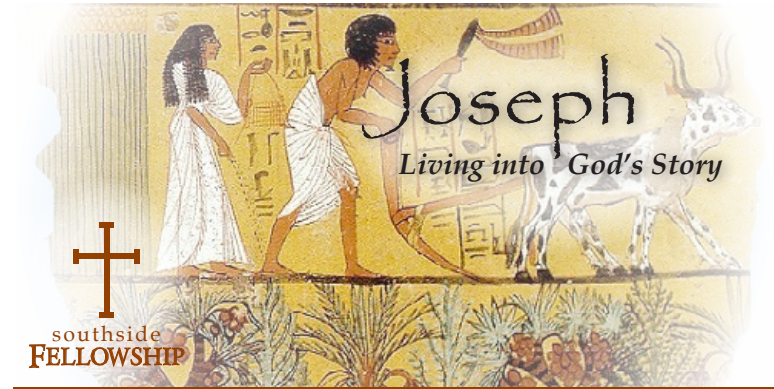
If you were looking for "confirmation" about some direction you sensed from the Lord, what would you be seeking? What ways would you anticipate the confirmation might come?

Reread Genesis 37:1-36. Jot down the immediate and long-term repercussions of Joseph's sharing his dream with others.

When Joseph shared his dreams with his family, what kind of reception do you think he might have been hoping for? What might he have wanted from them?

We assume, at times, that if God is behind something happening in our life that we should be facing smooth sailing and easy living. In fact, we even look for God's leading by trying to determine where the "open doors" are—where it looks like we could easily head. Joseph's start was a little different. If these dreams of his were from God, the Lord certainly didn't give him an easy start. From the moment he began sharing the dreams, he only had trouble.

How could understanding what happens here in the early moments of Joseph's story draw you into a deeper dependence on God—in spite of what you might see going on around you?



## Weekly Devotional Guide

February 7, 2010

### Genesis 37: And So the Story Begins

## Day One

To make sure we have a sense of the "family life" of Joseph, glance over these details, drawn from earlier sections in Genesis:

Joseph's father was Jacob.

- The conniver who stole a birthright and a blessing.
- The schemer who deceived his own father.
- The patriarch who was wrestled to the ground by God.
- The husband who married four but loved one, Rachel.
- The believer who learned to lean on God.
- The father who mourned the loss of his dear wife, Rachel, when she gave birth to his last son, Benjamin.

Joseph's brothers were 11 in number.

Two of them, Simeon and Levi, dealt treacherously and vindictively with a neighboring city even though the people of that city sought to make right a wrong done to their sister. The other brothers joined in. (Genesis 34)

One of them, Reuben, slept with one of his father's wives, and apparently without any consequence. (Genesis 35)

One of them, Judah, mistreated his own daughter-in-law, treating her contemptuously. (Genesis 38)

When Joseph brings a "bad report" to his father about the brothers (Genesis 37:2), the language suggests that he was not merely telling what he thought, but what was being said about the brothers by others.

With this as background, read the opening portion of the account of Joseph's life in Genesis 37:1-4.

Joseph and Benjamin were the only two sons born to Jacob by Rachel; Joseph first and then Benjamin, in whose birth Rachel died. How does knowing that fill in the picture of what is said in 37:3?

Why might Joseph be prized by his father over Benjamin?

The language in 37:3 about Jacob making a robe for Joseph suggests both that Jacob did this himself (as opposed to having a maid or one of his wives do it) and that he did it repeatedly (as the garment wore out or as Joseph grew). What does this tell you about the relationship between Jacob and Joseph?

Given the background and the little glimpses given us here, what do you think Joseph's "growing up years" would have been like?

### Day Two

In order to have a broader setting for understanding a bit of what God is doing in the life of young Joseph, let's think about dreams. God used dreams, from time to time, to speak to His servants. Look at the following examples where God spoke through a dream. Make some observations about the dreams.

Person	Passage	Dream
Abraham	Gen. 15:12-21	
Jacob	Gen. 28:10-17	
Laban	Gen. 31:24	

Peter Acts 10:9-16

What kinds of things did God communicate to these people through dreams?

Why might He have used a dream to communicate with these people?

We cannot conclude from such passages that the Lord *must* or *will* communicate with us through dreams, but it is possible. Talk to the Lord about the various ways that He speaks to you and ask Him to incline your heart to hear Him whenever and however He wants to speak.

Read Genesis 37:5-11. What do you think would have gone through Joseph's head and heart when he first realized that God was speaking to him in a dream?

### Day Three

Let's pull together some of the pieces we have been wrestling with. Read Genesis 37:1-11.

What did Joseph do when he first had dreams from God?

How did his brothers respond? How did his father respond?

Some suggest that maybe Joseph had a haughty attitude in reporting these dreams. Does the text support that idea? Why or why not?

Seeing as it has apparently been many years since anyone who is walking with Yahweh, the God of Israel, has had a visit or a voice or a vision, Joseph's dreams might well have come as quite an unexpected surprise. Where *could* Joseph have turned to help him understand what was being said in the dreams?

Here's what we are left with:

Joseph was bereft of his mother.

Joseph was hated by his brothers.

Joseph had an awkward (at best) relationship with his father.

Joseph had dreams that appear to be from God but when he turns to those who should or might be able to help him understand what is going on he is harshly rebuffed.

Joseph's dreams are belittled and attacked.

Given this start, what chance does Joseph have in becoming one of the most prominent figures in the work of God recorded for us in the Old Testament? (More space is given to the account of Joseph and his life in the book of Genesis than any other character, including "the friend of God," Abraham!)

We haven't unpacked all of Joseph's story yet, but we do know that God is going to do marvelous things in and through him. But notice how Joseph's story begins! Misunderstood, alone, troubled, on the outs with those with whom he thought would care, puzzled, and now God's messing with his life seems to just be making things worse! Alistair Begg wrote:

There is no human reason whatsoever that Joseph should have emerged from the emotional and spiritual carnage of his family life to be the incredible man of God he was. The only way we can explain it is . . . the grace of God. (From *The Hand of God*.)

Regardless of *your* starting point, God, in grace, intends to involve you in *His* story. Don't be overwhelmed by what you think are crippling beginnings. Look to the God of Joseph!