

## MAKING LEMONADE

### "HOLD ON TO YOUR DREAMS"

#### GENESIS 37:1-11

#### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Humanity** – I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior. John 3:16, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

The Bible says, ". . . for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The shortcomings of humanity are nowhere more evident than in the home. Too often home is the setting for conflict, hostility, even family violence; "dysfunctional family" is a contemporary term we are all too familiar with. Indeed, literature, including biblical literature, is replete with stories about hostile brothers and the violence that results from their mutual dislike. One author writes: "Examples are numerous, both in the Bible and elsewhere in literature and history, from Cain and Abel and Jacob and Esau to Eteocles and Polynices, Romulus and Remus, and Richard the Lionheart and John Lackland. The Franco-American scholar Rene Girard has observed that the close proximity that draws brothers together is, somewhat paradoxically, also what more than anything triggers deadly strife between them. Brothers resemble each other with regard to their physical and mental characteristics but also with regard to the objects they desire—whether a woman, a throne or a father's estate. This mimetic

***Not only was Jacob a deceiver, he was also a passive father.***

– Charles Swindoll

desire, which can find fulfillment for one of them only, may easily lead to bloody conflict" (Eckart Frahm, "Surprising Parallels between Joseph and King Esarhaddon," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 42 [May/June 2016] 3:43).

Ironically, the favoritism and deception that characterized Jacob's young adult life later characterized his family's life. His father, Isaac, favored his brother, Esau, while his mother, Rebekah, favored him. It's not surprising that together they tricked his father into blessing him rather than his brother, provoking Esau to remark later: "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" (Ge 27:36). Later, he favored Joseph and made him a "richly ornamental robe." When his brothers saw that their father loved him more, they hated Joseph so much that they refused to speak to him.

Commenting on Jacob's dysfunctional family, Charles Swindoll writes: "Keep in mind that from the time of his birth, Joseph was his father's favorite. He was the firstborn of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, whom he dearly loved. He was the child of Jacob's old age. Joseph was also unlike his brothers in character and attitude. Perhaps Jacob favored Joseph for all those reasons. Not only did he love him the most, he unwisely showed him great favoritism.

"Now, Jacob's other sons were no fools. They might have been lustful, unruly, deceitful, and vengeful, but they weren't stupid. They quickly realized, by the highly visible evidence of their father's indulgences toward Joseph, that he was the

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pet in the family. As you can imagine, by giving Joseph an elaborate full-length coat, which was also a sign of nobility in that day, his father was boldly implying, 'You can wear this beautiful garment because you don't have to work like those brothers of yours.' His mother had been the favored wife, and Joseph was the favored son. And his brothers weren't about to sit back and let that continue. In only a matter of time, they would unleash their anger.

"The home in which Joseph was raised was comprised of a family filled with angry, jealous, and deceitful people. Then, within that hostile environment, for seventeen years, the other sons of Jacob had watched as their father played favorites with Joseph. Their jealousy had turned into resentment and hatred. Joseph's brothers had come to despise their younger brother so severely that they could not even speak a kind word to him. Try to imagine the mounting pressure in that home. It was a giant powder keg on the verge of explosion" (*Joseph*, 9-11).

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Genesis 37:1-11

1 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

2 This is the account of Jacob.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: 7 We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around

mine and bowed down to it."

8 His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

9 Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

10 When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" 11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Circle "account" in v. 2.
- \* Circle "bad report" in 2.
- \* Bracket "richly ornamented robe" in v. 3.
- \* Underline the repeated word "hated" in vv. 4, 5, 8.
- \* Highlight his brother's interpretation of Joseph's first dream in v. 8.
- \* Draw an arrow from "reign" to "rule" in v. 8.
- \* Circle "moon" in v. 9.
- \* Bracket the rhetorical question in v. 10b.
- \* Highlight his father's interpretation of his second dream in v. 10.
- \* Circle "jealous" in v. 11.
- \* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 11.

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day **2**

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Some think that seventeen-year-old Joseph misrepresented his brothers to their father when he brought him a "bad report," which turned them against him. What do you think and why?
2. Why was Jacob especially fond of Joseph?
3. Explain the *significance* of the "richly ornamented robe" that Jacob gave Joseph.
4. Joseph had one dream and then another. So what?
5. Identify the sheaves in Joseph's first dream.
6. Identify the sun, moon, and eleven stars in Joseph's second dream.
7. Put the one point of Joseph's two dreams in your own words.
8. How would you describe the *tone* of his brothers' and his father's rhetorical questions?
9. Explain the *contrast* in verse 11.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about how you know the episode doesn't end at verse 11.

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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

"The story of Joseph (Gen. 37, 39-46, 50) is built around an important character type of biblical literature, the suffering servant. Such a hero undergoes suffering, usually undeserved, that accomplishes great good for other people. Joseph is such an innocent sufferer who becomes a savior of people. His story is dominated by the theme of providence. Although events that happen to the hero seem at the time to be tragic, by the time the story is over they turn out to have been governed by God for a redemptive purpose. To highlight this providential theme, the writer has composed a story that is itself intricately designed and carefully planned" (Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 100).

The story of Joseph is more than a delightful story, however. It links the promise made to Abraham and the story of the patriarchs with their settlement in Egypt and ultimately the exodus. When God made his covenant with Abraham, he told the patriarch, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions" (Ge 15:13, 14). The story of Joseph explains how Abraham's descendants wound up in a country not their own. The story of the exodus explains how they came out with great possessions. As the LORD had predicted, a family went down to Egypt, but a nation came up out of Egypt.

It is also a story of divine providence summed up in 50:20, "You plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good, in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened." In episode after episode we see God at work to make the dream he gave Joseph come true. Nothing that happened could frustrate God's plan for Joseph. In his darkest hour, when he was a slave in Potiphar's house and then imprisoned on a false charge, the narrative repeatedly comments, "the LORD was with Joseph." And if divine providence and his overruling of desperate circumstances is one theme in the Joseph story, human responsibility is its counterpoint, for it presents the dire effects of sin on family life. "Jacob's favoritism turns normal sibling rivalry into deadly hatred, so that Joseph's brothers plot to kill him. And Jacob is blind to the effect of his actions on his sons. While fratricide is averted, the tragic effects of this hatred blight the life of Jacob's family for more than twenty years" (Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, *Genesis 16-50*, 359).

The story of Joseph is much more than a great

children's story. It's a powerful story that will have a profound spiritual impact on everyone who actively reads it. And like all classic stories it has three elements: characters, setting, and plot. Concerning the characters in the first episode of the story (Ge 37:2-36), one commentator writes: "Jacob is a loving father to Joseph but utterly insensitive to his other sons (37:3-4). He seems completely unaware of the hatred he incites by his favoritism . . . Reuben is depicted as a failed leader. Although his plan to rescue Joseph from the pit shows him as a responsible older brother, he fails to accomplish his plan and stands feebly before the pit (37:29-30). Judah is a coldly calculating leader: saving his brother from immediate death to profitably sell him into a living death (37:26-28) . . . Joseph is depicted as morally good but immature and bratty. His tattling, boasting, and robe parading inflames his brothers' hatred against him" (Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis*, 498). As far as the container of the plot is concerned, the setting is more important than one might think. First, changes in the setting serve as structural markers around which the action of the story unfolds. This episode begins in Hebron. From there the action moves north through Shechem to reach its climax in Dothan. And then it returns to Hebron where the episode ends. Second, the setting provides an atmosphere in which that action seems inevitable. One literary critic observes: "In this story of violence, the setting abets the crime of the brothers. It is a remote setting where crimes go unobserved. The landscape itself becomes Joseph's enemy, with its open pits into which people can be thrown and wild animals in whose blood a coat can be dipped to deceive a father. And the action occurs near the route traveled by trading caravans headed to Egypt. The very setting established an atmosphere of hostility" (Ryken, 59). The plot unfolds in three stages in three settings.

"Genesis 37 provides the introduction to the Joseph story in that it lays the foundation for the crisis between Joseph and his brothers and foreshadows through the dreams the final resolution to the crisis" (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 595). Part one (vv. 2-11) lays a foundation for the treachery of Joseph's brothers (vv. 12-36) by recounting how one thing and then another fuel their growing hatred for him. According to verse 2, young Joseph returns from tending the flocks with his brothers and spills the evil beans to Jacob, that is, "he brought their father a bad report about them." Although the text is ambiguous,

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his brothers were likely up to no good given their past shenanigans recorded in chapter 34 and their future treachery recorded in part two of this episode, but telling their father will return to bite Joseph in his backside. To make matters worse, Jacob loves Joseph more than his other sons and makes his favoritism obvious by giving him "a richly ornamented robe" that "set him in a class apart and exempted him from the menial tasks of farming" (Joyce G. Baldwin, *The Message of Genesis 12-50*, 159). Apparently, Joseph is now management and no longer labor, which explains why he isn't sent to Shechem with his brothers to graze sheep (v. 12). No wonder, his brothers "could not so much as greet him" (Waltke, 500).

But it is Joseph's two dreams (vv. 5-11), representing his exaltation, that push his brothers over the edge and cause his father to ponder. In the first, his brothers' sheaves of grain bow down to his (v. 7), and in the second, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bow down to him (v. 9). The meaning of the dreams is obvious to his brothers and to his father and comes couched in their respective rhetorical questions. His brothers ask, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" (v. 8) And his father asks, "Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" (v. 10) Commenting on the fact of two dreams, one commentator explains: "Like

Pharaoh's two dreams, which are said to be one (41:25), it seems likely that both Joseph's dreams are making a single point, namely that his family will one day bow down to him, not that they will do so on two occasions. The doubling of the dream suggests, rather, the certainty of fulfillment, that 'the thing is established by God' (41:32)" (Wenham, 351). Only later does the reader learn why God intended for Joseph to rule over his family, that is, to save their lives by a great deliverance (45:7).

Verse 11 leaves what will happen next open to the reader's imagination while making it perfectly clear that the episode, much less the story, isn't over. On the one hand, given their history and their hatred of him, Joseph's brothers will surely take their revenge on the "dreamer" (v. 19) the first chance they get. Jacob, on the other hand, will doubtless continue to ponder the significance of his beloved son's dreams.

The *lower story* or "apparent plot" (Ryken, 102), is about God's choice of Joseph to save many people, including his own family, from seven years of famine that will ravage the land and its population. The *upper story* or "hidden plot" (Ryken, 102), is about God's providence at work to preserve the descendants of Abraham and to fulfill his promise to give them the land of Canaan.

## *The Message of the Passage*

*In two complementary dreams, the LORD reveals his providential selection of Joseph to rule over his family to save their lives, notwithstanding the jealousy of his brothers and the bewilderment of his father.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following living questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

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# notes **STUDY** – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **Jacob lived**  
begins in verse 2.

Verse 1 marks the end of the "account of Esau" (36:1). The story of Joseph

v. 2 **account**

Cf., "This is the family history of Jacob" (Wenham, 344). Genesis is divided into ten main sections, each beginning with the word "account" (see 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1-repeated for emphasis at 36:9--and 37:2). "Contrary to what one might expect, the accounts are not essentially about the titular ancestor but about his descendants" (Waltke, 18).

v. 2 **bad report**

"The word report (dibb,) by itself denotes news slanted to damage the victim (see Prov. 10:18)" (Waltke, 499 italics added). Nevertheless, based on their previous behavior (Ge 34), it is likely the brothers were up to no good. Joseph reported their wrong doing to Jacob, and they hated him for it.

v. 3 **ornamented robe**

Joseph's "tunic of many colors" (NKJV) or "Technicolor dream coat" may not have been all that colorful. The meaning of the expression, which occurs elsewhere in the OT only in 2 Samuel 13:18, 19, is difficult. Another possible meaning based on a cognate Aramaic term meaning "palm of hand" or "sole of foot" is that it was a long garment reaching to the ankles or wrists ("long sleeved robe" NEB, "long robe" TEV). Perhaps it was regal apparel (Waltke, 500). Whatever it looked like, the coat marked Jacob's special affection for Joseph and served as a perpetual reminder to his brothers of Jacob's preference for him—and apparently Joseph wore it every chance he had (cf. 37:18-19, 23). In the words of one commentator, it "set him in a class apart and exempted him from the menial tasks of farming" (Baldwin, 159), which would explain why he wasn't with his brothers tending sheep (v. 12). "Most scholars acknowledge that status, not just favor, is what the special coat represents" (John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, 662).

v. 4 **hated**

"Favoritism has a long pedigree in Jacob's family. Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob, Rebekah loved Jacob more than Esau, and most pertinently Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (25:28; 29:30). His old love for Rachel is now transferred to Joseph, Rachel's son. It is therefore hardly surprising that 'they hated him,' but that it is said three times (vv 4, 5, 8) indicates the intensity of their feelings" (Wenham, 350).

v. 5 **dream**

Unlike Martin Luther King's personal, "I have a dream," Joseph's dream was revelatory and expressed God's intention for him. "In the ancient Near East, dreams were a common means of divine communication and prediction; the brothers well understand its prophetic nature" (Waltke, 500). On the other hand, while the narrator views Joseph's dreams as revelatory, perhaps his brothers viewed them as the product of their brother's own inflated ego, which would further fuel their hatred for him (Wenham, 351).

v. 9 **moon**

The sun, moon, and eleven stars clearly represent Joseph's father, mother, and brothers. But isn't Rachel dead? "Rachel had died when Joseph was about six or seven years old. Perhaps one of Jacob's other wives has become his surrogate mother" (Waltke, 501). Or perhaps "the moon is included just to complete the picture of the heavenly bodies" (Wenham, 352).

v. 11 **jealous**

Their hatred culminated in jealousy in anticipation of their revenge. "In context, this seems to be a stronger and deeper passion than 'hatred' (vv 5, 8). Indeed. In various passages it is a feeling that is liable to spill over into violent action (e.g., Num 25:11, 13), even with God (Exod 20:5) . . . So the note that 'his brothers were very jealous' is ominous, suggesting that they may well seek revenge" (353).

## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Joseph's heritage was a mixed bag of blessing and blunders. He was the great grandson of Abraham, who was a man called out by God to be the Father of the great nation of Israel. Not only was he promised innumerable descendants, but he was also told the whole world would be blessed through him. The promised Savior would eventually come from his family line. But Joseph's ancestors were also marked by lying and trickery. Twice, Abraham lied about his wife being his sister. His grandson, Jacob, Joseph's father, bought Esau's birthright for a bowl of stew and then tricked his father, Isaac, to get Esau's blessing. Joseph, however, was a cycle breaker. The sin that permeated his family line stopped with him. And while he wasn't perfect, he recognized that God's plan was always the best. Joseph chose to trust God in the good and bad, and God eventually used him to save his family and nation from starvation. The beautiful thing about being a cycle breaker is that it can happen anytime. One parent can decide to accept the challenge to intentionally disciple his child and that family's legacy is altered. We did that in ours. We decided worship wasn't going to be something that our family did only on Sunday. We determined to teach our kids to live life as worship. You can do that too. You can be a cycle breaker and chart a new course for generations to come.

### What Does The Bible Say

**Weekly Verse:** Read Genesis 37:1-11

1. How old was Jacob in this passage?
2. Why did his brothers not like him?
3. How did they feel about his dreams?

### What Do You Think

These dreams were actually God showing Joseph something that would happen in the future. How does it make you feel to know that God knows your future and He is in control of all things?

### What R U Going To Do

Joseph's brothers did not treat him kindly. This week do something kind for your sibling. Write down what you did at the bottom of the *Scrolls* for 3 extra tokens! If you don't have a sibling, choose to do something kind for your parent.

### Core Comp

Humanity - I believe God loves everyone and we all need Jesus as our Savior.

### Memory Verse

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).