

Joseph's Life & Example



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The life of Joseph and how his own family treated him will show us that jealousy, resentment, and anger can destroy our life. If any of these three sins reside in our heart, we need to know that, and we need to repent before God—asking for His help to eliminate them and give us a true spirit of forgiveness and love toward everyone.

God considered the example of Joseph to be so important that his story takes up more space in Genesis than does Creation; the life of Abraham; the Worldwide Flood, and the Tower of Babel combined. God gives important lessons from Joseph's life and trials. Genesis 37:1-2 *"Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. 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."*

These four sons had done wicked things—they murdered Shechem and every male in the city to avenge their sister Dinah. It is not a surprise that Joseph brings back an unfavorable report about them. The sons of Bilhah are Dan and Naphtali; while Zilpah had Gad and Asher. These brothers were extremely jealous of Joseph—possibly because their mothers were handmaids. This envy and jealousy fuels many wicked acts done to Joseph by these brothers.

Joseph had avoided the company of these brothers because of their evil deeds and wicked lifestyle. If they had asked him to join them in

drinking and getting drunk—he would have refused; if they tried to influence him to be immoral—he would have walked away; and if they would have pressured him to disgrace their father by joining in their sins—he would have left their company.

Joseph was not sinless because Romans 3:23 *"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"* but the Bible does not mention any specific sin. There are only a few people in the Bible where no sins are mentioned. Daniel, Jonathan, and Enoch—with only a few verses on him, but Joseph takes up one-fourth of Genesis and no mention of any sin. Even though a young man, and having to deal with much pressure and many temptations, God enabled him to live a righteous life, and Joseph stood for what was right in the face of serious opposition.

Genesis 37:3 *"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours."* There was favoritism in the family that caused serious problems in the home. Jacob should have learned from his father showing favoritism to his brother Esau—how damaging that can be in a family. We should not have favorites because Acts 10:34 *"God shows no partiality."*

This *coat of many colors* was a full-length robe with long sleeves, which represents a position of authority. Shepherds wore garments of coarse material, but this full-length robe was meant for a prince. The long sleeves enabled the wearer to carry documents or writing materials inside with a drawstring at the wrist.

This tunic meant that Jacob had assigned Joseph a position of authority over his older brothers. He would be their boss, even though he was only seventeen, and the eleventh of twelve sons. That position was the right of Ruben the first-born, who knew why it was not given to him.

Ruben had been immoral with Bilhah Genesis 35:22 which forfeited his first-born rights 49:3-4.

Jacob would recall that Esau had forsaken his birthright Hebrews 12:16 *"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."* The first-born was not always given birthright privileges. Next in line would be Simeon or Levi, but both of them were involved in the murder of Shechem to avenge their sister Dinah. Judah would then be next in age, but the Bible mentions some serious sin in his life.

God would not have excluded them permanently from their inheritance rights, if there had been a genuine confession, repentance, and forsaking of those sins, but we do not hear of them doing that. There is also the matter of being spiritually ready and prepared by God—who would appoint only the right individuals to positions of leadership.

It could be said that Joseph was Jacob's firstborn since Rachel was his first chosen wife. Hagar had Ishmael before Sarah had Isaac, but Ishmael did not receive the firstborn rights. Romans 9:13 *"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;"* Malachi 1:2-3. Jacob was simply following God's direction and choices in giving Joseph a position of authority over the others.

Genesis 37:4 *"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."* Hate, anger, and jealousy are grievous sins that must be confessed, repented of, and forsaken with God's help. They cannot stay in our heart. We have to be honest with God, and admit the sin before Him, if there is any resentment toward anyone for any reason. Our prayer is Luke 18:13 *"God, be merciful to me a sinner!"*

Jesus connected anger, resentment, and hate with murder. Matthew 5:21-22 *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,*

and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 'But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.'"

It is the serious sin of slander to call someone a fool, worthless, good for nothing, etc. 1 John 4:20 "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

1 John 2:11 "Whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him." Love for others is an outward sign that we have true love for God in our heart.

Genesis 37:5-7 "Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, 'Listen to this dream I had: 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.' 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."

The sheaves predict a famine and how Joseph's plan saved the entire country of Egypt, the Israelites, and the known world from starvation. 9-11 "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."

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? His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind."

The Hebrew word for anger, jealousy, or envy is used 120 times in the Old Testament. The definition for *Jealousy* is being upset because of some blessing another received; while *envy* is being upset and *desiring what* another may have. Envy leads to coveting Exodus 20:17 Commandment #10. Any place where people interact and work together, envy and jealousy can be a problem. Someone will be liked more than we are, promoted ahead of us, or receive a pay increase—while we are overlooked. Satan will exploit such things to defile our conscience with envy and jealous feelings.

The apostle says jealousy and envy are vices—and those who practice such sins forfeit their divine inheritance Galatians 5:21-22. Jealousy and envy are as serious as murder in the sight of God, because they keep us out of the kingdom. Confession, repentance, and forsaking those sins is the key to forgiveness and change. We cannot allow jealousy, anger, spiteful acts, or resentment become a "root of bitterness" for they can escalate Hebrews 12:15 and defile many.

Joseph's brothers did not deal with jealousy in a scriptural way, so it escalated to envy and hatred—putting Joseph in danger as they were ready to strike out in violence. Envy and jealousy can have tragic results. Envy and Jealousy starts by focusing on us, instead of on God—it is all about Him and not about us. When we count our blessings, jealousy disappears.

Rachel was so jealous of her sister having children, that she contemplated suicide. Jacob had to say, "Am I in the place of God?" Genesis 30:2. Envy leaves God out of the picture, when He is to be the center of our life.

Cain slew his brother, and Saul tried to murder David because of jealousy. In this account

of Joseph, envy is allowed to grow until the results are disastrous. To have victory over jealousy and envy is to first admit them. Then we thank God for His many blessings, and to believe that He has many more for us, as we forsake those sins and remain in His will.

Rejoicing with those whom God has blessed, is just doing what we should be doing Luke 17:10. We could never repay God for what He has already given to us, and we can have victory over jealousy by getting on our knees and confessing it in prayer. We need to love others and to get our eyes off of ourselves.

We all have the privilege of placing any such wrong attitudes or feelings before God in prayer. All serious sins of the old sin nature Galatians 5:19-21 are changed to the virtues of the new divine nature—"Fruits of the Spirit"—22-23 "love, joy, peace, longsuffering [patience], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, [restraint]."

The Holy Spirit will control our attitude and feelings. Whatever temptation we face, God can use the trial to whittle our image to that of His Son. Whatever trial we are going through, we can learn a valuable spiritual lesson from it, if we will give our life back to God.

It is all about the change God can bring about, if we will allow Him to have our life—as Joseph did. The *result* will be the same, and our *reply* can be the same as Joseph's Genesis 50:20, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."



www.fcqchurch.org

PO Box 24283

PHILA PA 19120-5283

info@fcqchurch.org