

Genesis 37

“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” (Genesis 37:3, NIV).

The commandments . . . are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourselves” (Romans 13:9, NIV).

Family dysfunction: It is no wonder that Jacob favored one son above the rest, because he had been brought up the same way. We can refer back to the story of his parents, Isaac and Rebekah.

“Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob” (Genesis 25:28).

As parents favor one child over another we can see the rivalry begin in them. And, as the story concludes, Rachel helped Jacob receive the blessing that was meant to go to Esau. Jacob learned the idea of favoritism from his own parents. Therefore, since Joseph was the first born of the woman he really loved, Rachel, it made sense he would become the favorite child.

Joseph’s brothers probably put up with their father’s favored treatment of Joseph, but what really angered them were these two things: 1) the coat Joseph showed up in and 2) the dreams he shared with them. Both were placing Joseph in a superior status in the family. The coat was no ordinary shepherds’ coat, it was not made to be flexible or useful to a shepherd, but was something that an administrator would wear. This demonstrated to the brothers that Joseph was being placed above the rest of them, because he would no longer have the job of a shepherd but would be the one to inherit the business. The dreams confirmed what the coat symbolized and allowed the brothers to confirm their beliefs, Joseph saw himself superior to them. The brothers saw no way out, but to take him out of the picture.
What I want my students to:

Know:  Joseph was faithful in times of trouble and trusted God to work in his life.

Feel:  Secure in God’s love and guidance in our lives.

Do:  Treat others in the way we would want to be treated.

Leader’s Devotion

When my husband and I announced that we were expecting our third child, our older two children were already 14 and 13 years old. It was quite an adjustment for these two teenagers to think of having a baby in the house. I can remember hearing over and over from other people that we were lucky because we had two “built-in babysitters” in the house. I’m not so sure those two “babysitters” felt so lucky! I believe that even though they were happy and excited (or at least maybe a bit interested) in having a little sister, they began to be apprehensive about what was going to happen to the dynamics of our family – everything seemed to be changing and revolving around the baby! Sibling rivalry and jealousy is a natural part of every family and the family in our lesson this week is no exception. While I was preparing this lesson, I was a bit concerned with how to explain the harsh way Joseph’s brothers reacted to him. It’s a pretty violent story!! As always, we can look to God and His infinite wisdom to show us that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Joseph loved God and knew that he was called according to His purpose. God was able to work through the evil acts of Jacob’s sons to bring about great works through Joseph. As you discuss this story with your students, help them to understand the human emotions that we all feel sometimes – like jealousy and anger – but that with God’s help, we can overcome and allow Him to work in us!
FEELINGS

Materials: A bag of candy or some special treats

Procedure: Pick out one student to give a piece of candy to, and then give them a lot of special attention while ignoring the rest of the students (really ham it up). For example, tell that person you’re really glad they’re here in class today, give them another piece of candy, tell them you think they’re really special and like the way they do (something), tell them you really like the clothes they are wearing today, give them some more candy, ask them if they want to sit in this “special chair,” because it is more comfortable, etc, etc.

After a few minutes of this, stop and ask the rest of the class what they were feeling as that student got all of your attention and praise. Guide them to get the answers of hurt feelings, jealousy, or even anger. Those are some of the feelings a group of brothers had in our story today . . . let’s see what happened.

THAT’S NOT FAIR!

Materials: Poster board, large sheet of paper or even a chalk board

Procedure: Have you ever said “That’s Not Fair!” I’m sure we all have said or felt that at one time or another. What kinds of things do you think are unfair? What makes them unfair? What would make them fair?

Ask your students to list times when something happened to them that they thought was unfair. Have them write it on the board, graffiti style, filling in as many different situations as they can think of.

As you can see, there are many things that can happen in our lives that we might think is unfair. But, Christians have faith that God can use those unfair situations to turn out something good. That is exactly what is going to happen in our lesson today.
**Bible Story**

**Teacher Tip:** Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles

Our Bible lesson today is from the book of Genesis, chapter 37. Help students locate this in their Bibles. Joseph was from a very large family. He was the next to youngest of the 12 sons of Jacob. Jacob raised sheep, so his sons were shepherds and were strong and sometimes violent men. All except Joseph, that is. He was a thoughtful, dreamy boy and his rough older brothers didn’t like him.

When Joseph was about seventeen, his father gave him a special gift, because he loved him very much. Have someone read 37:3. This verse says that the robe (or what we would call a coat today) that Jacob gave his son was “richly ornamented.” We may not know what it looked like exactly, but we can be sure that it was very special and unusual and it would have made Joseph stand out when he wore it. Shepherds usually dress in rough, plain clothes without any decoration, so the robe made Joseph’s brothers more jealous than ever.

Joseph also had dreams that made his brothers hate him all the more. God was letting Joseph know about his future and that He had great plans for him. But his brothers were also angry and jealous of that instead of being glad that God was working in his life. If time allows have students read the dreams in verses 37:5-11 and discuss them.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were watching the sheep in the fields. The sight of the long, rich, beautiful robe was more than the brothers could take. They could see him coming from a distance, and as he got nearer their jealousy and hatred took over and they plotted to kill Joseph and throw his body in a pit. Reuben, the oldest brother, could not bring himself to commit such a terrible crime, so he suggested they just throw Joseph in a pit. (Reuben planned to return and rescue him later.) When they had torn off Joseph’s beautiful coat and had thrown him into a pit, they saw some merchants coming down the road. So, Joseph’s envious brothers sold him to the merchants as a slave. This was not very unusual, because in those days poor families would often send their children to work for wealthy men because they could not always take care of all their children. (37:12-28)

The brothers went back to Jacob and lied to him about what happened to Joseph. They showed their father the coat that they had dipped in animal blood and let Jacob believe that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Can you imagine the pain and hurt that Jacob suffered because of what his sons had done? Read 37:34-35. The hatred and jealousy that Joseph’s brothers had in their lives hurt many people.

Meanwhile, the merchants took Joseph with them into Egypt and sold him to an important officer of the king of Egypt, Potiphar. Joseph was a faithful and valuable servant. Even after being sold by his jealous and evil brothers, Joseph kept on doing what was right and good. He’s an example for us today to keep trusting God even when we have troubles in our lives.

Joseph’s brothers let anger, hatred, and jealousy control their lives instead of the love and friendship God wants us to feel for each other. How could this story have been different if they trusted God to work in their lives? Joseph and his father suffered because of what his brothers felt for him, and yet God was able to work through the terrible things they did. We’ll find out more later about how Joseph continued to let God work in his life to save a whole nation of people.
OBJECT LESSON

Materials: Several different colors of material – be sure to include a piece of green, red, yellow, blue, black and white material

Quest Connection

In our lesson, we learned that the coat that Joseph received from his father caused him a lot of trouble. We found out that Joseph was the favorite son and his brothers were so jealous of him that they sold him as a slave and pretended that he was dead. Joseph had a lot of heartaches and trials in his life that seemed to start with that coat of many colors. Have you ever thought that in a way, each of us is making a coat of many colors for ourselves everyday? But, instead of a coat made of material, the coat that we are making for ourselves is made out of the things that we think, do and say.

Procedure: To demonstrate to the students that the attitudes and actions we put on everyday become the coat that we wear the rest of our lives. The colors that are in that coat depend on the things we do and say.

Some of us may be making coats that have green in it. Hold up the green material. This green is going to represent jealousy in our lives. Feeling jealous of someone often happens when we want something that another person has. I wonder how many of us today are jealous of someone that we know. Have students give examples of what is means to be jealous of someone else. Jealousy is full of hatred and anger – is that a color you want in your life?

Sometimes we make coats for ourselves that have large patches of red. Hold up red material, which symbolizes anger and a quick temper. When someone has a quick temper they often say things in anger before thinking about what they should say. Have students think of things they can do when they get angry at someone or something to avoid doing something they will regret. Anger and a quick temper can hurt us as well as the ones around us. We need to try to keep this attitude out of our lives.

Some of us might be making coats that have yellow streaks in them. Hold up a piece of the yellow material. Yellow has always been a symbol of a fearful attitude. The Bible tells us that we can trust in God and we don’t have to be afraid. As we have talked about the life of Joseph, we will see that there were no yellow streaks in the coat that he made for himself. He was one of the bravest men in the entire Bible – and he trusted God in fearful situations to make everything all right.
Let’s follow Joseph’s example and keep yellow out of our lives by putting our trust in God.

Blue (hold up blue material) often represents sadness in our lives. Sometimes you might hear someone say they’re feeling blue. Psalm 68:3 says “may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful.” God’s wants us to be happy and not worry about problems in our lives. Again, He wants us to put our trust in Him!

Often the coats of our life get spotted with black. Hold up the black material. This color is going to represent the lies and sins in our life. Do you remember what a sin is? Let students respond. We all have sin in our lives because we are human, but we can try our best to live the kind of life that God wants us to by following Jesus’ example in loving and caring for others and putting God first in our lives. In our lessons about Joseph, we’ll see that he was a man who dedicated his life to God, and he was rewarded for it.

The last color I want to talk about today white. Hold up the white material. White has always been the color in the Bible for forgiveness – of cleanliness – of what happens to our hearts when Christ takes away the sin. We all have those spots of green, red, yellow, blue and black in our lives, but God has made a way for us to be made clean again – by accepting the gift of His Son Jesus. By accepting Jesus into our hearts, we can have forgiveness for all the wrong things we do and feel.

We’re going to talk more about Joseph and the coat that his father gave him. It was full of many of the colors we talked about here – but his life was not! Yes, different colors represent different things, and as we look at our own lives let’s try to fill it with the actions and attitudes that God wishes us to have. Let’s make our coat the right kind of coat the first time so we won’t have to worry about changing it later!
Our story centers around jealousy between brothers, because Jacob felt especially close to his son Joseph and showed his love to him more than his other sons. Joseph’s brothers undoubtedly thought it wasn’t fair that Joseph got a special robe to wear when they had to wear plain shepherd’s clothes. Have you ever felt jealous of someone else because they got something that you didn’t? I know that this has happened to all of us, either in our own family or with our friends. Let’s look at a few situations to see why people are not always treated the same way. At first glance it may seem “unfair” – but think of a reason that it really isn’t unfair. Think about why they might have been treated differently. Can they be happy even if they aren’t treated the same?

**Procedure:** Pass out worksheet to students. Individually, or as a group, discuss the situations and possible explanations behind them. See if they can add more to the list.

Do we always have to be treated the same way by our parents, our teachers or our friends? Can we be happy anyway? How should we react if we’re hurt, angry or jealous?
When we are baptized, we say that we are part of the Family of God. By being baptized and accepting Jesus as our Savior, we are telling others that we want to commit our lives to God and become part of His family.

**Procedure:** Let students fill in and decorate their copy of the family tree with names of Christians on the leaves; remind them to include their pastor, teachers and other members of the church, as well as their friends and family. Have them put Jesus on the tree trunk. Whether your students have been baptized or not, help them to understand what it means to be a part of God’s family and how we can work together in the name of Jesus to do His will.

Joseph was taken away from his family for many years, but he never forgot them or stopped loving them. Even more important is the fact that God never forgot or stopped loving Joseph. He continually worked through his life to fulfill His plan! More on that in our next lesson!
Sometimes it’s hard to see how our actions affect others around us. We don’t know exactly what went wrong in Joseph’s relationship with his brothers, but we know that by the time of our story, Joseph’s brothers were full of anger, jealousy, and hatred toward their younger brother. I wonder what could have happened if the brothers treated each other differently. Let’s look at some of the story points again and act out the situation with an attitude twist.

Procedure: Have students look up one or more of the following verses and have them pick (or assign them) a scene to act out. First, have them act it out as it is in the Bible; then have them look at some way the characters could have behaved differently to get along with each other. (Be ready to join in with your students in acting out the story – it will ease shyness among your more sensitive students and will help build relationships with all of them – have fun with it, while pointing out the seriousness of the lesson.)

Genesis 37:3-4 (Joseph’s robe) 37:23-24 (thrown in well)
37:5-8 (1st dream) 37:26-28 (sell to merchants)
37:18-20 (plot to kill) 37:31-33 (lie to father)

Think of a time when you were hurt by something someone said or did to you – or a time when you might have hurt someone else by something you did. Jesus gave us two commandments or rules to help us live our lives the way God wants us to. Look up Mark 12:30-31. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” What do you think these verses tell us about how we should treat each other? Think of a time in your life that a different choice of action could have changed the situation for the better.
Joseph’s Colorful Robe

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Materials: Pattern for Joseph’s robe from Resource Pages copied onto heavy cardstock or construction paper (two for each student), wax paper, old crayons, plastic knives, iron, towel, hole punch, yarn, glue

Quest Connection

It’s fun to get presents on our birthdays? But, how would you feel if you received a treat or gift for no specific reason at all – but just because you are loved? I know that would make me feel extra special! Genesis 37: 3 says that Jacob (also called 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. During the time of this story, shepherds like Joseph’s family would have worn plain, ordinary clothing without much decoration. We don’t know exactly what Joseph’s robe (or we call a coat) would have looked like, but he must have felt extra-special when he wore it. We’re going to make a multi-colored robe to remind us of Joseph and the way he trusted in God.

Procedure: Have students cut out two coat patterns with the centers cut out also. Give each student two pieces of wax paper just a little bigger than the center of the coat. (It can be trimmed later, so it doesn’t have to be exact.) Instruct students to use the plastic knives to scrape crayon shavings onto one piece of wax paper – the more variety you use, the more colorful this coat will be! After they have enough crayon shavings, set second piece of wax paper over first and slide iron over project very quickly (don’t hold too long or crayon will turn into one big blob!) Adults only with the iron, please! Let it cool just a moment and place the wax paper creation between the two coat patterns. Glue together and trim edges as necessary. If desired, punch a hole in the top and string with yarn. Write TRUST GOD along the bottom of the robe to remind us of our lesson.

Close

Hang this in a window to remind you of Joseph and his trust in God, even in times of trouble.
Trust Caravan

BIBLE SEARCH

Materials: Several copies of the camel pattern from Resource Page, Bibles, pens or markers
Optional: one or several concordances

Quest Connection

At the beginning of our story, it seemed as if Joseph had a pretty good life and things were going well for him. His father loved him and gave him a beautiful gift, and then God used dreams to tell him that He had special plans for his life. But wait! Joseph’s story quickly takes a u-turn when his brothers sell him to a passing caravan of Ishmaelite merchants. Try to imagine what might have been going through Joseph’s head as his beautiful robe is ripped off of him, he is thrown in a pit, and then loaded onto a camel and taken far from his beloved father and home. He might have wondered what God had in mind and how He was going to get him through this situation. Acts 7:9-10 says, “Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles.” Joseph remained faithful to God and trusted Him to keep him safe. We’re going to make our own caravan of camels to help us remember to trust in God to bring us along the rough roads of our lives.

Procedure: If your students are not familiar with a concordance, this could be a good activity to introduce them to one. Show them how to look up “trust” in the concordance to get Bible references with the word trust in it. Explain that this list will include all instances of the word trust and you can look up the verses that fit your purpose (we specifically want trust in God). Use verses you find or from the list below to have students look up and record verses about trust on their camels. (Note: All references from NIV Bible)

Psalm 33:21  Psalm 37:3  Psalm 40:3  Psalm 56:3
Psalm 56:4  Psalm 62:8  Proverbs 3:5  Isaiah 12:2
Isaiah 26:4  Nahum 1:7  John 14:1  Romans 15:13

Close

Hang your camels around the classroom to remind you and your students of God’s unfailing faithfulness when we trust in Him!
### Unfair Situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unfair Situation</th>
<th>Possible Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard got a new bike.</td>
<td>*Richard didn’t have a bike before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His brother Mark had to ride an old bike.</td>
<td>*It was Richard’s birthday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin’s class went on a great field trip.</td>
<td>*Tina’s class went to the zoo last week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her best friend Kaly’s class didn’t get to go.</td>
<td>*Tina’s class had a special project to do in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaitlyn got the last piece of chocolate cake.</td>
<td>*Andrew already had his piece of cake earlier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her brother Andrew only got a store cookie.</td>
<td>*Andrew didn’t like chocolate cake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha got to stay up late.</td>
<td>*Shelby was sick and needed more sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelby didn’t.</td>
<td>*Samantha is older and has a later bedtime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina was invited to Dillon’s party.</td>
<td>*Amber was going to be out of town that day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber was not.</td>
<td>*Amber was coming the next day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## IT’S NOT FAIR!

Things aren’t always what they seem. Look at the column labeled “Unfair Situation” and think of some possible reasons that is might not really be unfair. Then add some of your own at the end.

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<td>Christina was invited to Dillon’s party. Amber was not.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GOD’S FAMILY TREE
JOSEPH’S COLORFUL ROBE
Joseph's brothers were jealous of him and the colorful coat that their father gave him. God doesn't like it when we are jealous, because it shows that we are not being thankful for what He has given us. Pray a prayer asking God to help you not to have a jealous attitude.

Then, make a list of 10 things, talents, and/or people God has blessed you with.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

God wants us to be happy with what He gives us and not compare ourselves with others.

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (1 Chronicles 16:34).
God kept His promise to Joseph – not because of anything Joseph did, but because of how much God loved him.

God loves you and will keep His promises to you, too.

Write a prayer thanking God for loving you.

Father,

Write your prayer here.

In Jesus’ name.
Amen.

“The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made”
(Psalm 145:13).