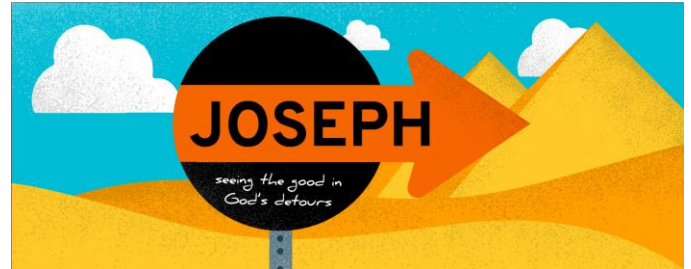




VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Joseph: Seeing the Good in God's Detours



Part 1: The Most Interesting Man in the World
Tim Badal | October 2, 2016 | Genesis 37:1–11

Today we're going to be in the book of Genesis as we begin a new series titled "Joseph: Seeing the Good in God's Detours." For the next three months we'll be studying the life and times of a familiar Bible character. Perhaps you know about Joseph from the musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber, "The Technicolor Dreamcoat," and many of us are aware of the story that comes from the pages of Scripture.

Today we'll learn some introductory things about the life and times of Joseph from the first 11 verses in Genesis 37. Let's start with the first two verses:

Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives.

I know I'm pushing the envelope by using a beer advertisement as an introduction and as a sermon title, but I believe it strikes at the core of Joseph's life. Dos Equis beer should win an award for marketing based on their commercials that talk about the most interesting man in the world. They use a dignified, bearded older man as their character to make you believe that drinking their product will make you like this man. The thing that makes the commercials hilarious is their claims about what the Dos Equis man has been able to do. For example, when a tree falls in the forest and no one is around, he hears it. His signature won a Pulitzer prize. He can kill two stones with one bird. He once won a staring contest with his own reflection. When he attends the opera, it's not over until he says it is. And because of these things, he's the most interesting man in the world.

It goes on. He's won the lifetime achievement award twice. He has taught old dogs a variety of new tricks. He tells his milk when and if to expire. If he were to mail a letter without postage, it would still get there. He never wears a watch because time is always on his side. He's the cure for the common cold. He once started a fire using dental floss and water. He fought the law and won. I like this one — Google uses him as a search engine. And roses stop to smell him. He's the most interesting man in the world.

You see, we use these types of marketing devices because there's something about being a person of great interest, a person who does what mere mortals cannot do. However, we are not studying a fictitious character like the Dos Equis man. Rather, the man we will be reading about is a real flesh-and-blood man who walked this earth and was just like you and me. Yet Joseph is going to show us why he is one of the most interesting men in all of human history.

The very things I seem to struggle with on a daily basis were tests Joseph passed with flying colors. As the prized son of his father, he would go from a place of great privilege to a pit. Then from the pit he would be taken into slavery in Egypt, to the house of a man named Potiphar. He would "climb the corporate ladder," successful in all he did—until his master's wife would try to seduce him. Being the godly man he was, he would turn away from her. When she tried to grab him, he fled from immorality.

But that good choice only gained him a place in another pit, a prison dungeon. There his good actions brought him favor with the warden, who put him in charge of all the other prisoners. That's unheard of: a prisoner watching prisoners. But we're not dealing with an ordinary man—we're dealing with one of the most interesting men in the world. In prison he came into contact with two

of the king's most important men: his baker and his cupbearer. When these men both had dreams, Joseph consoled their despair by interpreting those dreams through the help of God. And what Joseph foretold actually took place. Then one of the men had Pharaoh's ear and Joseph made a request: "Remember me when you are back with Pharaoh and tell him about my unlawful imprisonment. Let him know I can be a valuable, law-abiding Egyptian." However, the man forgot Joseph's request. Joseph ended up spending 13 long years in a pit. But then Pharaoh had a set of dreams, and Joseph was brought into his court to interpret the dreams. This led to his appointment as prime minister over all Egypt.

Joseph did all things well. Was he God? No. Was he our savior? No. But he's a model of what an ordinary person can do in the hands of an extraordinary God. You see, the things Joseph did are things you and I can also do. If we are properly faithful and obedient to God, He can position each of us to do great things for Him and for His Kingdom. They may be behind the scenes, or in our workplace, or before the President of the United States. Joseph teaches us that whether we're in a pit or a palace, when we obey God, we will be reminded that He is with us, that He will watch over and protect us, and that He will provide what we need.

That's why Joseph is the most interesting man in the world. But how did he come to be a man with such amazing character and courage, a man who was successful in all he did and for whom everything he touched prospered? He must have come from an amazing family. His lineage must have been filled with Hall of Famers. At 17 years of age, this amazing young man showed intelligence and a love for the things of God that would blow away people three times his age.

But here's the amazing thing. The family he comes from was not brilliant or deeply faithful. Today we're going to learn that the most interesting man in the world came from one of the most messed-up families in all of history. This should be an encouragement to you. Maybe you too come from a dysfunctional family.

I remember when Amanda first met my family. I thought they were normal. We all think that, right? I remember Amanda saying, "The next time I visit your family I need to bring earplugs. You guys are crazy loud, like number ten on the stereo all the time. I've got a headache thinking of all you've talked about—and you talk a lot. You talk over each other. Can you even hear what each other is saying?" I said, "Hey, hey, hey." But here's the crazy thing: she's joined our family anyway. And she's gotten loud too. That may be because we've got three stubborn children. I don't know...

But we all have dysfunction. I could spend hours on Amanda's family. I mean.... No, we all have dysfunction in our families. Maybe we had a messed-up mom or dad. Maybe we didn't have a mom or dad living with us. Maybe there's divorce in our life. Maybe there were some terrible, horrific decisions made—either by us or by someone else. Maybe there's a family dynamic that makes the Thanksgiving dinner table a battle royale. This should be a great reminder that God works miracles amidst broken families. He can do extraordinary things through messed-up people like us.

As we begin our study of Joseph's story in Genesis 37, we're told he's 17 years old. Other than an earlier mention of Jacob's wife Rachel giving birth to him, this is the first the Bible speaks of him. So we might wonder what has taken place in those first 17 years. What made Joseph the man he became?

I'm here to tell you that by the time I was 17, I had experienced most of the foundational things in my life, things that set the direction for my life. As I've told you often, I was 14 when my most life-changing event took place: the death of my brother. It changed my personality, it changed my outlook on things, and in some ways I believe it changed my calling. Before his death I lived in the shadow of an amazing older brother. I was a freshman and he was a senior in a small school. He was well-known, and at the point of his death in September he was in the running for homecoming king. I was an overweight, not very funny, not very good looking 14-year-old who lived in the shadow of a good-looking, popular, did-everything-great older brother.

But here's the problem. When someone dies, they go from being a mortal to an immortal. All the bad stories or bad grades or mess-ups my brother had as a mortal were forgotten. Only the good stuff was remembered. So that event revolutionized who I was and changed the kind of man I would grow up to be. You see, teenagers have huge things in their lives that impact the way they look at life, and we're going to look at some things in Joseph's younger years that had a massive impact on his life as an adult. For all of us, the first 17 years usually define the trajectory of the rest of our lives.

Yet let me remind you of this: if we consider the six major chapter breaks in Scripture regarding Joseph's life story, all of them are bad. So maybe you experienced a terrible childhood, and you've concluded that God has no purpose or plan for you. Joseph reminds us that no matter how bad your childhood was, God can use it for good. Just as He did in my life, He can take the most heinous and ugly aspects of your life and use them for great good.

I may be wrong in this—and I will be made right when I stand in glory—but I believe I would not be standing here today doing the things I'm doing with the skills and gifts God has given me if I was still a middle son in the shadow of Chris Badal. God had to take my older brother—something that would grieve our family for years. Even to this day we're heartbroken at the loss of our dear brother and son. But I rejoice because what can be deemed as bad for man, God can use for good.

So Joseph is a great reminder of how a bad story can turn out well. And no matter your age, no matter where you find yourself, have hope because God has a good plan for you. When Paul writes in Romans 8:28, "*All things work together for good...*," it's as if he was thinking about Joseph's life in Genesis.

1. As we explore the early life of Joseph, we see one messed-up family.

So with the limited time I have, let's look at this messed-up family.

His messy upbringing begins with a chaotic past.

Like so many dysfunctional and broken families, it doesn't begin in the here and now, but started somewhere way back in the past. Joseph's dysfunctional family began with the dysfunctional family of his grandpa Isaac, his grandma Rebekah, his uncle Esau and his dad Jacob.

In Genesis 25 we learn that Jacob is quite the enigma. He is one whom God would use in great ways and would become a patriarch of the faith, but we see that at times he miserably failed God and the people around him. The story of Jacob in Genesis 25 is chaotic through and through.

Beginning in Genesis 25:19 we read:

These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to be his wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean. And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her.

Think about that. Isaac is watching the belly of Rebekah, and wrestle mania is happening there. Some of you ladies have had pregnancies like that. It was so bad that when Moses wrote the book of Genesis, he tells us that there was a battle royale going on in Rebekah's womb.

And she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak.

He was like an alien; like a messed-up little Sasquatch. So what do you name Sasquatch? You name him Esau, the hairy red one. I hope my mom didn't describe my birth like that.

Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.

Here's the important part:

Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Oh boy. We've got a problem.

Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright."

As the firstborn, all of their dad's possessions were reserved for Esau. Inheritances weren't given equally to all the children in Old Testament times. They were given to the firstborn, and the firstborn could do with them as he chose. In essence, the firstborn becomes Dad when Dad dies. Jacob says, "I want that for myself." So he takes this opportunity. "Sell me your birthright right now."

Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Later in chapter 26 we'll see that Esau becomes so angry about that incident in his life that he seeks to hunt down his brother—a brother who wants to kill his brother. It was a messed up family. The parents could have fixed it, but they played favorites instead.

His messy upbringing begins with a crooked deal.

Jacob's mother tells him to run away because he has angered his brother, and because he also deceived his father. Jacob pretends to be Esau by covering himself with hairy animal skins and tricks blind Isaac into giving him the birthright and the spiritual blessing. Esau is so angry he tries to hunt him down.

Isaac then tells Jacob to go to his uncle Laban, his mother's brother. That story begins in Genesis 28. When he arrives at Laban's home, he finds one of his cousins, Rachel, to be very beautiful and falls in love with her. He agrees to work seven years for Laban if Rachel could be his bride. You can read about this in Genesis 29:20–30. On the day of the marriage, he's all excited, because he's about to get Rachel, the love of his life.

The marriage ceremony is completed, but there was some sort of veil that kept Jacob from seeing who the bride was. They go to the marriage bed after the wedding reception, they do what newly married couples do, and then the next morning Jacob wakes up and next to him in bed is the older, not as attractive sister, Leah. Oh boy. Houston, we have a problem. I don't quite understand this. This will be an "Ask Jesus" question when we get to heaven: how does he not know it wasn't Rachel? But he doesn't.

Jacob is indignant. "I worked seven years for Rachel, and you give me Leah." Laban says, "Hey, buddy. You always give away the oldest first. She's always the one who is married first. You can't marry the younger first, but the older." The deceiver, Jacob, is the deceived. Jacob's chickens came home to roost.

So Jacob doubles down. "Listen, I'll work another seven years. You give me Rachel." So now he has two wives who are sisters. Do you think that's a good idea? No, he blows it instead of thinking, "It is what it is. My great, great, great, great grandfather Adam was told by God to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh, not two or three or four flesh, one flesh, in a monogamous marriage." He makes the decision to have two wives. Well, who had two wives before? His grandfather did and it didn't work well for him either.

His messy upbringing begins with competing marriages.

So we see that this crooked deal turns to competing marriages. This story is found in Genesis 29:31–35 and 30:1–22. Jacob has created a massive issue for himself. He has two wives, Leah and Rachel. Back then, a woman was a great wife if she could produce children for her husband. Leah starts having children, but Rachel doesn't. She says to her sister, "Every time I give birth to another boy, my husband will love me." She already knows that the favorite wife is Rachel, but because she has become connected to Jacob through their children, she believes he will love her more.

Rachel knows because she is barren, she has less connection with her husband. So she does what Sarah did: she brings her maidservant Bilhah into the mix. She says to Jacob, "I know I can't give you children, but you take my maidservant, and she will give you children 'from me.'" Jacob says, "No, no, no... Well, I guess I can." He does the unthinkable—and now he has three women in the mix. Bilhah starts giving children to Jacob.

Then Leah becomes barren, so she says, "I'll do what Rachel did. Here's Zilpah. She's my maidservant. She'll give you children. They'll be my children by default, so we can still be one happy family." Jacob says, "No, no, really, I can't... Well... Okay, I guess I will." Now we've got four women, all competing for the affection and attention of one man.

Let me make this abundantly clear: while God gave allowance to the men who took on more than one wife and did not strike them dead, He has always said anything besides one man and one woman is sin. The Bible never paints a picture of functionality or of good when there has been more than one wife in the story. It creates all kinds of turmoil.

So now we have this family who has produced 12 sons and one daughter. I want you to think of Jacob's family portrait. It took forever to get them all together. Here's what we've got. Right in the middle is Jacob and Rachel with their newborn son Joseph (Benjamin would come later). Then there's Leah in the blue with her clan, and the two concubines Bilhah and Zilpah with their two sons each. Can you imagine what the holiday dinner party looked like with that crowd? "Well, dear, the turkey sure is nice. Oh, Leah, your green bean casserole was delectable. Oh, Zilpah, that stuffing was out of sight. Oh yeah, and Bilhah, you make the best pumpkin pie."

Think of the dynamics of the children. "Dad's not spending as much time with me. It must be because he hates my mom, but he loves that Rachel, doesn't he?" What a messed-up family—all because of one foolish decision.

His messy upbringing begins with criminal behavior.

The story now moves on to criminal behavior in Genesis 34. Here we read about Jacob's only daughter, Dinah—the daughter of Leah. With 12 brothers, do you think she was protected? You better believe it. We're told that Dinah is living with her father, near the town of Shechem in an area filled with Canaanites—people who did not follow the ways and decrees of God. Jacob is there because he's running away from his brother Esau, and at this point he's also running away from his Uncle Laban.

Dinah is out doing her daily tasks, and one of the town's young men, also named Shechem, saw Dinah and raped her. Then in some weird emotion, he falls in love with her. He tells his father, "I want this foreigner's daughter, Dinah. I've slept with her, and now I want to make her my wife." The father knows this might bring trouble, but he goes to Jacob and asks if they can make a bad situation right. Jacob seems to turn a blind eye to it. He seems unaffected by the fact that his daughter has been assaulted. But he sends his boys, who are indignant—especially Dinah's full brothers from Leah's clan—who tell Shechem and his father, "If this marriage is to take place, then Shechem has to follow our God and all of His commands. One of the things we do is we circumcise all men, so that's what needs to happen."

So they agree that all the men in the town should be circumcised, so their families could intermarry. How would you like to have been the man who had to announce that to everybody? On the third day, when the Bible tells us the pain was at its worst, Leah's sons go into the city and kill every adult male in the town. We don't know how many, but we have to assume the number had to be at least a hundred—and they kill every one of them. We're told they take all the children and women for themselves and plunder the city, taking all the goods and livestock. They are part of one of the most heinous crimes in all of Scripture—this is Joseph's brothers.

His messy upbringing begins with creepy passions.

Right when you think things couldn't get any worse, they do. We've got criminal behavior by his brothers, and now we have creepy passion. In Genesis 35:22, we are told of some real weird stuff. Reuben, the oldest son of Jacob, the eldest brother of Joseph, decides that he wants to sleep with one of his father's concubines, Bilhah. Now, most scholars believe the reason he does this is to stake his claim to all of his father's inheritance. Let me just say, I don't care what his reason is—it's sick.

So what does he do? He does that which is totally abnormal. He sleeps with a woman who is sleeping with his father. And because of that, Reuben loses his firstborn privileges. It's handed to someone else. All of the benefits and blessings to which he was entitled are taken away from him because of this ghastly sin.

His messy upbringing begins with a costly and colorful gift.

This brings us to Genesis 37:3–4. We now see who gets the blessing that Reuben lost. It's Joseph.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

Many believe this was not so much a tattletale as it was the report that Jacob's name was being defiled by the brothers. Perhaps he told his father, "Your sons are doing what they did in Shechem again. They're bringing reproach to your name, and I wanted to make you aware of that—not because I think I'm better or more obedient, but because I don't want to see your name defiled."

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age." This young boy was brought to Jacob when he was old, and Jacob had fallen in love with Joseph. *"And he made him a robe of many colors."* Favoritism hits a second generation, and it's shown in a costly and colorful gift. But this coat of many colors angered his brothers. Why? I'm sure Jacob had bought gifts for each of his sons. What made this gift so profound? In essence, it wasn't just the colors of the jacket, but translators believe it was the size of the coat. It was a flowing coat with long sleeves and a flowing hemline that dragged to the ground. It was a jacket that said, "This man is not a worker, but a boss. This guy doesn't get dirty. He directs attention." So the brothers become angry. Here's one of the youngest siblings commanding the attention of the oldest. He is the one who is loved in a special way by a father who makes no attempt to hide it.

This then is the short history of the household into which Joseph was born. I want you to imagine for a moment that Joseph is joining your small group. "Hi, my name is Joseph. I'm new to Village Bible Church. I come from a large family where my uncle hunted down my father, trying to kill him. Then I have a great uncle who fooled my dad into marrying the wrong woman. To fix that, my dad married not only his first wife, but then he married my mom too. When these sister-wives weren't producing enough children, my mom and my aunt gave my dad two concubines for Christmas.

“Because of that, I have 11 brothers and one sister. Well sadly, my sister was raped and was called to marry her attacker because of a *laissez faire* father. So my brothers, wanting to right the wrong, went and killed off all the men in an entire city—and then stole all their women and children, plus all their goods. It was around my 15th birthday that my older brother wanted to sleep with my father’s concubine. Because of that, my brothers Dan and Naphtali—they don’t like Reuben all that much.

“Then my brother Benjamin was born, and that’s when my mom died. My dad thinks I’m the greatest kid to have ever walked the earth, and that makes everyone hate my guts. But I’m just glad to be part of a Village Bible Church small group.”

Wow! I’m so glad that the Bible doesn’t sanitize any of this, because it reminds me how absolutely sinful sin can be, and how broken and messed up people can be.

So what do we need to learn from this? I want to give you a couple applications. First of all, as we look at the life of Jacob, we see that a man who has great experiences with God can still sin greatly against Him. So maybe you’ve experienced great things from God. Maybe God has used you in amazing ways. Well, don’t think you’re immune to massive sin in your life. David is a reminder of this. Samson is a reminder of this. The Apostle Peter is a great reminder of this. Great men and women of faith can do great sin before a holy God. So be careful. Walk with your God closely. Don’t ever give up on your faith. Don’t ever take a vacation from maintaining your spiritual health.

Here’s a second lesson from a messed up family: great family thorn bushes can bring about great roses. Maybe you come from a horrific family. Don’t let your family define you. Let your faith in God do that. And blossom. Be the man or woman God has called you to be, just as Joseph did.

Third, favoritism in the family is alive and well today, even as it was in Jacob’s day. Parents, be very careful. Love your children. It can be hard. Some children are easier to love than others. I did not make it easy for my parents at times to love me. But I never believed they loved me any less than my brothers. We’ve got to be careful of that.

Finally, our decisions are real decisions, and they carry long-term ramifications. Jacob made decisions in his youth that would follow him all his life and would bleed into the families of his sons. So make wise decisions.

2. A messed-up family produced a man of faith.

Because of God’s grace, a messed-up family produced a man of faith. We dig into the life of Joseph because we want to see how some invaluable lessons impacted the life of this man of faith. But the story of Joseph is much more than a great story that teaches us some moral lessons. Let me go quickly through a couple of these lessons.

In Joseph we see a preview of Christ.

While I’m not one to dig deeply into what scholars call “typology”—that is, the idea that things in the Christian life are prefigured or symbolized in the Old Testament, especially when it comes to Jesus—but in the life of Joseph you can’t ignore them. There are so many similarities between Joseph’s life and the life and times of Jesus that they have to be some sort of preview.

Let me give you some of these. Joseph and Jesus both had a close and intimate relationship with their father. Joseph and Jesus were both sent by their father to serve their brothers, only to be betrayed, beaten, abused and sold for profit by those who were closest to them. Joseph and Jesus would go from a privileged position to the place of a servant. Later on, like Joseph, Jesus would encounter two criminals—both of whom were guilty, while He Himself was innocent. In both stories we learn that one criminal would be condemned and one would be saved. The baker loses his life; the cupbearer is saved. Jesus has criminals on His left and right, one of whom jeers and abuses Him with his words, and the other who says, “Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.”

Over and over again, Joseph was a man stricken and abused by others for crimes he did not commit. But probably the most striking parallel is that the very men who sought to kill Joseph and Jesus were the ones who were in a position to be saved when Joseph and Jesus came into a position of regal authority.

A.W. Pink, the great Bible preacher, says there are more than 101 parallels between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus. I don’t know if that’s true, but I can tell you there are a lot. Joseph’s story is a reminder and a preview of what God was going to give His people in His perfect Son Who would take away the sins of the world.

In Joseph we see a portrait of the Christian life.

We are going to see over and over again that Joseph will live in the valley of defeat and agony, and then on the mountaintop with great thrills and victories. The Christian life is between those valleys and peaks. Joseph shows us that when we find ourselves on the mountaintop, we are to worship and thank God, remaining faithful to Him. But when we find ourselves in the valley of the shadow of death, our response should be no different. We are to faithfully obey, diligently staying true to God, His will and His Word. As Peter says in 1 Peter 4:12, we don't need to wonder at or be surprised when strange things happen to us, as if God has left His throne. Rather, we are to trust and obey Him, doing His will.

We see the plan of God and our response to it.

Finally, we see the plan of God and how we are to respond. In Genesis 37:5–11 we read:

Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

You might say, "What a foolish thing to do, to tell someone your dream." We've all done it before, right? We have some crazy, weird dream and we tell someone about it. The lesson here is don't eat pizza before you go to bed.

Seriously, Joseph tells his family his two dreams, and we need to recognize why he does this. You see, earlier in the family tree, Jacob tells his children about one of his dreams. It was a dream where there was a stairway from heaven. Led Zeppelin didn't come up with this—Jacob did. Jacob tells the story to his children, knowing that that dream came from God. In those days, God spoke to His people through dreams.

So now Joseph comes to his family and says, "I had this dream," and his brothers would have known, "Oh, boy. God spoke to our father through dreams. Now He's speaking through Joseph in dreams." I want to make this very clear. The brothers of Joseph knew exactly what those dreams meant. They knew God had a spotlight on the brother they hated. They knew He was speaking and that God was saying to Joseph at the beginning of his life, "I've got a plan for you." And the brothers hated the plan.

Here's our response to this. Joseph reminds us that we must respond properly to God when He speaks in our lives. We have three possible responses.

Will you turn against it?

Number one, we can turn against God's plan, like the brothers did. "I don't want anything to do with this, and I'm going to fight it." Next week we'll learn what happens as a result of their attitude. But they want nothing to do with God's plan.

Some of you here may be saying, "I don't like the plans God has for me, and I'm going to go my own way, do it my style, put my plan on my schedule. I'm not going to do it the way God wants it done." And you will end up like Joseph's brothers, filled with a life of sin.

Will you simply think about it?

Second, you could be like Jacob. You can hear the plan of God and think about it. It stuck in Jacob's head. Some of you may like thinking about religious things, about the Bible. Oh, it doesn't change your life. It doesn't cause you to run from your sin. You may feel good after leaving today. "Boy, Tim sure did a nice job. The worship team sang good songs. I enjoyed the coffee." But it never leaves your head and moves to your heart.

Will you trust it as right and good?

The story of Joseph says when God puts plans before us—and He's put a plan before each one of us—we can turn against it and fight it. We can think about it, letting it stay in our heads but never touching our hearts. Or we, as Joseph did, can trust it as right and good. Joseph said, "God, if I'm in the palace, I'm going to obey You. If I'm in the pit, I'm going to obey You. If I'm being seduced by my master's wife, I'm going to obey You. When I'm unlawfully imprisoned for a crime I didn't commit, I'm going to obey You.

When my brothers come into Egypt and I'm the prime minister of Egypt, I'm going to obey You. I'm going to obey. I'm going to obey. I'm going to obey."

The story of 17-year-old Joseph reminds me of a song I grew up with:

Trust and obey
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus
But to trust and obey

Will you do that today? Will you do that this week? No matter what came Joseph's way, he never complained, and he never compromised his faith, because he knew God was in control. Do you know that? Will you live according to that? Or will you be like his brothers, or like his father, and miss the blessing of God working His plan out in your life?

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.net).