

STOP GENERATIONAL SINNING!

Genesis 37: 1-4 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

This morning, let's begin Joseph's amazing story in earnest. We learned in our first message who Joseph's daddy was—Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. Joseph's story is the longest story of one person in the book of Genesis. Joseph's story equals Abraham's story in chapter length, 14 chapters, but the story itself is 25% longer. God doesn't want any of us to miss the message of Joseph's life. The life of Joseph seems to be the greatest and clearest picture or type of Jesus Christ in the whole Old Testament. The parallels Joseph's life to Jesus are many, but Arthur Pink, a Bible teacher claimed there are 101 parallels in their lives. Both were chosen and beloved by their father, both sold or betrayed for 20/30 silver pieces.

Joseph's experience seems to be one of the most powerful illustrations of Romans 8:28 in all of scripture. His life portrays God's providence in working all things together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Every detail of Joseph's life, worked in the end for good, from Joseph's coat of many colors in Genesis 37: 3 leading to the jealousy of his brothers selling him in to slavery to the passing slave traders, Ishmaelites and Midianites, for 20 pieces of silver from his brothers, then Joseph being sold in Egypt to Potiphar, the captain of the guard in Egypt, then being betrayed by Potiphar's wife, accusing him of a sin he was innocent of, later sharing confinement in a prison cell, together with Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker, and the cupbearer being the means God used to bring Joseph an audience with Pharaoh—and it all worked together for good. Joseph would one day tell his brothers, regarding their selling him into slavery, in Genesis 50: 20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about, that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

Joseph's life shows us a great illustration of faithfulness to God, no matter what happens to us. Joseph's story tells us about tension in his home. It was a dysfunctional home. Our world today has fewer and fewer traditional families with one father and one mother staying married together. Tensions happen however in traditional homes too. Joseph's story was beyond words. Joseph had three step-mothers, ten step-brothers, (six step brothers by his step-mother, Leah, --Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun) (two-step brothers by his mother Rachel's maid, Bilhah—Dan and Naphtali) (two step brothers by his step-mother Leah's main, Zilpah—Gad and Asher) and one step-sister by his step-mother, Leah—Dinah.) They all lived at home in their tents at the same time. Joseph's daddy, Jacob, though a godly man in many ways, embraced the polygamy common in that day, which opened the door to jealousy, insecurity, and every conceivable conflict between his wives, Joseph's mother and his three step-mothers. As Joseph's story

unfolds, his step-brothers took turns being brutal, wicked, murderers, lying and conniving as Jacob their father had been, while they grew up. Some of Joseph's brothers were openly immoral. Growing up in Jacob's tents was not a walk in the park. With all the blatant sins, the deceptions, the emotional manipulation, and being hated by his step-brothers, Joseph learned how, by God's grace, to rise above the generational sins of his father, mother, step-mothers, step-brothers, step-sister and brother, Benjamin. Joseph didn't succumb to living the life of a victim. He rose above the generational sins of his family and he lived the life of a victor for God. Born in 1746 BC, this magnificent story begins in 1729.

I rise to salute Joseph's ability by God's grace to come out victoriously from his dysfunctional sinful generational past—worse than plumbing problems. I see hurdles he jumped over that often bog each of us down in sin and shame. I see Joseph showing us that it is possible, no matter what kind of families we come from, to love those who hate us, to respect those who mistreat us, to pray for those we are separated from by many miles, and to never quit loving the precious parents we have, flawed as their lives may be. Joseph never chose to speak ill of his parents but he did speak evil of his step-brothers. When he first spoke to his 11 brothers in Egypt, 22 years later, in 1707 BC, at 39 years old, Joseph's first words to the 11 were, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" How Joseph loved his family! High hurdles in dysfunctional homes often remain as generational sins and become road-blocks to living for the Lord. Joseph's story shows us an illustration of Psalm 18: 29 which declares, "And by my God, I can leap over a wall." Have your high family hurdles become divisive road blocks, or are you willing to stop generational sins in your life, and by your God, have you been leaping over the high walls? What are these family hurdles?

IS DECEPTION & MANIPULATION IN OUR FAMILY BLOCKING UNITY IN THE FAMILY, OR ARE WE LEAPING OVER THAT WALL?

(I.) Notice, Genesis 37: 1 – The year it appears was 1729. We read, "Jacob lived in the land of his father's (Isaac) sojournings, in the land of Canaan." Nevertheless, Jacob, Joseph's father, had lived in Padanaram—modern day Syria for twenty years in the homeland of Laban. Joseph's father, Jacob, had two wives and two handmaids or concubines. He had children from each one of them—Leah, Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah. When Joseph was still a very young boy, around age 7, he was uprooted from his home hundreds of miles north in Haran, in present-day Syria. His father Jacob and his mother Rachel's brother, Laban—Jacob's father-in-law, could not get along together. Jacob arrived in Padanaram, as a cheater, and he met the cheater of all cheaters, Laban. Finally, Jacob and his wives secretly planned to leave Haran and return to Jacob's family in Palestine—in Canaan. If you read the story, it was a sneaking off in the night event. Jacob literally fled from Laban. We

read in Genesis 31: 20, “And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee. He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.” Laban overtook Jacob. We read that Laban said to Jacob, in Joseph’s presence as Joseph was just 7 years old, like a second grader. Genesis 31: 27-28 is Laban’s accosting Jacob. He said, “What have you done, that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you flee secretly and trick me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre? And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly. It is in my power to do you wrong.” Joseph saw this interplay with his Dad and his father-in-law cheating and tricking each other. It was a very unhappy, bitter, biting, stinging, acrimonious parting with Laban, Joseph’s grandfather on his Mom’s side.

How did Joseph leap over this cheating wall and not live to be a generational cheater, cliquish, a deceiver, and a manipulator himself, like his own mother Rachel, who stole Laban’s gods when Jacob’s family fled from Laban? We aren’t told completely how Joseph leapt over this manipulating wall. But this we know. Gen. 32 reports how Jacob parted finally with Laban, Joseph’s grandpa and the angels of God met him. Joseph may have heard his Dad say, in Genesis 32: 2 – “This is God’s camp!” As a seven-year old, that would have impressed me. Joseph knew God was with his Daddy’s, by his side. Then, Joseph saw his Dad hastily divide his family and flocks into two camps and sent them on ahead of him as he prepared to meet Esau, his estranged brother. Joseph must have known that story too—from his father. It must have been a scary –even frightening time for Joseph, who was only a young boy. His Dad was staying behind all alone at the Jabbok River to pray and get himself ready to face the sins of his past. Reports came that long-angry Esau, his father’s brother, was on his way, coming with 400 soldiers.

So how did Joseph turn aside from the family sin of cheating, whispering, stealing, deceiving, and manipulating? Joseph and both camps of his families saw their husband and Daddy the next morning. He looked different. Joseph saw his father limping into the camp to lead his family to meet Esau. Imagine his words, “Dad, what happened across the Jabbok? Why are you limping, Dad?” he must have asked. And Jacob must have told his family in both camps how he had prayed and wrestled with God in prayer for deliverance from Esau. Then his father told them that he mysteriously wrestled with the Angel of the Lord all night. He must have told them how when he finally submitted to God and told God his name was Cheater, God blessed him with a new name—Israel, naming him “A Prince with God who wrestled with God and won. Jacob told how the Lord Himself touched him in his hip socket to never let him forget that moment. This was a breaking of

the generational sin handed down to Jacob from Abraham, Joseph's great grandpa and Isaac, his grandpa, and his Dad told him he was a changed man. This change didn't change Jacob's sons, but the wrestling that changed Jacob, seems to have also changed Joseph, his seven-year old son. Both his Daddy and Joseph were changed for the remainder of their lives. Joseph must have been old enough to understand the lesson fleshed out in his own father's experience—He learned that God is real—that He promises us His protection, and that He wants honesty from us—and that He intends to break the chains of deceiving, whispering, cheating, manipulating, and every other form of treachery! Joseph saw that God not only blessed his Daddy, but that God gave his Daddy a memory of his brokenness, his sobbing and repenting to God as he wrestled. Joseph could remember that his daddy had said that he told God he was unworthy of the least of God's steadfast love. Every time Joseph saw his Daddy limp, he knew he wanted an encounter with God—to see Him face to face and live. Imagine the imprint this made on this young boy--Joseph! I ask you, have you and I been with Jesus, surrendered our generational sin of whispering behind other's backs, treacherously cheating, forming clicques, and manipulating? Has God touched us and helped us leap over this treacherous wall that is a road block to many believers?

IS SPEAKING EVIL OF OUR SIBLINGS SEPARATING US FROM OUR SIBLINGS OR ARE WE LEAPING OVER THAT WALL TOO? (II.) Notice

Genesis 37: 2. “Joseph, being seventeen years old, (10 years have past) –he 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.” Joseph grew up a typical teen. He knew how to stretch the truth like all of us do too. He knew how to put a spin on a tale to get his brothers in trouble. Our text says Joseph was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, which lets us know who these boys were: Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher. Those five boys must have had unkind words to each other at times, and Joseph let Jacob his father know it.

The Hebrew word for bad or evil is **ra**. It means evil, wicked, mischievous, or troubling words. The Hebrew word for report is **dibbah**. This word means to give an evil report, to slander, to speak or spin a story about others to entrap them or to make them look bad. Usually when we speak evil of others, like this teenager Joseph did, we perceive that we have a germ of truth, whether real or just perceived. Yet, by the time we are done fabricating our story, no matter how well-meaning we may feel we are in justifying ourselves, the truth we claim to tell is most often something concocted, something we've heard in part, second hand, or we've based our information on inferences or we are harbouring a resentment or an unforgiven fault that we are holding against others, or our report may be borne only by our deep desire to make someone we have issues with, look bad, as we tell

our story. Often by the time we cook up our evil report in the crock-pot of our conniving strategy—the truth we claim to be telling, is no longer truth at all, but a lie that we use to justify our dislike of others—be it our brothers or sisters in our family or in the family of God. Joseph is truly a wonderful type of Christ, but never forget, he was a sinner too, just like you and me, and part of the hatred his brothers had for him, was no doubt borne out of Joseph’s tattling habit, telling a bad report about his brothers to their Dad. Parents, don’t feed tattling in your home by giving it utmost attention. Do some research yourself. You may teach your children to learn to give evil reports, and to learn to love to entrap their siblings whom God wants them to love & treat better than themselves—Philippians 2: 1-5.

Joseph learned from his dad not to cheat. How did he learn to break the chain of evil speaking against his siblings, his brothers? Genesis 35 may be a clue to tell us about when Joseph was 14 years old. His father Jacob took his whole family to Bethel, where he showed them all the very spot where he had his first personal encounter to God, many years before Joseph was born. Running for his life, Jacob had laid down near the town of Luz and slept on the ground, where he put his head on a stone for a pillow. There he dreamed about a great ladder that came down from heaven and touched the earth, with God at the top looking down at him, speaking with him, and angels ascending and descending on the ladder. Jacob had called the place Bethel, the house of God. Now Jacob took his family and his 14-year old son, Joseph to this altar. Here God appeared to his father Jacob and told him—Genesis 35: 2 to speak to all his household. That included Joseph. Jacob gave them God’s words, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.” So, they did, and out came Rachel’s stolen gods she stole from her father, Laban. That day these gods included rings that were in their ears, and Jacob buried them all under a terebinth tree. And Joseph’s Daddy built another altar he called “El Bethel—The God of the House of God. And there, Joseph’s grandpa Isaac’s wife, Rebekah’s nurse, Deborah, died and she was buried under an oak tree below Bethel. Joseph didn’t change overnight, because at age 17, 3 years later, he was still holding onto his idol of pride, trying to make himself look good by tattling on his brothers. But somewhere, God met with Joseph, maybe after he was sold as a slave and was all alone himself with God. We never ever again hear of Joseph speaking evil of his brothers—no more bad reports. God helped him break the chain. Hallelujah. When Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers, all he needed to do was to tell Pharaoh what his brothers had done and asked for vengeance. They would have died immediately. No, Joseph rather, began to weep when he saw them, until he could not control himself. He then said to them, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive? Come near to me. I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt...It was not you who sent me here, but God.” The chain of bad reports, the evil reports, and the evil accusations were broken.

IS FAMILY FAVORITISM & JEALOUSY DIVIDING US FROM OUR PARENTS & SIBLINGS OR ARE WE LEAPING OVER THAT WALL?

(III.) Notice verses 3-4. Now Israel/Jacob loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age, (and we also know because he was Rachel's only son, until her final pregnancy and dying in bearing her second son, Benjamin, when Joseph was seventeen.) And Jacob made him a robe, tunic, or coat of many colors. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him." There was intense family rivalry and conflict in this home that loved God. Though the family was godly, it was a broken home, a very unhappy family. Money was no longer their problem with Laban cheating Jacob. Jacob was wealthy with large flocks of sheep, goats, cattle, and camels. The problem was disunity, rivalry and jealousy, separation, and the problems in the blended families blew up with the favouritism of Jacob giving that many-colored coat to Joseph. There were reasons for all this.

First, the 10 step-brothers all had different mothers. Joseph and his baby brother Benjamin were born to Jacob's favourite wife, Rachel. There was intense sibling rivalry – just as there was intense rivalry between the women in the household. It's not surprising. Polygamy (one man having more than one wife) leads to all kinds of insecurities, marital unfaithfulness, fear, anger, and bitterness. Blended families are common today and are difficult. I pray for you who are living in blended families with more than one father or mother or both—that God will help you break the chains of favouritism and jealousy. I spoke to a man this past week, who has been divorced twice. He did everything he could to break the chains—and now it's up to God. He confessed his sin to his grown step-children of showing his preference for his children when he married their mother. His wife wants to return to him. He wants to remarry her, but his grown children say to their mother, "It's us or him. If you go back to him, you don't love us." Oh, the pain, perceived, or real of favouritism! Did Joseph break this chain? He did! Was it in prison? We don't know. When Joseph revealed to his brothers who he was in 1706 BC—when he was 40 years of age, he was free of favouritism and jealousy, to whatever extent he once was bound. Yes, we read in Genesis 45: 14-15, that Joseph told them, "Hurry and bring my father down here." Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck." (Is that all? No) "And Joseph kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that, his brothers talked with him." Do you hunger for God to work in your life, in your family, in your extended family, and in our church family? Take a long look. Where are you right now? What generational sins are you passing on to your children? When will you ask God to break those chains? Why not let them go today—let cheating, manipulating, whispering, cliquishness, evil speaking, jealousy, lying, and favouritism go now! With God's help, stop your generational sins today. Amen.