

Biased Love

“He’s jealous of you, Krystal,” Trina said.

“For what?” Krystal practically sobbed. The 30 year old had retreated to a less populated part of the park. She had grown weary of her sister Danielle’s acid tongue and the anger—especially the anger! Krystal reached out repeatedly to her sister in love. Still, when Danielle had an audience, “the comedian” would come out to entertain with jokes that were mostly at Krystal’s expense.

“You certainly fill out those jeans. I mean talk about tight!” Danielle had wisecracked earlier. Then came the laughter.

The Sampson family had gathered for a picnic. Krystal, Danielle, and their brother Grady were the children of their parents, Gerald and Delores. Krystal had the lightest coloring of the children. Her complexion and wavy hair came from her “father’s side of the family and her brains came from her mother’s side.” Although Krystal was the youngest, she was the first in her immediate family to graduate from college.

“I don’t have anything more than anyone else. I’m not rich or anything,” Krystal said to Trina.

“You have your parents’ love,” said Trina.

“So does Danielle,” countered Krystal.

“Yes, but they understand what your sister has done to you,” her friend said gently.

Krystal sighed in her heart. She knew it was true. Krystal took Danielle’s abuse because she wanted to make it up to her. She also continued to pray for the Lord to save her hurting, angry sister.

- 1. How do serious problems in families impact society in general?**
- 2. Why is a strong marriage important to a family?**
- 3. Why do members of a family need to respect each other?**

Jacob's Favoritism of Joseph

Genesis 37:2-4, KJV

2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

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.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

Genesis 37:2-4, NIV

²This is the account of Jacob's family line.

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.

³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. ⁴When 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.

The end of Genesis spotlights the life of Joseph and the circumstances that led to the relocation of Jacob's entire family to Egypt. The narrative begins with Joseph as a young man of 17. He and some of his brothers were taking care of his father's flocks. The brothers had done something they shouldn't have while away from home tending the sheep. Joseph saw the wrongdoing and let Jacob know about it. Although the text doesn't tell us so, the brothers undoubtedly had hard feelings toward their younger sibling because of his reporting on them.

Jacob increased the friction by showing his preference for the firstborn of his favorite wife, Rachel. Jacob loved Joseph more because he was born in his father's old age. In fact, Joseph was Jacob's youngest son next to Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother. Jacob showed his favoritism by giving

Joseph a special tunic. The Hebrew word that describes it is obscure. "A coat of many colours" (vs. 3, KJV) may mean that the robe had long sleeves or was richly embroidered. In any case, it distinguished Joseph as the favored son of Jacob and the future ruler over the family.

As Joseph wore the ornate robe, it became a source of constant irritation to his siblings. They were visually reminded that their father loved Joseph best, and their hatred of Joseph prevented them from being able to even speak to him kindly.

4. *What responsibility did Jacob give to Joseph?*

5. *How did Joseph's brothers feel about him?*

Joseph's Two Dreams

Genesis 37:5-11, KJV

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun

Genesis 37:5-11, NIV

⁵Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

⁶He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷We 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."

⁸His 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.

⁹Then 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."

KJV

and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

NIV

¹⁰When 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?" ¹¹His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

In the ancient Middle East, people believed that dreams were a window into knowing the future. This sentiment proved to be true in Joseph's case, for God sent the dreams to show the superior blessings He would give to Joseph. After he had the dreams, he told them to his brothers and in turn their hatred intensified. Some commentators allege that Joseph was gloating over them, or was arrogant or condescending, but the text does not support these views.

In the first dream, Joseph saw himself and his brothers tying up sheaves of grain when suddenly, Joseph's bundle stood up. Then, his brothers' bundles surrounded Joseph's sheaf and bowed down to it. The brothers interpreted the dream to mean that one day they would bow down to him as their ruler, so his brothers' hatred of him rose higher.

In Joseph's second dream, he saw the sun and moon (the parents) as well as 11 stars (the siblings) bow to him. This time Joseph described the dream to his father and brothers. Jacob chastised Joseph for the dream because he saw that he, his wife Leah (Joseph's mother, Rachel, had died by this time; 35:19-20), and his sons would all bow down to Joseph.

- 6.** *What was the nature of Joseph's first dream?*
- 7.** *What was the nature of Joseph's second dream?*
- 8.** *How did Jacob respond to his son's second dream?*

Joseph's Enslavement

Genesis 37:23, 24a, 28, KJV

23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;

24a And they took him, and cast him into a pit. . . .

28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

Genesis 37:23, 24a, 28, NIV

²³So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—^{24a}and they took him and threw him into the cistern. . . .

²⁸So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

After Joseph's dreams, most of Jacob's sons took his flocks about 50 miles north to Shechem (37:12). Then, Jacob sent Joseph to find out how they were doing. When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, a symbol of his status that he wore out of respect for his father. The brothers, by harming Joseph, dishonored Jacob. As the siblings previously planned (vss. 18-22), they threw Joseph into a nearby cistern, then callously sat down to eat some food (vs. 25).

Sometime during the meal, the brothers spotted a caravan of traders (referred to as both Midianites and Ishmaelites; 37:28). The merchants were carrying spices down to Egypt (vs. 25). Judah recommended that, instead of murdering Joseph, his brothers should sell him as a slave to the caravan. The group liked Judah's idea and so went along with it (vs. 26-27).

When the siblings pulled Joseph out of the cistern, he may have thought that he would be freed, but his brothers brazenly sold him into slavery for 20 silver coins. The amount paid for Joseph was the usual slave price for a young male.

9. *What despicable actions did Joseph's brothers take against him?*

Love Never Fails

“Train up a child in the way he should go,” said 19th-century Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon, quoting Proverbs 22:6 (KJV), “but be sure you go that way yourself.”

It is human nature for most of us to place higher expectations on others than we do for ourselves, and this is particularly true for other members in our own family. As a Christian minister, Spurgeon undoubtedly observed this to be frequently true within families in the church, and that’s why he ardently urged Christians to stay the course in their walk with the Lord Jesus.

The apostle Paul himself cautioned Christians about the consequences of abandoning Christian virtues and behaving selfishly: “For I am afraid,” he wrote in anticipation of his visit to the believers in Corinth, “that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be. . . . I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder” (2 Cor. 12:20 NIV).

The key to evading such bad behavior for Paul was demonstrating the love of Christ, saying “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

When the love of Christ guides what we think and what we say and what we do, our relationship with others, especially those who are dearest to us, will be seasoned with God’s blessings, for ultimately Christ’s love never fails.

10. *Why are families the nucleus of the Church?*

11. *Why is it crucial for a church to have leaders who have strong and stable families?*

12. *In what ways does expressing Christ’s love heal family discord?*

Focus on Your Family

After many years of deep resentment, Jacob's sons could no longer tolerate their brother's annoying presence, and so, they sold him into slavery. Problems within our families will never become so tragic. Nevertheless, disputes and conflicts even on a far minor scale can still destroy families. That is why we all need to be empowered with Christ's love in overcoming any strife that may emerge between a family member and us.

► *Take a few minutes to write a letter to God. In this letter, thank Him for blessing you with either a caring family or a supportive church family. Then, praise Him for adopting people of all races and cultural backgrounds into His heavenly family through the atonement of His Son Jesus Christ.*

KEY VERSE

And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

—Genesis 37:11, KJV

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

— Genesis 37:11, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

September 7 through September 13

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Acts 13:1-5—Paul and Barnabas Appointed for Ministry.

Tues. Genesis 41:9-13—Joseph, Chief Interpreter of Dreams.

Wed. Genesis 41:14-24—Dreams of Cows and Corn Explained.

Thurs. Genesis 41:34-36—Preparing for the Expected Famine.

Fri. Genesis 41:41-49—Storing Grain for the Future.

Sat. Genesis 41:53-57—Egypt Feeds the Middle East.

Sun. Genesis 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52—Leadership During Crisis.