

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In &
Beyond the Church

of Discipleship

Day 1: Genesis 37:17-18

September 26, 2021

The man said, ‘They have gone away, for I heard them say, “Let us go to Dothan.”’ So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him.

Dothan is 15 miles north of Shechem. Shechem is about halfway between Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee. The brothers went there to be further away from their father and Joseph. Their dislike of Joseph takes the form of action as they are away from home. Many times if we are away from home we are tempted to do things we would not do at home. Before going overseas when I was in the Corps, officers would advise us not to leave our morals in this country.

Question: Is there another place in the Bible where brothers did not get along?

Challenge: Try to find these cities on a map: Dothan - Shechem - Jerusalem - Egypt (Goshen).

Scripture: Genesis 39

Day 2: Genesis 37:19-20

They said to one another, ‘Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

Look up the scripture Genesis 37:5-11 to see why the brothers disliked Joseph. Joseph had a talent like his father, in that he could interpret dreams. The brothers thought that if the dreamer was dead the dream would also die. As soon as the idea of putting Joseph to death came to them a series of events began to unfold that changed their lives but not for better. They believed killing would be the solution but it became the problem.

Question: Is it easier to condemn someone if you do not say their name?

Challenge: Try for a period of time to journal what you dream. At that end of that period, see if you can take any meaning from your dreams.

Scripture: Genesis 40-41

Day 3: Genesis 37:21-24

But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, ‘Let us not take his life.’ Reuben said to them, ‘Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him’—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Reuben, the eldest, would be responsible to explain to his father what happened. Reuben realizes that killing Joseph would put a blood debt upon the brothers that they could not pay. Reuben, it seems, plans to release Joseph at a later time. The robe represented another reason they hated their brother (Genesis 37:3-4). The robe was an outward sign of their father’s preference for Joseph. The Bible tells us that Jacob loved Joseph because he was the child of his old age. Joseph reminded Jacob of his youth. Joseph brought back memories of when Jacob’s life was simple. When one’s children are growing up life has clarity of purpose. As the children move out, the parents must make a new life and develop a new purpose. Some have a hard time with this and do things to remind them of the way it was.

Question: Do you think Reuben was only thinking of the negative effects from killing Joseph or did he have some affection for him?

Challenge: Think of a different way the brothers could have dealt with their anger about Joseph’s arrogance.

Scripture: Genesis 42-43

Day 4: Genesis 37:25

Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt

A solution to the problem of killing their brother comes along in the form of traveling slave dealers. There was a lively slave trade between Egypt and Canaan at that time. If they allowed Joseph to come back to Shechem to their father, the family unity (such as it was) would be destroyed. By selling him they make some money and Joseph goes away. Joseph ends up being sold to a captain of the Pharaoh’s guard, Potiphar. It is not exactly known where Potiphar’s house was located. However, it must have been somewhere in the Goshen (modern delta) area of Egypt near the capital at the time. It was likely located at modern Tell el-Dab’a in the northeastern region of the Nile Delta.

Question: What do you think the term “Ishmaelites” refers to besides the people they saw?

Challenge: Look at an ancient map and try to find Gilead, Egypt and Tell el-Dab’a

Scripture: Genesis 40

Day 5: Genesis 37:26-27

Then Judah said to his brothers, ‘What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.’ And his brothers agreed.

In order to both get rid of Joseph and fool their father, they took Joseph’s robe and put blood on it. This destroys both the hated symbol and the person himself. Reuben does come back to get Joseph out of the pit but he finds that the brothers have already sold him.

Question: What do you think of applying Judah’s solution - make them slaves - to prisoners today?

Challenge: Think through the issue of slavery. Is it profitable or not? Does it help or hurt a society and why?

Scripture: Genesis 44-45

Day 6: Genesis 37:28

When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

The series of events that began with the plot to kill Joseph continues as Joseph goes to Egypt and eventually becomes the means of salvation - from famine - for the brothers. In order for Joseph to be able to show mercy to his family years later, he had to spend some time learning humility. In a similar way Moses had to spend some time learning the lesson of humility. When God wants to use certain people for a great task but the individual isn’t ready, God will provide them experiences that will make them ready to follow His lead. Often God needs to teach us humility before the task begins. Paul had to spend three days in blindness before he could see again and begin his ministry.

Question: Do you think that the brothers believed that Joseph would live long enough to ever enter their lives again?

Challenge: Find out how much 20 pieces of silver are worth today.

Scripture: Genesis 48:1-11 and 50:7-26