**1. Motivate**

What did sibling rivalry look like in your family?

* size of birthday party
* nicer bicycle
* they went to one kid’s sports more than the other
* sports/academics/looks/boyfriend/girlfriends were stressed
* hand me down clothes/bicycles/band instruments
* bickering in the back seat of the car “you’re on my side, no …”
* “he hit me” “no I didn’t”
* tattling on each other

A video introduction to the Bible study is available. View it at <https://tinyurl.com/36d88sed> . If you don’t have wi-fi where you teach, it is best to download the video file to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/2s3hrf8u>

* making up stories of what the other one did
* one got away with not doing chores

**2. Transition**

Some of these are inevitable … some avoidable.

* Today we look at sibling rivalry in Jacob’s sons
* We see that unchecked animosity can lead to great harm within the family.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Bad Reports and Favoritism

Listen for who was the favorite.

Genesis 37:1-4 (NIV) Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. 2 This is the account of Jacob. 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. 3 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. 4 When 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.

Why might a parent favor one child over another?

* maybe just because of their gender … the parent had always wanted a boy/girl
* their personality agreed with that parent more than the other siblings
* behavior … one kid gets in trouble, the other never causes any problems
* first child, middle child, last child (baby of the family)

What reasons do you see for conflict between Joseph and his brothers?

* favoritism from their father, special gifts he was given
* he told about the dreams he had (not in this passage)
* he might have been “in their face” with his coat
* he tattled on them to their dad

What other kinds of things cause jealousy between siblings?

* when one excels at something (sports, academics, etc.) and the others don’t
* where the child is in the sequence of siblings
* oldest may be jealous over attention of baby of the family
* youngest jealous over the older ones having more freedoms
* middle child can feel both of those influences

How does boasting get people like Joseph into trouble?

* puts others off
* people get tired of hearing it
* “Who do you think you are, anyway?”
* others feel the person has an inflated image of themselves
* the qualities boasted about may be entirely untrue
* if they are true, it can grate on your nerves

You are one of the brothers. How do you feel about Joseph? What thoughts would you have?

* what a jerk
* we’ll see who’s really in charge and who is not, when dad is gone
* I’d like to take that coat and …
* what was dad thinking?
* I’m going to have me a dream and it’s going to be a nightmare for someone
* that Joseph has some kind of ego
* he needs to be put in his place

Thinking of cause and effect, do you think *hatred* was the *cause* or the *result* of this conflict?

* probably a bit of both
* likely a spiral effect
* their dislike of his favored status caused them to treat him badly
* he might have responded with flaunting his status
* this resulted in more disfavor and hate
* (however, in the rest of the story of his life, he comes across as an honorable person)
* Joseph may have been immature when he received his fancy coat and bragged about it along with his dreams

How can parents avoid fueling jealousy between their children?

* try to treat them equally
* encourage each for their individual (but different) accomplishments
* give each child appropriate responsibilities that change as they grow up
* each child works as an understudy of the older sibling and takes on that job as they all move up the ladder of maturity

3.2 Jealousy, Animosity, Betrayal

Listen for plans of betrayal.

Genesis 37:18-24 (NIV) But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. 19 "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. 20 "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." 21 When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. 22 "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe--the richly ornamented robe he was wearing-- 24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

Based on the fancy coat and the bragging, why did Joseph’s brothers hold him in such contempt?

* he was Dad’s favorite
* he was a pesky little brother that thought he was *somebody*
* apparently he had made a big deal about the dreams
* also, apparently, he wore the special coat and they probably felt he flaunted it

What emotional reaction do you have to Joseph’s betrayal by the brothers?

* how could they do that?
* well, he *was* a braggart (in their eyes)
* dirty trick
* at least Reuben was trying to save him
* they’re asking for trouble, it’s going to haunt them later

What makes jealousy such a powerful emotion?

* someone else has something you don’t
* you feel they don’t deserve it
* you feel you do deserve it
* it’s a constant indication of their favored position
* it doesn’t go away
* the other person often makes a big deal about it~~

How can you keep anger or jealousy from taking root in your life? How should we deal with feelings of jealousy?

* practice daily thanksgiving to God
* choose an attitude of gratitude for what God has provided
* pray for those who you feel are against you
* work at being a peace maker
* don’t react in anger when you feel slighted
* don’t “fuel the fire” by trying to get back at someone
* ignore apparent slights

3.3 Deception and Grief

Listen for deceit.

Genesis 37:31-34 (NIV) Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe." 33 He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days.

Why did the brothers feel they could let their father believe that Joseph was dead, rather than simply admitting they sold him?

* the bloody coat and the “missing body” implied an attack by a bear or lion
* “we found this” … they had an implied alibi
* in once sense, admitting having sold him implied that he would probably have a miserable slave’s life for an extended period
* he was still alive, but dad would assume Joseph would never be seen again
* would have been constant wonder and grief of his probable fate
* contrast to a painful but quick death

How might keeping this secret have impacted their relationship with their father in the future?

* they might have to make up more stories/lies about what happened
* would constantly in the back of their minds
* had to guard what they said, never mention or bring up name of Joseph
* they would always carry the guilt of this in dealing with dad
* they would know that they had hurt him badly and there was no way to resolve it

How does this event fit into the larger story of God’s plan for Joseph and his family?

* no doubt Satan was at work tempting and scheming to sew discord within the family
* Satan wanted to cause a split and render the whole group dysfunctional
* his plan may have even been carried out to disrupt the lineage of Abraham that God would use to bless all peoples
* but God would use this to actually further His ultimate redemptive story

What does this passage show us about how God can work through even the darkest moments of deception and loss?

* Satan often works to bring tragedy and devastation to our lives and our families
* these events, along with our own failures, have the potential to ruin us emotionally, physically, and spiritually
* but God can and will work to turn these negative situations into spiritual victories … if we come to Him with submission and faith

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Pray.

* Pray for God to keep you from all forms of animosity and resentment.
* We must not tolerate attitudes of unkindness toward others.
* Left unchecked, the root of our wrong attitudes can grow into harmful actions with bitter consequences.

Share.

* Contemplate what you can do to stop these types of issues from taking root in your heart.
* Connect with a friend who knows you well and share with them your struggles.

Forgive.

* With God’s help begin the process of forgiving someone from a past hurt.
* Start the process of reconciliation with that individual (Eph. 4:31-32).

Cryptogram Puzzle



We just received this two part message from separate operatives of the underground church in Janofzertish. They have studied the same passage as ours and want us to know how it important it is to not fear when you are a religious minority. Use the numbers in the key to determine what letters go in the message below. Help and further Family Activities are available at <https://tinyurl.com/2s3hrf8u> When you have completely decrypted the message pass it on to your young people for their encouragement.