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Fellowship  
Life of Joseph  
Lesson 3  
Providential Pain: Joseph is sold into slavery  
Genesis 37:25-36  
4/7/2

Pray, read the passage three times and ask questions.

**25 As they sat down to eat their meal,  
they looked up and saw a caravan of  
Ishmaelites coming from Gilead.  
Their camels were loaded with  
spices, balm and myrrh,  
and they were on their way  
to take them down to Egypt.**

Is “they” Joseph’s brothers? Who are Ishmaelites? Are they the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham’s first-born son by his maidservant? That would make Ishmael’s sons and Isaac’s sons, Jacob and Esau, first cousins; Ishmael’s grandsons would be Jacob’s second cousins or Jacob’s sons--those mentioned here, third cousins. So, any way you look at it, even though Isaac and Ishmael were only half-brothers (different mothers), their children, Joseph’s brothers, and yet they don’t act like family, why not? (Note: there is just under 20 years between Ishmael and Isaac’s births [2086, 2066 BC] and Joseph being sold into slavery [1898]. This would be like from the time of our American Revolution until World War II. This amount of time would allow even third cousins to become very distant. Where is Gilead?

**26 Judah said to his brothers,  
"What will we gain if we kill our brother  
and cover up his blood?"**

Now Judah is taking up for his kid brother, where is the oldest brother, Reuben, who took up for Joseph originally? Why the change of heart on Judah’s part or had he picked up on what Reuben had said earlier? Perhaps he was not as jealous as then. This would be like from the time of our American Revolution until World War II. This amount of time would allow even third cousins to become very distant. Where is Gilead?

**27 Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites  
and not lay our hands on him;  
after all, he is our brother,  
our own flesh and blood."  
His brothers agreed.**

Reason prevails.

**28 So 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.**

Now they are called Midianites? Are they the same thing as Ishmaelites? Are they not descendants of Abraham by the wife he took after Sarah died, Keturah (Gen 25)? So the Midianites would be similar in cousin standings toward the Israelites (remember Jacob's name has been changed to Israel), or 12 brothers, as the Ishmaelites were to the brothers. All three groups were at least thirties and Midianites? Did they ask if this were their brother or who he was? Did Joseph tell them? Did they ignore him? Did they care? Was he just a commodity? No love lost here between brothers or cousins?

**29 When Reuben returned to the cistern  
and saw that Joseph was not there,  
he tore his clothes.**

Where had he been, looking after the sheep? Now he shows his true colors; he was loyal to his younger brother or perhaps even more to his father, knowing what Joseph's death would do to him.

**30 He went back to his brothers and said,  
"The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?"**

What does this last phrase mean? Where does he want to turn? to find him?

**31 Then they got Joseph's robe,  
slaughtered a goat  
and dipped the robe in the blood.**

Did they tell Reuben what they had done?

**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."**

Notice they say, "your son," not "our brother."

**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 do people tear their clothes when he great grief, such as Reuben earlier?

**35 All his sons and daughters came to comfort him,  
but he refused to be comforted.  
"No," he said,  
"in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son."  
So his father wept for him.  
36 Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to  
Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials,  
the captain of the guard.**

His palace guard?

**Who?** they, Ishmaelites, Judah, his brothers, our brother, Midianite merchants, Joseph, who, Reuben, the boy, I, their father, your son's, Jacob, all his sons and daughters, my son, Midianites, Potiphar, Pharaoh, captain of the guard

**Where?** up, from Gilead, their way, down to Egypt, by, out of the

**When?** as they sat down, so when the Midianite merchants came by, when Reuben, then they got Joseph's robe, then Jacob tore his clothes, many days, meanwhile

**What?**

- As they sit down to eat a caravan heading to Egypt comes by.
- Judah suggests that instead of killing their brother and covering up his death, why not sell him to the merchants.
- So they pulled him out of the well and sold him to the merchants for twenty shekels of silver.
- When the oldest brother, Reuben, who had suggested that Joseph be put in the dry well so that later he could return and rescue him and return him to his father, returns and doesn't find Joseph in the well, he is grief-stricken.
- The brothers then kill a goat and stain its blood upon Joseph's robe.

- They then carry the robe back to their father, where he presumes Joseph has been killed by a wild<sup>y</sup> beast on his way to find his brothers and reacts in deep grief.
- No one can comfort him; he is determined to go to his grave grieving his son's death.
- In the meantime, Joseph is sold to the captain of Pharaoh's guard.

**Summary...** Instead of being murdered or rescued by his brother Reuben, Joseph is sold to some traveling merchants who in turn sell him to the captain of Pharaoh's guard. When his brothers return home with Joseph's bloodstained robe that his father had given him, his father presumes his death and is inconsolable.

**Bottom line...** Providentially, Joseph is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and taken to Egypt.

**Why?** (What do I learn about God? People? Life? Myself?)

- That caravan was no accident; it accomplished several things: 1) saved Joseph's life from being murdered by his jealous brothers; 2) it prevented Reuben from saving him and returning him to his father, but at the same time, probably not preventing it from happening again and 3) it gets Joseph to Egypt and near Pharaoh.
- People lie--even at the expense of their father's or someone's great grief. In other words, they are willing to go to great lengths to carry out their deception.
- Sometimes we presume too quickly because we are so trusting; had Jacob been a little more discerning might not he have weaseled something or the truth out of Reuben or Judah. Be careful to react or to assume too quick. Do your investigation. Look for the inconsistencies. Obviously, God had other plans for Joseph.
- The loss of a child is a great grief. Some parents never fully recover. The death of their child haunts them the rest of their lives, perhaps even sending them to an earlier grave.

**So What?**

**Struggle...** I still have my big three: 1) Jordan's baseball; 2) Finishing the construction of the church, and now 3) coaching Amanda's team.

Jordan, after going 1 for 7 with 6's K's early in the season (although his only hit was key and lead to a win) is no longer in the starting lineup. He is just pitching. He doesn't seem to be bothered by it and accepts the coach's decision. His first pitching outing was great against a weaker team. He struggled in his second outing against a traditional St. Louis power. He struggled early in his third outing, but turned it around, giving up only one run in the first five innings on a wild pitch. But then our defense unraveled in the bottom of the sixth. Three errors and a blown call led to three runs. Our three and four hitters then struck out with two runners on in the top of the seventh--we had only two hits. Jordan threw 120 pitches. It was good from the standpoint that he battled back and was in the game; bad that he has another L by his name. Our hope is AR? He will continue to get the tough starts/teams. As a parent, it's tough to watch your child experience all the ups and downs of sports.

As far as coaching Amanda's softball team and finishing the church's construction, I have several more weeks to discuss both--neither are going away.

**Principle/Application...**Don't react or presume too quickly; I have learned that over the past several years. Remain almost stoically calm in the face of adversity...as Moses with his back to the Red Sea or the children of Israel marching around Jericho. Joseph's being sold into slavery, initially seems bad...losing his family and all. And yet, it not only saved his life, had his brothers chose to kill him instead, but it also prevented him from going through this all over again, had Reuben rescued him and returned him home. By removing Joseph from the family, God was temporarily relieving a very tense coaster of his ups and downs. If he loves God, and I believe he does, God will take care of Jordan. May there be pain and disappointment in his life? Absolutely. Will God use this to grow Jordan up, if Jordan responds to it appropriately--in the power and dependence of the Holy Spirit? Yes.

So, for the moment, I return my son into the hands of God, his desires, hopes, dreams, aspirations, ups, downs, disappointments and all. And for the moment, I let it go. (Remember, God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...)

To add to all this. Jordan and I went up and watched about six innings of the SMS-Razorback game this week after practice. It was one of the best times I have ever had with him, as we sat underneath the sleeping bag, shivering, eating peanuts and just watching the game. For the moment, it couldn't have been any better. Thank you, Lord. I will await the fulfillment of your ultimate plan.

**Your struggle?**

**Principle/Application?**

**Your students' struggles?**

**Principle/Application?**

Joseph M Cross,

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