

Explore the Bible: Accept

January 16, 2019

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Feb. 3 focuses on Genesis 37:5-11, 19-27.*

Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel. He was tending his father's sheep, along with his brothers, when one day something bad happened among the brothers. Joseph brought the bad report home to his father (Genesis 37:2).

Joseph was the favorite son of Israel and because of favoritism, Israel loved him more than he loved his brothers. He loved him so much that he made a beautiful ornamented coat for Joseph. which caused his brothers not to speak kindly to him (Genesis 37:3).

Genesis records another incident of sibling rivalry concerning two brothers. Cain is known as one who tilled the soil, while Abel is known as one who kept sheep (Genesis 4:1-8). When Cain presented his offering of fruit from the soil to God, it was not accepted. However, when Abel presented his offering of fat portions from some of the firstborn sheep, God accepted the offering. Cain became extremely jealous of Abel and murdered him.

Jacob understood how sibling rivalry could damage relationships. Fortunately, after 20 years of separation, Jacob and Esau reconciled. Jealousy among siblings will often result in years of unforgiveness and division. Through prayer and forgiveness, God is able to bring reconciliation.

Rule Over Us? (Genesis 37:5-11)

God often spoke to people in the Bible through dreams. Joseph should have known his brothers, who hated him, would not be excited about a dream where he would rule over his family. Jacob should have understood that God used dreams to speak to his people, but instead, he was angered by Joseph's dream and rebuked him. If Joseph had used wisdom to share the dreams, many problems with his family would have been avoided.

Believers are cautioned by Jesus to be "shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves" as they go out among people to witness the gospel (Matthew 10:16). Jesus characterizes false prophets as wolves and the believers as sheep. Jesus warns his disciples to use wisdom as they share the truth because of the dangers they may face. Not only should they use wisdom, believers are directed to "speak the truth in love" through gentleness and not in an offensive manner (Ephesians 4:15).

God used dreams in the Old Testament to fulfill his plans and to share his future plans. He spoke to Abraham in a dream promising his descendants a land of their own. But before that would happen, he shared that there would be a time when his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for 400 years (Genesis 15:12-16).

God still speaks through dreams today to prepare his people to accomplish his will. Although he uses dreams and other means to speak to his people, God reveals his will through his word when we study and meditate on scripture. His word goes forth from his mouth and does not return to him void; it accomplishes what he pleases and prospers whatever it is sent to do (Isaiah 55:11). Not only is his word truth, his Son is truth. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Indeed, this is the message of truth and must be presented with wisdom to others, even though all will not receive.

Why does Jesus say he is the truth?

What Happens to Your Dreams Now? (Genesis 37:19-24)

It was destined that Abraham's descendants would travel to a foreign land and remain there for 400 years. Fortunately, the decision to kill Joseph was not the plan of God. Even though the brothers hated Joseph with deep resentment and plotted to kill him by throwing him into the cistern, Rueben had a better plan; throw him in the cistern and rescue him later (Genesis 37:19-22). However, this plan did not work.

Jealousy is an emotion every believer will experience. They cannot allow jealous emotions to hurt or mistreat those God chooses to use for his service. Believers should guard themselves against allowing jealousy to have control in their lives.

Why is it important to guard the emotion of jealousy?

What Do We Gain? (Genesis 37:25-27)

Instead of being left to die in the cistern, the brothers sold Joseph to the Ishmaelite caravan (Genesis 37:28). Finally, he was sold to Potiphar in Egypt and into slavery (Genesis 37:36). Joseph would be greatly used by God to save the nation of Israel. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out" (Romans 11:33).

God makes his plan very clear to believers in dreams and especially through his word. Sometimes the troubles of life may overtake the believer and test his faith in God. Others will try to make the believer doubt whether God actually shared his plans. Believers must hold on to the faith that God

will accomplish what he has started, regardless of those who may try to thwart his plans. “Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (Proverbs 19:21).

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