

# Joseph Dreams Disturbing Dreams

Genesis 37:1-11

Many have heard the story of the coat of many colors. But not all remember the trouble that coat caused. It's interesting that, in the same way that Rebekah's favoritism toward Jacob ravaged her family, Jacob's display of favoritism toward his son Joseph had equally serious consequences. Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons because Joseph had been born to him in his old age and he was born by Rachel, Jacob's most loved wife. Joseph's "bad report" about his brothers (Genesis 37:2) only made things worse, fueling Jacob's preference for Joseph and his brothers' resentment toward him. The richly ornamented robe further intensified the brothers' feelings. They hated Joseph because he was so clearly their father's favorite.

This robe was designed to stand out from the work clothes the other brothers wore, and it likely relieved Joseph from doing unpleasant tasks that could have soiled it.

The relationship between Joseph and his brothers was bad enough before Joseph began having dreams indicating that he would rule over his brothers. Joseph was the second youngest of 12 brothers. The eldest would naturally and culturally have held the role of family leader. For the eleventh son in line to claim such a position surely infuriated the other brothers. Joseph even incurred the rebuke of his father when he described these dreams.

From our point in history, we know what Joseph's dreams foretold. But Joseph's brothers didn't have our perspective. Their hatred of Joseph probably caused them to suspect that he was inventing these dreams in order to put his brothers down and to flaunt his father's favoritism.

Although God ultimately reconciled the members of this family, this story serves as a model of how not to treat family members. None of the members of this family really loved the others as they should have. Joseph, his brothers, and their father all contributed to the rift between Joseph and the brothers. To honor God, family members must show God's love to one another. For Jacob, that might have meant showing love equally to all of his sons. For Joseph, that might have meant keeping his dreams to himself, even if the dreams truly were messages from God. And for the brothers, it might have meant loving Joseph in spite of their father's favoritism and Joseph's attitude. No matter what or who the problem is within our families, God wants us to love our families with the same love he shows for us.

## **Devotion for Leaders**

**The One Thing:** As we follow Christ and grow in his love, we will naturally want to demonstrate his love in our families.

**Weaving Faith Into Your Life:** Jacob's sons all needed the love and favor of their father. Reread Genesis 37:3-4. How did Jacob's favoritism toward Joseph affect his other sons? As you teach and influence students, remember that every student longs for the favor of significant adults. Decide to show special love and encouragement to your students this week.