

Joseph told on them. Even little kids recognize why Joseph's brothers were jealous and hated him. Joseph told on them, he was favored by his dad, and Joseph seemed to think he was better than them. Those are actions all packed into these verses from the book of Genesis in the first lesson. And what happens is not surprising. But we want to examine if there's something we can learn as we go into battle in our spiritual warfare. Is there something from this story of Joseph that we can apply to our lives? I think there is.

Start at the beginning. Joseph is seventeen when we first hear of him out working with his brothers. Remember he has ten older brothers and one younger brother. They weren't the tightest family; the twelve had four different mothers and a pretty big age range. There was natural distance between them. Joseph was out tending to the sheep when he noticed his brothers doing something they weren't supposed to. We don't know exactly what they did wrong. Whatever it was, Joseph didn't want any part of it. Already at seventeen he shows a high moral character. **"He brought their father a bad report about them."** At the first opportunity he told his father, the father of all of the brothers, what his brothers were doing. That didn't exactly make the brothers happy.

If you know nothing about Joseph you may know one thing. Thanks to a translation in the King James Version of the Bible, the coat given to Joseph came to be known as the coat of many colors. While that could be true, it was more likely how you heard it this morning. **"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."** Even that's not the greatest description. Think a long robe that reached to the ground with long sleeves. What made it special and rich was comparing it to other robes that workers wore. Workers wore robes to the knees with no sleeves so they could work. Long robes with sleeves were reserved for royalty. Jacob showed Joseph how important he was to him. Problem was Jacob didn't give that coat to any other sons. That didn't exactly make the brothers happy either.

The brothers saw Joseph as a goody goody, rule follower, a snitch, and a favorite of their father who they didn't like. They were jealous and grew to hate him. These older brothers of Joseph were his examples of leadership, anything but great examples. Out in the field misbehaving they didn't think of their father. Whether it was sleeping on the job, stealing sheep, or whatever else it was selfish. They were thinking of themselves. And they thought of themselves when Joseph received his father's gift too. They were mad their dad loved Joseph more than them. Again they were selfish and self serving.

Many think of leaders as the kind of people that jump out front and take command of a situation. They get involved and urge the followers to get involved too. Others think leaders stand in the back and shout orders. They scream for people to follow but rarely do any of what the followers are doing. Which leader is easier to follow? Which would you rather be if you were called to lead? We want to be and follow leaders who are out front, doing the same work as everyone else, and urging others to follow by joining in. Leaders who really think about the followers, that kind of leader is serving.

But think of your examples of leadership. Leaders of countries that seek power for themselves. Leaders in sports showing off for the camera to gain endorsements. Many leaders of today only look out for themselves. Truthfully that's our tendency too. Do you find yourself looking out for you first? We might find ourselves like Joseph's brothers, out of the watchful eye of our boss doing what we shouldn't be doing. We know the hiding places of our lives where we're able to get away with certain things, places where we think no one is watching or checking up. We might find we're like the brothers in wanting to be the big shot around the office, our homes, or our neighborhoods. If that means finding faults and using them in people who are threats to our position then so be it. Or we act like Joseph's father Jacob and play the favorites, or we like being the favorite. Whether on purpose or by accident, we enjoy our moment in the spotlight. Who benefits when we act this way? Deep down we act these ways for ourselves. We can fall into sin trying to serve ourselves and not others.

Joseph held himself to a high moral standard because God had expectations. God expected him to honor and respect his father and brothers. Joseph also knew by the coat he received as a gift how much his father loved him. Then God gave him glimpses of how much God loved him and what his future would be like. **"Joseph had a dream...he said to them...we were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."** A child could understand Joseph was destined for greatness. His brothers would bow down to him someday. Joseph would be a leader, among his own brothers, even among his own family.

What we don't know is how much Joseph understood his brothers' hatred of him. Did he overlook it? Did he ever see it? If he knew their hatred, why tell them the dream that would just make them hate him more? Joseph was a believer in God from a family of believers in God. Joseph may have thought this dream needed to be shared, regardless of the content. Then in love for his family he shared it. That would be serving others. They reacted harshly. **"Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us? And they hated him all the more."** Had Joseph changed? Was he now being naïve to their hatred? Was he rubbing it in that he would be a leader over them? What may have started as Joseph serving his brothers with good intentions backfired.

Even the best leaders can't control everything. For Joseph the worst was yet to come. Read the story from chapter thirty seven forward sometime, it's gripping. Soon Joseph would be sold by his own brothers into slavery because they hated him. In a foreign country he'd get thrown in prison and left to die. Yet Joseph's dreams would come true. God controlled his future in such a way that God's promises shared in these dreams eventually happened. And his future leadership provided rescue for his family. The deliverance of Joseph's family previewed the ultimate deliverance and rescue God would provide the entire world through the Savior.

God's best servant leader would rise up from the family of Jacob and Joseph. Jesus never had a sinful immoral action or thought to cover up. He was perfect his whole life to offset your imperfection. He certainly had the chance to be a big shot on earth. He could've had servants and soldiers and everything he wanted. But he gave it all up to be the servant leader we needed. He willingly entered into the battle to win you rescue from your sins. And Jesus never plays favorites. He loves. He gives a gift, never to make one jealous of another. His gift is his love for all people the same. His love caused him to come for people like us who didn't love him. He gave his life for people who didn't love him. He showed love to us so that we might believe in him and love him back. We need have no jealousy because Jesus is Savior for you and Savior for me.

To be a servant leader must come from outside of us. God gave strength to Joseph through dreams. Your strength comes from God. He gives you the ability to be a servant leader by faith. Servant leaders show siblings, parents, and all relatives the same love. Seek to serve their interests not your own. Be willing to give up your own personal rights to serve another. If you're a parent, parent fairly. Love each child as special. Let there be no favorites. And in all areas of your life put others first. Make sure others are taken care of. Lower yourself to serve them. Remember your motivation comes from the Savior who **"did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

This short section of Joseph's life does have something we can apply to ours. It's that Joseph is not our best example of leadership. His brothers aren't. His dad isn't either. Each had their faults since each was a sinner like us. We need to look, like Joseph did, outside ourselves for the ability to be a servant leader. We need to look to our God. Our Savior was a servant leader for us. He came to serve each of us. He came to serve you with his life and death. He came to live for you so you might live. And because he served, you have your motivation to serve others. To charge into combat as servant leaders.