

STUDY 1 - GOD'S MESSY FAMILY - GENESIS 37

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When was a time you looked at a situation (personal, local or global) and you thought 'what a mess'? What was it about the situation that made you feel this way?

Observe and Reflect

From Genesis 37:1-4

1. What is going wrong in this family?
Identify the signs of dysfunction in Jacob's household.
Where do you see division, and what is causing it?

Read Genesis 37:5-32

2. How does Joseph come across in the story?
How would you describe Joseph's attitude and communication?
Is he simply faithful, or is there something more complex going on?
3. What effect does favouritism have?
Jacob gives Joseph a special robe (Genesis 37:3).
What impact does this have on Joseph, his brothers, and the wider family?
4. Trace the escalation of sin
Follow the brothers' response in Genesis 37:4ff
How does their attitude and behaviour escalate step by step?
In Genesis 37:18-32, list the key decisions the brothers make.
At what points could things have gone differently?
5. Where does God appear to be in this chapter?
God is not directly mentioned in most of Genesis 37.
How does that affect your reading of the events?
What do you think the author wants us to notice anyway?
6. What role do "ordinary events" play?
Consider the arrival of the Ishmaelite traders (Genesis 37:25-28).
What looks random or incidental in the story?
How might these moments be significant?

Next Steps...

7. What does this chapter teach about human nature?

Based on the whole chapter, what does Genesis 37 suggest about:

- family relationships
- jealousy and resentment
- moral decision making

8. What might this mean for our own lives?

Where do you see “messy” or confusing situations in your own life or world? How might Genesis 37 shape the way you think about God’s work in those situations?

9. How does this story point forward in the Bible’s storyline?

Genesis 37 sets up the suffering and rejection of Joseph.

Where else in the Bible do we see God working through the rejection or suffering of a chosen one to bring about good?

10. What kind of deliverer do we begin to see emerging?

Joseph is rejected by his brothers, sent away, and later becomes a means of rescue.

What similarities and differences do you notice between Joseph and the kind of Saviour the Bible ultimately points to in Jesus?

11. How does Christ reshape how we read this “mess”?

If God brings good through betrayal and suffering in this chapter, and ultimately through the cross of Jesus, what does that suggest about how God works in broken and painful situations today?