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**JOSEPH AND JACOB**

**Passing on:** family commitment and blessing

**What a mentor does:** intercedes (prays)

**Scriptures to study:** Genesis 37-49

**Key thoughts:**

* The story of Jacob’s family illustrates God’s relationship with His people and how He preserves them despite their disobedience, foolishness and wickedness.
* Jacob was taught to value prayer and blessing, and passes this down to his own children.
* Joseph’s commitment to his family doesn’t waver, even after he is betrayed by his brothers. In the end he loves them, forgives them and reunites with them.

The story of Jacob and his son Joseph occupies 12 chapters in Genesis. Jacob (Israel) was Joseph’s father. Though they are separated by Joseph’s slavery and eventual rise to power in Egypt, we do read a number of accounts of their interactions. Joseph was Jacob’s most beloved son, which meant he was favored and given attention by his father. This also created envy and hate in his brothers and led to his enslavement.

Early in life Jacob stole his father’s birthright from his older brother Esau. Jacob had a total of 13 children. We don’t know much of Jacob’s life as Joseph’s story unfolds, but we do know that he eventually reconciled with his brother Esau (Genesis 33:1-10), that he grieved over the loss of Joseph (Genesis 37:34-35) and that he deeply loved his family (Genesis 42:1-2). How do we know that Jacob taught his son Joseph the importance of preserving the family? Because later in Egypt when he has the power to exact revenge on his brothers he does the opposite. He forgives them and has them move to Egypt en masse to avoid the famine.

**Jacob teaches what it means to be chosen by God.** Jacob was aware of God’s promise to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac that a nation would come from their lineage. As a father he taught this to his children, including Joseph. They were chosen by God and were blessed by God, and at the same time were expected to be obedient to God. Jacob was 130 years old when he moved his family to Egypt to avoid death by famine. With each of his sons, and how including Joseph with whom he has been reunited, Jacob instills the values of caring for family and being faithful to God.

**Jacob blesses Joseph’s children.** When he is very old and can hardly see, Joseph introduces him to his children. Jacob gives praise to God and blesses them, saying: “May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly on the earth” (Genesis 48:16). This is a great example of a mentor praying for his son and family and desiring God’s blessings for them.

**Jacob also chooses the younger son over the older.** When giving his blessing, Jacob places his right hand on Joseph’s younger son instead of the firstborn. Joseph tries to correct this error but his father tells him it is not a mistake. Jacob said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations” (Genesis 48:19). This is one of several examples in Jacob’s family where a younger is chosen over the older. Jacob stole his older brother’s birthright. Joseph himself was favored over his older brothers. And now Joseph’s younger son is favored over the older. Jacob is teaching Joseph in this instance to trust God, even when it doesn’t always make sense.

**Jacob blesses all of his sons.** Next we see Jacob blessing each of his sons in Genesis 49. He tells them what is to become of them. He knows them well and has prayed to God regarding them for his entire life. He desires that they continue to be obedient to God and to value and care for their families. Just as God blessed Abraham and Isaac, Jacob (Israel) desires to that his son Joseph—and indeed all of his sons—see his example in giving blessing.



* Have you ever received anything by way of a blessing from your parents or family? What was it and how did you receive it?
* Was one child in your family ever favored over another? How did that affect the family dynamic when you were growing up?
* Who are people in your family that you pray for? What do you ask on their behalf?



* Read Genesis 37:34-35. What does Jacob’s grief tell us about his relationship with his sons?
* Read Genesis 48:19. Why is Jacob bestowing his blessing on the younger of Joseph’s children significant? What is Jacob teaching Joseph through this action?
* Read Genesis 50:20. How did Joseph gain this mature spiritual perspective on his life and circumstances? Is this something he may have learned in part from his father?
* Read Genesis 49:2-27. What do you observe in some of the words of blessing Jacob gave to his sons? In what ways were they unique and specific?
* Why is prayer an important part of any mentoring relationship?



* What are some ways you can be a blessing to someone through mentoring?
* Who can you begin praying for today specifically as a mentor or mentee?
* How can you pass on the importance of family to your sons and daughters, and others in your sphere of influence.