

# "Descending"

THE LIFE OF JOSEPH: GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN OUR SUFFERING | PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

GENESIS 37:1-36 | FEBRUARY 17/18, 2018

*"But his brothers saw Joseph in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him." (Genesis 37:17-18)*

## God's Blessing Descends to Humanity (37:1-4)

Abraham & Sarah → Isaac & Rebekah → Jacob & Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, Zilpah

Blessing in the midst of brokenness

## Dreams Descends to Joseph (37:5-11)

God as the giver of dreams in pairs

Joseph the regal-robed 'dreamer'

## Conflict Descends Amongst Jacob's Family (37:12-35)

The journey of Joseph

The anger of his brothers

The roles of Reuben and Judah

The throbbing grief of Jacob

## Joseph's Descent (37:36)

Regal-ruler to shipped-off slave

Dream-teller to silenced victim

Favored son to forgotten one

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Joseph's story begins with family. Answer one of these questions to start your study:
2. What was one of the funniest moments in your family growing up?
3. What has been one of your most memorable family challenges that shaped who you are?
4. This weekend we begin a new series, "The Life of Joseph: God's Sovereignty in our Suffering." We will follow the life of Joseph in Genesis 37-50. This week we begin our study by looking at Genesis 37:1-36. Take a moment to pray, asking God to lead you into His truth, and then read that passage aloud.
5. This story begins with a family. It is the family of Jacob, who is the son of Isaac and Rebekah, who is the son of Abraham and Sarah. Jacob's children are in conflict because Jacob lived with great conflict. What do we learn about Jacob's children, particularly Joseph, from verses 1-4?
6. The story escalates because of Joseph's prophetic dreams in verses 5-11. What do these dreams tell us about Joseph and his brothers? How do Joseph, his brothers, and his father react to these dreams?
7. It seems as if God is behind these dreams, particularly because they arrive in a pair. However, Joseph's approach to relating God's work is problematic. What do you think Joseph does right or wrong in relation to his dreams?
8. Now, look at verses 12-31. It's worth noting that Joseph travels into the land of Jacob's adversaries (Shechem), a distance of roughly 50 miles, to find his brothers. What do you notice about Joseph and his brothers, particularly Reuben and Judah, in these verses? [For more information on Reuben, read Genesis 29:31-32 and 35:22. For more on Judah, read Genesis 29:35 and 38:1-30.]
9. Have you ever experienced wrong at the hands of others? Have you ever inflicted wrong on others? How might God speak into those moments of our lives?
10. Joseph's descent into suffering ends with betrayal, grief, and abandonment. Look at verses 32-36 and consider the dynamics between Jacob and his children. What is going on here?
11. What is one thing God is speaking to you through this study? If you are on your own, write it down and pray about it. If you are in a small group, take time to discuss this with one another before praying together.

## FURTHER REFLECTION:

- Join in with the daily devotional for this series: [josephdevotional.wordpress.com](http://josephdevotional.wordpress.com)
- Read further background on Joseph's family by reading Genesis 25-35
- Watch the video from the Bible Project on the second part of Genesis, which includes the life of Joseph: [thebibleproject.com/videos/torah-genesis-2](http://thebibleproject.com/videos/torah-genesis-2)