

Study Guide

Series: Wrestling With God
“Jacob and the Technicolor Dreamcoat”

Monday – Read Genesis 37:1-11. Jacob favored Joseph, Rachel’s first son. The “dreamcoat” showed Joseph’s favored status. Family therapists now know that being a “chosen child” like Joseph often skews emotional growth and relationships. Joseph’s strutting misuse of his ability to receive and interpret dreams finally upset even Jacob. Jacob should have known the danger of parental bias from his own parents, but he didn’t. Have you ever been “the favorite” in some setting? Have you had to relate to someone else who’s “the favorite”? What wounds from those experiences undercut your life and the lives of those around you – limiting your joy and effectiveness? It’s so easy (and such fun!) to feel superior to others as Joseph did, but that is not the character of Jesus Christ. How can you express the value and dignity of others around you? Choose one thing you will do this week to show respect to someone you are tempted to feel superior to.

Tuesday – Read Genesis 37:12-36. Jacob cluelessly sent Joseph to see his brothers. They acted on their outrage at being lorded over by their brother and undervalued by their father. First, they wanted to kill Joseph. Reuben and Judah talked them out of that, and they sold him to traders. They tricked Jacob (sound familiar?). He believed his favorite was dead and mourned the loss bitterly. Genesis doesn’t tell us what Jacob’s sons and daughters said as they tried to comfort Him, but it didn’t help much. Do you know how to comfort a grieving friend or family member, to honor the process of grieving rather than saying “Get over it”? Reuben and Judah had enough moral courage to stand up to their brothers and say, “No, don’t kill Joseph. We don’t want blood on our hands.” On the other hand, they weren’t able to say, “Dad, Joseph isn’t dead – we sold him to traders headed for Egypt.” How morally courageous are you? In what areas do you want to become braver?

Wednesday – Read Genesis 42:1-38. Years later, Jacob sent his sons (all but Benjamin, Rachel’s other son) to Egypt for food. Over time, Joseph had thrived in Egypt (the story is in Genesis 39-41). He ran the famine relief plan. His brothers didn’t know him and bowed to him. (Remember his dreams?) He gave them a tough time at first and insisted on seeing Benjamin. Some Bible students believe Joseph was having a little mischievous revenge, toying with his brothers. Others think he was testing them to see if they had grown in character over the years. In what ways do you see the brothers showing more kindness and maturity than they showed when Joseph was younger? Imagine yourself in Joseph’s position. In all of Egypt only Pharaoh held more power than he did. What could Joseph have done when he saw his brothers coming before him? On a spectrum from “most vengeful” to “most generous,” where would you put his response? How would you have responded in his place?

Thursday – Read Genesis 43:1-16, 45:1-18. Desperate, Jacob sent Benjamin to Egypt. Joseph put the brothers through more trials (chapter 44). Finally, overwhelmed by emotion, he revealed who he was. He made peace with the brothers who sold him as a slave and nearly killed him. He told them God had worked for good even in their evil actions. He asked them to bring his father to Egypt. “Do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that

God sent me ahead of you,” Joseph told his brothers. Think of a time when someone did evil to you. How are you allowing God to redeem this evil—turning it into a blessing instead of a curse? How can Joseph’s story strengthen your faith? When Joseph revealed who he was, Genesis says his brothers were terrified (which makes sense!). What do you imagine the impact of Joseph’s forgiving generosity was on them? In what ways does Joseph give us a vivid image of the way God treats each of us when we seek God’s grace?

Friday – Read Genesis 45:25 – 46:7, 48:1-11. Amazed, Jacob learned that his much-loved, much-mourned son not only was alive, but held great power in Egypt. His “spirit revived,” and he went to Joseph. At the end, he blessed Joseph’s children, blessed all his sons (chapter 49), and spoke yet again about losing Rachel. Jacob’s story, like ours, is one of human messiness mixed with the grace of Jacob’s God. Compare Jacob’s rapport with God in Genesis 46:1-4 with his relating to God in 28:10-17. Then God had to speak in a dream before Jacob recognized God was there. Here Jacob calmly worships before God speaks. Where are you in walking with God and sensing God’s presence? How can you grow into the “old friends” faith Jacob had? One last irony: Jacob got as nearly-blind as his father Isaac had been (48:10). However, the boys he kissed and embraced really were Joseph’s sons. There was no struggle or trickery when he met his grandsons. What do you learn about God’s patient work in human lives as you think back over Jacob’s long spiritual journey?