

Hatred and Jealousy

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[0 : 00] When we started the study of Joseph's life, we discussed how Joseph's life really is not! about Joseph. It's about the progression of redemptive history, how God is going to redeem! his people from the curse of sin. The themes of land, seed, and covenant appear again and again in the book of Genesis to mark the progression of that redemptive history. They're always there and they're always reminding us of God's redemptive work. Throughout Genesis, including the account of Joseph, God shows that he's faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people.

And in doing that, God fulfills his covenant that he made to Joseph's great-grandfather, Abram. Genesis 12, 1 through 3 records that covenant with Abram. Just for review, those verses say, Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." We talked about the land, the seed and the covenant being themes throughout Genesis. Notice the presence of all three elements in that passage. God tells Abram to go to a land. He promises to bless him with seed, which he references as offspring there. And he does so by way of making the covenant with Abram. So this again is the key to interpreting Genesis. And as we come to the life of Joseph, we can't forget that Joseph's significance is tied up in the Abrahamic covenant. Tonight we're going to re-familiarize ourselves with Joseph's ancestors, and then we'll dig into the first 11 verses of Joseph's story. Let's go ahead and read

Genesis 37, 1 through 11. Starting in verse 1 of chapter 37, it says, Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being 17 years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, Hear this dream that I have dreamed. Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field. And behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright.

And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf. His brothers said to him, Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to rule over us? So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.

[3 : 29] But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you? And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. Two negative feelings dominate this passage. Those are hatred and jealousy.

Verse 4 says that the other brothers hated Jacob. Verse 5 says that the brothers hated Joseph even more after Joseph told them about his first dream. And verse 11 says that the brothers were jealous of Joseph after Joseph told them about his second dream. And as we look through some additional background and then move through the 11 main verses tonight, we're going to see some of those same feelings of hatred and jealousy ran in the family long before Joseph came along. I misspoke there for a second and said that the brothers hated Jacob. Really, they hated Joseph, but

I think we'll find out as we go along they didn't have much love for their father either. So we'll see that as we progress through the story. These early chapters of Joseph's story show us that God can use anyone and save anyone that God chooses regardless of that person's original character and motives. So once again, God can use anyone and save anyone God chooses regardless of that person's original character and motives. That's really the main idea that we'll see tonight. We're going to break tonight's passage into three sections starting with verses 1 and 2. And actually, we won't get all the way through verse 2. We're going to stop in the middle.

Verses 1 and 2 introduces to the main characters of the story, the people. So people fills in your first blank. So let's listen to verse 1 and the first part of verse 2 again.

They say, We'll stop there and pick up with the rest of verse 2 a little bit later.

But we meet several people here in these verses and we're going to backtrack in Genesis to re-familiarize ourselves with Jacob and his family. And most of our time tonight is going to be spent looking in detail at Jacob's parents, Jacob's wives and concubines, and then Jacob's sons.

[6 : 10] And of course, that's where Joseph comes in. So flip back to Genesis 25 and look at verses 19 through 28. Genesis 25, 19 through 28. That's where we learn about the birth of Jacob and his twin brother Esau.

Starting in verse 19, it says, These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham fathered Isaac, and Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the Aramean, of Paddan Aram, the sister of Laban, the Aramean, to be his wife. And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren.

And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah, his wife, conceived. The children struggled together within her, and she said, If it is thus, why is this happening to me? So she went to inquire of the Lord, and the Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided. The one shall be stronger than the other. The older shall serve the younger.

When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. Afterward, his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob.

Isaac was 60 years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

[7 : 53] Verse 28 has a theme that's common in Jacob's family. Look at verse 28 again. Jacob had parents that each favored one son over the other. So as we get into Joseph's story, keep in mind that Joseph knew what it was like to live with the father who played favorites.

The tension that we first saw while the boys were developing in Rebekah's womb continued as Jacob and Esau grew up. Let's read on in Genesis 25 and we'll see that. We'll pick up where we left off and read verse 29 through verse 34. Verse 29 says, Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted. Therefore his name was called Edom.

Jacob said, Sell me your birthright now. Esau said, I am about to die. Of what use is a birthright to me? Jacob said, Swear to me now. So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew and he ate and drank and rose and went his way.

Thus Esau despised his birthright. The tension gets even worse and escalates further in chapter 27 of Genesis. That's where Jacob, with the help of his mother, tricks Isaac into blessing Jacob instead of Esau. So let's look at Genesis 27 verses 5 through 10.

Genesis 27 5 through 10 say, Now Rebecca was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, Rebecca said to her son Jacob, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau. Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food that I may eat it and bless you before I die. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you.

[9 : 51] Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats so that I may prepare them delicious food for your father such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies. Jacob is no dummy here. He knows that even though his father can't see well, he may recognize Jacob in other ways. So let's look at verses 11 through 17 as we read on here.

But Jacob said to Rebecca, his mother, Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing. It's interesting here, isn't it? Jacob's not worried about deceiving his

father.

He's worried about what's going to happen to him if his father finds out. So we get some insight into Jacob's character there, at least at that point. Picking up in verse 13, we see what his mother tells him. His mother said to him, Let your curse be on me, my son. Only obey my voice and go bring them to me. So he went and took them and brought them to his mother and his mother prepared delicious food such as his father loved. Then Rebecca took the best garments of Esau, her older son, which were with her in the house and put them on Jacob, her younger son, and the skins of the young goat she put on his hands on the smooth part of his neck. And she put the delicious food and the bread which she had prepared into the hand of her son Jacob. The scheme worked. Isaac was tricked into blessing Jacob instead of Esau. And we're going to fast forward to Genesis 27, 30 through 38 to see what happens when the real Esau returns with the food that his father had asked him to get.

Starting in verse 30, it says, As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac, his father, Esau, his brother, came in from his hunting. He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, Let my father arise and eat of his son's game that you may bless me. His father Isaac said to him, Who are you? He answered, I am your son, your firstborn Esau. Then Isaac trembled violently and said, Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me? And I ate it all before you came and I blessed him. Yes, and he shall be blessed.

As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. But he said, Your brother came deceitfully and he has taken away your blessing. Esau said, Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.

[12 : 48] Let's pause there a second. Esau is right about taking away the blessing, but Jacob didn't really have to work too hard to get his birthright, did he? It's interesting how people tend to remember history the way they want to remember it. So then we continue on and Esau is still speaking.

Then he said, Have you not reserved a blessing for me? Isaac answered and said to Esau, Behold, I have made him lord over you and all his brothers I have given to him for servants and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son? Esau said to his father, Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

In verse 41 of that same chapter, Esau vows to kill Jacob after Isaac dies. Rebecca overhears that vow and she tells Jacob that he needs to get out of Dodge as quick as he can. She advises Jacob to go stay with his uncle Laban in Haran. And Isaac later agrees with Rebecca's advice, but Isaac goes one step further. He tells Jacob to marry one of Laban's daughters. While Jacob is on his way to Laban's house, we see another trait that runs in the family. Jacob stops to spend the night and he has a dream of his own.

So flip over a few pages to Genesis 28 and let's look at verses 10 through 19. As we read the verses, notice how the themes of the land, the seed, and the covenants appear again.

So again, this is Genesis 28 verses 10 through 19. Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran and he came to a certain place and stayed there that night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

[14 : 58] And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give to you and to your offspring.

Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south. And in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, surely the Lord is in this place. And I did not know it. And he was afraid and said, how awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God. And this is the gate of heaven.

So early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at first. For all of Jacob's character flaws, he now has confirmation that he's the seed through which God will fulfill the covenant that God made with Abraham. Remember what we said earlier, God can use anyone and save anyone God chooses regardless of that person's original character and motives. These verses also are significant because Jacob now is in the land that God promised him. But of course, he doesn't own the land yet. Moving along in our review of Jacob's family, chapter 29 introduces us to all four women who become the mothers of Jacob's children. Jacob's already dysfunctional family is about to get even more dysfunctional pretty fast. So let's look at verses 16 through 18 of Genesis 29. Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance.

Jacob loved Rachel and he said, I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter, Rachel. Skip down a few verses in Genesis 29 to see what happens when Jacob completes his seven years of service. We're going to go to verses 21 through 30. It says, then Jacob said to Laban, give me my wife that I may go into her for my time is completed. So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. But in the evening, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob and he went into her. Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant. And in the morning, behold, it was Leah. And Jacob said to Laban, what is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me? Laban said, it is not so done in our country to give the younger before the firstborn. Complete the week of this one and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years. Jacob did so and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant. So Jacob went into Rachel also and he loved Rachel more than Leah and served Laban for another seven years. The irony of Jacob complaining about being deceived is obvious. Now Jacob knows what it's like to be on the other side of deception. Unfortunately for him, this won't be the only time that he gets deceived. At the end of chapter 29, that's when the kids start coming along.

In addition to meeting the children, we'll see the themes of hatred and jealousy surface again. The sons apparently learned by example. So let's look at Genesis 29 31 to chapter 30 verse 8.

[19:07] When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, Behold, the Lord has looked upon my affliction. For now my husband will love me. She conceived again and bore a son and said, Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also. And she called his name Simeon.

Again she conceived and bore a son and said, Now this time my husband will be attached to me because I had borne him three sons. Therefore his name was called Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son and said, This time I will praise the Lord. Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, Give me children or I shall die. Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel and he said, Am I in the place of God who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb? Then she said, Here is my servant Bilhah. Go into her so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her. So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife and Jacob went into her and Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, God has judged me and has also heard my voice and given me a son.

Therefore she called his name Dan. Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed.

[20:50] So she called his name Naphtali. If you're keeping count, Jacob now has six sons by two different mothers. Not to be outdone, Leah then gives Jacob her servant Zilpah and Jacob has two sons by Zilpah and those two are Gad and Asher, sons seven and eight. After that, Leah has two more sons, Issachar and Zebulun.

Issachar and Zebulun make sons nine and ten and then Jacob's one daughter Dinah comes along and Leah is also Dinah's mother. The skip down to verses 22 through 24 of Genesis 30. Verses 22 through 24 say, Then God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her womb.

She conceived and bore a son and said, God has taken away my reproach. And she called his name Joseph saying, May the Lord add to me another son. So now we're up to 11 sons with Joseph. Meanwhile, Jacob and Laban have a falling out. So Joseph runs. He's good at running when things get a little tough. While he's on the run, he gets word that Esau is coming. So jump to Genesis 32 this time and we're going to look at verses 22 through 28. So Genesis 32, 22 is where we're going to pick up again. The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants and his 11 children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream and everything else that he had. And Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him into the breaking of the day. When a man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, let me go for the day has broken. But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. And he said to him, what is your name? And he said, Jacob. Then he said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed. So this is the first time we see Jacob referenced as Israel in this passage, but God himself confirms Jacob's new name in Genesis 35, verse 10. So listen to Genesis 35, verses 10 through 12.

[23 : 21] Genesis 35, 10 through 12 say, and God said to him, your name is Jacob. No longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name. So he called his name Israel. And God said to him, I am God almighty, be fruitful and multiply a nation and a company of nations shall come from you and Kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you and I will give the land to your offspring after you. So notice again, we talk about the land, the seed and a covenant there.

But even though Jacob gets that confirmation, he still faces hardship. Just look a little bit further down in Genesis 35 and we'll look at Genesis 35, 16 through 20. Then they journeyed from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor and she had hard labor. And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, do not fear for you have another son.

And as her soul was departing for she was dying, she called his name Ben-Uni, but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died and she was buried on the way to Ephrath, that is Bethlehem. And Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day. So now we've got the family history and we've met a lot of the people that we're going to see in Joseph's story. And now that we've seen the people, let's move on to the second section of the lesson. Going back to Genesis 37, we see the problem. So the problem is our second section.

[25 : 05] As we pick up with the end of verse two and read through verse four, Joseph and his brothers have been out pastoring the flock. And the very last line of verse two says, and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

The problem is obvious. Jacob loves Joseph more than any other of his sons. Joseph then sees his father repeat the pattern of his father's parents, showing favoritism to one child over another. Jacob giving the coat to Joseph would have been more significant in that culture than it would be in our culture because the robe marked the owner as the one whom the father intended to be the future leader of the household. That, of course, was an honor that was normally reserved for the firstborn son.

The favoritism surely was obvious before Jacob gave Joseph the multicolored robe. Moses plainly states the brothers' reaction to that favoritism. It says the other brothers hated Joseph and could not speak peacefully to him. While Joseph is innocent in the matter, Jacob is not. Moses leaves no doubt about which side of the ledger Jacob belongs on. So we see that Jacob, like his sons, is a sinful actor whose deeds will require God's intervention.

[26 : 48] So he, too, is a sinner in need of a savior. So that brings me back to what we've said more than once tonight. God can use anyone and save anyone God chooses, regardless of that person's original character and motives.

So right now, is Jacob looking like a person you would think God would want to save? He needs to save, that's true.

And we're going to find out how fortunate Jacob is as we go along. I skipped over the part about Joseph bringing his father a bad report about his brothers. Some Joseph studies actually get hung up here in a discussion about Joseph's motives.

They ask questions like, was Joseph being a tattletale? Was he trying to make himself look even better than his brothers? Did he volunteer the report? Was the report something that Jacob asked for?

So I'll give you the one thing that we are sure about, even though answers to those questions run the gamut. The one thing we're sure about, and the only real straight scoop, is that we don't know the true answer because Moses didn't tell us.

[27 : 55] So if it was really important for us to know, it would be there. Suffice it to say, though, that however we interpret the comment about the bad report, the report only made the brothers hate Joseph even more.

So, so far we have seen the people and the problem. In our last section of the lesson, we see the preview. So the preview is the last thing that you have on your blanks.

And that preview comes in the form of two dreams that Joseph had. We see those dreams in verses 5 through 11. Verses 5 through 11 say again, Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

He said to them, Hear this dream that I have dreamed. Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field. And behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.

His brothers said to him, Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us? So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

[29 : 06] Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.

But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to the ground before you?

And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. Joseph's visions reveal that one day he will be placed in a position of power, prestige, and privilege.

That even his own family members will come and honor him. But first of all, we see after that original dream that Joseph's brothers hated him even more.

The imagery in both dreams has the brothers bowing down to Joseph. Knowing how the story turns out, that makes a lot more sense to us than it would have to the brothers when they heard those dreams.

[30 : 12] Joseph's brothers were shepherds, remember, so they probably were struggling to think what the sheaves would have to do with them. They probably thought it was just another reason to discount the dream.

Little did they know, though, that decades later, the dream would come true when they would come to Joseph and ask for grain. So God is giving Joseph a vivid picture there of how grain is going to factor into Joseph's future.

But, of course, the brothers would have no way of knowing that. And even if the brothers didn't understand why the dream included sheaves of grain, they certainly understood the symbolism of their sheaves bowing down to Joseph's sheaf.

That, of course, is why they hated Joseph even more after he told them about the dream. The second dream is similar to the first, except that instead of 11 sheaves of grain bowing down to Joseph, 11 stars are bowing down to him.

The 11 stars obviously represents the brothers, but this dream also has the sun and the moon bowing down to him too. Verse 10 says that Joseph told this dream to his father and his brothers, and Jacob clearly understands who are represented by the sun and the moon.

[31 : 28] Look at verse 10 again. Verse 10 says that when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, What is this dream that you have dreamed?

Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you? Jacob knew that the sun and the moon represented Joseph's father and mother.

In ancient cultures, these astronomical symbols represented rulers. The dream then symbolically elevated Joseph over the whole house of Jacob, even his father.

The father part makes obvious sense, but let's think about the mother. Rachel was Joseph's mother. She died giving birth to Benjamin, so she's been dead for a while. And a dead person will never be able to bow down to Joseph, so who is the mother here? Have you thought about that before? Well, the mother must be Leah.

[32 : 29] Life with Jacob and Rachel must really have been a lonely experience for Leah. Certainly she had plenty of children to keep her busy, but she never had sole possession of Jacob's heart.

Then, all of a sudden, Rachel died. So after that, who do you think was the one who changed Benjamin's diapers or washed Joseph's face or bandaged his skinned knees? Who do you think became the real mother to Rachel's sons? Well, obviously Leah did. She took her sister's place, and it actually is next to Leah that Jacob would eventually be buried.

Perhaps this gives us a clue that Leah was the wife that God intended for Jacob all along. And Leah, not Rachel, is the mother of Judah, the one of the twelve from whom Christ is descended. After years of isolation and competition, God finally allowed Leah to become the woman of her husband's household, and she took on the duties of the stepmother of even Joseph and Benjamin. [33 : 31] That actually says a lot about Leah's character. If you have the handout from last week, the last line of it has the working title for this lesson, and it was going to be titled The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

That was when I thought I could make it through all of chapter 37 in one lesson. The good was going to be a reference to Joseph, but it also was going to be a reference to Leah. We see an indication here that she was doing the best she could to honor her sister by taking care of her sister's children. I want to backtrack a little bit and look at the final verse of tonight's passage, too.

It says, So it looks like Jacob is at least questioning Joseph's dream, if not downright rejecting it. But he really isn't. Scripture tells us here that while the brothers grew more jealous of Joseph, his father keeps the saying in mind. Does that remind you of anything else in the Bible?

[34 : 34] We remember that the Virgin Mary, reflecting upon the visit of the shepherds after Christ's birth, treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.

So Jacob files Joseph's visions away safely in his memory bank. He understands the importance of dreams, and God has revealed much to Jacob in this manner over the years.

By age 108 or so, Jacob is wise enough to recognize when the Lord is speaking. Sensing that Joseph was to be elevated to prominence over them, the envy and hatred of his brothers is understandable.

If you think about it, God's sovereign choice of a leader often brings out the jealousy of those who must submit. Rather than recognize God's choice, Joseph's brothers set out on a course to destroy Joseph, and the brothers' actions, though prompted by the belief that they should lead, actually proves why they should not have led.

What is clear by the end of verse 11 is that tensions have escalated to a dangerous place between Joseph and his brothers. It seems equally clear from what follows that both Jacob and Joseph are unaware of how serious and perilous the brothers' hatred and envy of Joseph has become.

[35 : 51] In the ancient world, the blood tie of brothers was viewed as carrying a covenantal loyalty that made the relationship safe and secure. Clearly, this chapter describes a breakdown of this loyalty in Jacob's family, and with each use of the word brother or brothers, it only serves to highlight even more how dysfunctional Jacob's family had become.

If we didn't know the end of the story, how many of you would believe me if I told you that most of the bad brothers would become the heads of the tribes of God's chosen people? That's why we've considered over and over again tonight the main idea of this passage.

God can use anyone and save anyone God chooses, regardless of that person's original character and motives. If nothing else, Jacob and his sons are prime examples of that.

However, let's consider Leah one more time. We can learn something important as a secondary thing from her. The names of Leah's sons tell us something about her journey of faith in God. Her faith in God had grown despite Jacob's behavior and the worse family tensions became the more she took them to God, at least initially. So again, the worse the family tensions became, we see evidence that Leah took those tensions to God.

[37 : 10] Earlier we read about Leah's sons being born and I want to touch on those verses again one more time but focus on Leah's reactions to the birth of the first four. In Genesis 29, 32, Leah

said after Reuben was born, the Lord has looked upon my affliction for now my husband will love me.

When Simeon was born, Leah said this in verse 33 of Genesis 29, because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also.

One verse later, Leah said this after Levi was born, she said, now this time my husband will be attached to me because I have born him three sons. So despite what Leah desired, Jacob's heart never changed for her, at least not for a long time.

But look how Leah's attitude had changed by the time her fourth son is born. Genesis 29, 35 said, and she conceived again and bore a son and said, this time I will praise the Lord.

Therefore, she called his name Judah. So do you see the difference there? For the first three, she was trying to win the favor of her husband. But on the last one, she realized that no matter what her circumstances were, she needed to praise the Lord.

[38 : 30] So she's progressed from trying to win the affections of her husband to praising the Lord despite her circumstances. We'll soon see Joseph remaining faithful to God despite his own difficult circumstances.

And we don't know whether this is the case or not, but perhaps he learned that trait by watching his stepmother, a stepmother who chose to mother Rachel's children despite knowing that Jacob had loved Rachel more.

So during a chapter filled with hatred and jealousy, Leah stands out for being someone who demonstrated selfless love because of her faith in God. God honored Leah's faithfulness and we've touched on this a little bit already.

She obtained a position of prominence only after she stopped desiring it. And Judah, despite all his character flaws, and we'll see even more of those flaws as we get further along, eventually will become the seed in the line of the promised Messiah.

So a secondary lesson for us tonight, in addition to knowing that God can save anyone he chooses, we need to really think about this. When we don't understand what God is doing, we can take a lesson from Leah and say, this time I will praise the Lord.

[39 : 44] So with that, let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you again for the reminder tonight that you are working even though we don't always see you in some of the more difficult circumstances we have.

Give us the faith and also the desire to praise you when things don't go well, just like we see Leah doing here after her son was born. Continue to be with us as we go through this study. Keep us true to what your word says. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.