

JOSEPH IS SOLD

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Lesson: Genesis 37:1-4, 23-28

Envy, jealousy—what do those two words make you think of? You know these things come from the evil of coveting—wanting something somebody else has, perhaps wanting it so much that if you could, you would take it away from him.

Now, you show envy and jealousy when someone takes the car window seat when you wanted it, when you don't get the biggest piece of dessert, and when you complain to your parents that somebody else is given a bigger allowance than you get. And sometimes you're jealous when you see somebody else is liked more than you are. And if you listened carefully to the story that I just read in Genesis, you will see that it spoke a little bit about jealousy. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him. Why? —because Joseph was liked by their father, Jacob, more than all his other sons. And he proved it by giving Joseph a coat of many colors. The result was that all his brothers were jealous of him and started to hate him. So that one day, when Jacob was not looking, they caught Joseph and threw him into a pit. And they would have killed him except that they decided to sell him—to sell him to become a slave, to be taken into a land far away—a country called Egypt. And as far as they were concerned, they would never see Joseph again.

Imagine that—selling your own brother for money. Selling him because you hated him. And you may ask, “Why would the Lord allow such a horrible thing like that to be done? Why did the Lord allow Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery?” Joseph, after all, had done nothing wrong. Well, the same reason is given when you may ask why are we allowed to do things that are bad. The Lord does not stop you when you want to do something bad, something evil. If you really want to, what would happen if the Lord suddenly said, “No, you can't do it?” The Lord allows you to do it. But then He allows something else to happen. He allows you to be punished. Whenever you do something bad, you are always punished. There is no such thing as getting away with it. Whenever you do something bad, sooner or later, in one way or another, punishment will always come.

If you read the story of Joseph a little further on, you will see how all his brothers were punished for the thing they did. But what is interesting is to see how the Lord takes any bad thing that people do and bends it, turns it around, so that something good will come out of it. We can see something good coming out of the fact that Joseph was sold as a slave. If you remember the story, he

became a ruler in the land and helped to save the Egyptians from the famine that was coming.

Now, what Jacob's sons had done was a very evil thing to do. And they were later punished for it. And we see that when people do something that's bad, the Lord will take that bad thing and make something good out of it. And it is the same with your punishments. Perhaps you have heard your parent or a teacher say, "I am going to punish you. And what I am going to do is going to be good for you." And that's true. It will be good for you. Why? Because it will help you to stop and think about what you're doing, and perhaps it will stop you from doing what was wrong, what you are being punished for. And after all, stopping to do what is wrong and starting to do what is right is the way that we all start getting ready to become angels. *Amen.*