

Genesis 37:1-11

No Compromise

In an unscientific internet poll readers answered the question “What would you do for a million dollars?” There were 20 choices and each person was asked to check off as many things as they would be willing to do for a million bucks.

Fortunately only 1% said they’d be willing to have their tongue removed. Unfortunately, 1 out of 5 said they’d give up the chance to have children, 1 out of 3 said they’d change religions, and a whopping 1 out of 2 said they’d star in a porn movie.

What would it take to convince you to compromise your principles? What’s your price?

Today we’re beginning a study of a man who refused to compromise no matter what it cost him. That man is named Joseph, and we see the details of his life in the Book of Genesis.

As we’ve seen repeatedly in our study through the Genesis account, Genesis is chocked full of life application principles. Genesis is history, but it’s history that’s filled with practical lessons for our lives.

The biographical account of Joseph is nothing short of remarkable. The detailed biblical record of his story begins when he was a teenager and continues until he dies at just over 100. During his life, Joseph experienced the depths of despair as he was hated by his brothers, sold into slavery to a caravan of traders, and later imprisoned on false charges

But also during his life he experienced the promotion of God and Joseph went from the depths of despair to the place of authority in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh in power.

Now actually, we know very little about the first 17 years of Joseph's life. What we do know is he was the first born of Rachel while Jacob was serving Laban at Haran. That put Joseph in the Messianic line. He was an ancestor of the Jewish people and of Jesus.

We also know that Rachel was Jacob's beloved so that put Joseph in a favored position with his father right off the bat.

Joseph was probably 5 or 6 when the family left Mesopotamia to move back to Canaan, or what we know as Israel today.

Jacob was affected by both heredity and environment. He would have seen all the trouble his father's polygamy caused. He would have experienced the fear that filled the whole camp when they met Essau's armed men. At such a young age those things would have made a deep impression on Joseph.

But he also witnessed the return of his father after he met God at Peniel.

Joseph would have noticed a change in his father when he returned limping and with brokenness of heart before God. This would have made some deep impressions too.

Open your Bibles to Genesis 37 page 36

As we come to Genesis 37 several tragic deaths are taking place. Deborah, Rebekah's nurse has died. Shortly after that Joseph's mother Rachel passed on and then finally Isaac, Joseph's grandfather died and was buried.

Genesis 36 gives us the genealogy of Esau, which becomes important later in understanding the conflict between Israel and Edom and the prophecies against Eden.

But chapter 37 opens with Jacob and his sons living in the land that God had promised them.

I. We Can Be Tempted To Compromise Our Values Because Of Peer Pressure

Read verses 1-2

Joseph is now 17 years old and is teamed up with 4 brothers; Dan, Naphtli, Gad & Ashur. These 5 young men are responsible for looking after their father Jacob's livestock.

Unfortunately, these 4 brothers of Joseph seem to be bent on following the path of their older brothers who massacred a whole city, committed incest, and practiced immorality. This is a shakey bunch.

Now, there is no doubt that there was a tremendous amount of pressure on Joseph to conform and be like his brothers. His brothers were self-serving, selfish men who had caused Jacob tremendous heartache already in life.

But something else was going on. We are not told exactly what it was but whatever it was Joseph didn't go along with it. In fact, rather than bowing to the peer pressure of his brothers and becoming like one of them he went home and brought a bad report of them to his father.

God often uses people as object lessons and illustrations. Joseph becomes a powerful illustration or type of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says Jesus Christ was made like unto his brethren. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He became a human being like us.

Joseph grew up in the family. He bore the name and the heritage of the rest of the brothers, but he was uniquely different.

They were darkness, he was light. They were murders, treacherous, incestuous. Joseph was a son who fellowshiped with the father, loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

One quarter of Genesis is devoted to Joseph and his life. And of all the people who come and go on the pages of the Bible nobody more beautifully portrays the life of Jesus than Joseph. You touch his life at any point, and you'll find an analogy of the life and work of Jesus Christ.

That's why he gets such a prominent position in Genesis. God's goal is to make His people like Christ.

So, here's Joseph out with his brothers learning the business of caring for the flocks. He didn't buckle under to the corrupt life style of Canaan. He didn't bow to the pressure of doing whatever his brothers were doing. Instead he brought a report to his father.

Now, understand, Joseph wasn't some kind of winning tattle tale just looking for a chance to tell Dad how rotten his brothers were to make them look bad.

Their actions could endanger the family and out of love for his father, Joseph told the truth. In other words Joseph had some convictions. He was willing to stand up for what was right. He wasn't going to sell out to be popular.

It seems like so often when we try to address problems in our society, especially in teens, we overlook the most powerful influence of all and that's peer pressure. The peer pressure teens face usually far outweighs all the other factors.

Now you might say, "Not me. I'm not influenced by others."

In a famous experiment social psychologist Solomon Asch showed groups of college students a line, and then asked each student to identify which of several other lines were the same length as the first one. (The answer was obvious.) Only one student, however, was the "subject." The others were "confederates," in league with Asch.

In many of the trials, all these students insisted that a shorter or longer line was the correct match.

Asch wanted to investigate what human beings will do when confronted with a group which insists that "wrong" is "right." Of course, everybody picked the correct line when they were alone. But in a group, 76 percent betrayed their own judgment and sided with the majority at least once during 12 trials.

Asch was shocked by these results. He warned about a "tendency to conformity in our society so strong that ... young people are willing to call white black." His results, he said, raised questions "about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct."

Peer pressure is a whole lot stronger than most of us realize.

Joseph's an example of a teen who could stand against the crowd. Here's a model for not only teens, but for all of us. Sure Joseph paid a price for being different. But in the end God blessed him and even used him to bless his family that had rejected him.

There's usually going to be a price to pay for doing what is right, for rejecting peer pressure. But the price is more than worth the trade-off of wearily going along with the crowd.

If we've received Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, then we've been bought with a price.

We've been called to be different. We're to glorify God in our body and our spirit which are God's. And God will never ask us to do something He doesn't give us the power to do. In fact, here's the biblical promise:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (I Corinthians 10:13)

I think it is significant that the story of Joseph's adult life is going to be one of victory and dealing with temptation God's way. And I believe one of the reasons why he's so successful as an adult is because he set the groundwork as a young person.

A second test of the character, or faithfulness of Joseph comes in the next two verses, and interestingly it comes at the hand of his father.

I. We Can Be Tempted To Compromise Our Values Because Of Peer Pressure

II. We Can Be Tempted To Compromise Our Values Because Of Pride

Read verses 3 & 4

The problem revolved around this special coat. Now it really wasn't a coat of many colors at all. The Hebrew uses the words *kethoneth passim*.

Kethoneth means "a tunic." *Passim* literally means "flat of the hand or foot."

Where did the coat of many colors come from? The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament used at the time of Christ for Jews who didn't speak Hebrew any more) translated *passim* by the word *poikilos* meaning "many."

In 1534 Martin Luther translated the Bible from Latin to German. When he got the the word *poikilos* he knew it meant "many." He wasn't sure what the original Hebrew word meant but noble men of his day wore lots of colors so he translated it by the German *bunter Rock*, which means "multicolored skirt."

Luther's German translation influenced the KJV translators so we end up with "coat of many colors."

What this really seems to be is a sleeved tunic that extended to the ankles. Now think about it. Was that the kind of thing you wore to work? You didn't do manual labor in something like this. This is what the overseer or boss would wear.

By giving Joseph this coat, Jacob was saying he should have preeminence over the other sons. Ruben was the first born, but he committed incest with his father's concubine, Bilhah and lost the right to that position. (I Chronicles 5:2)

Simeon & Levi certainly weren't candidates for family leadership after what happened at Shechem so Joseph was it. His father was pointing him out as the one that should possess the birthright. Remember how important this was in the eastern culture in which these men lived.

II Samuel 13:18 talks about this type of tunic as being worn by royalty.

Now, this really got his brothers aggravated. They hated him and were so angry they wouldn't even speak to Joseph.

But not only did this cause friction in the family, it put Joseph to the test too.

How tempting to use this authority given by the father to lord himself over this brothers. What an opportunity for pride.

The writer of Proverbs said. *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.* (Proverbs 16:18)

Pride has to be one of the most dangerous opponents we face.

Satan tried to appeal to Jesus pride. Jesus was the Son of God on earth. He had all power and all authority and yet He lived in humility. From His birth to His death everything about him showed that he was meek and lowly of heart.

And so Satan came along and said "If you are the Son of God make these stones into bread. You've been fasting for 40 days, your hungry, show your power."

But Jesus refused. You couldn't appeal to His pride. Even though He had the ability

to do what He wanted He was totally submitted to the Father in all things. He had no false pride, only a humble commitment to God.

A proud person isn't usable in the hands of God. Joseph faced this temptation and he passed it too.

See his brothers didn't hate him because he fancy his coat. They didn't despise him because he pushed his authority around.

They hated him because of their father's love for him. That's the only reason they had. Men hated Jesus because of his unique relationship with the Father and Joseph's brothers hated him for the same reason.

You know what the cure is for pride in our life? Realize that all we have and all we are we owe to the grace of God.

The moment we begin to look down on someone else is the moment we begin to forget God's favor.

Joseph learned not to fall to pride and that became a life pattern for him. He was eventually placed in the highest position in Pharaoh's court next to Pharaoh himself. Second in command of the most powerful nation on the face of the globe and Joseph ended up using his position and power to help his own brothers who sold him into slavery years before.

Then, there is a third point of testing in Joseph's life, and that is found in verses 5 - 11. It comes in the form of two dreams.

I. We Can Be Tempted To Compromise Our Values Because Of Peer Pressure

II. We Can Be Tempted To Compromise Our Values Because Of Pride

III. We Can Be Tempted To Compromise Our Values Because Of Doubt

Read verses 5-8

You didn't need an interpreter to figure out the meanings of these dreams that Joseph has.

And even though in our day God is using the Bible to speak, not dreams and visions

in that day, before there was any written scripture it was obvious that God himself was using these dreams to communicate.

Now the brothers were really angry. They said do you expect to reign over us?

Then he had a second dream.

Read verses 9-11

The first dream dealt with position and power, but position and power relating to the earth. The harvest field was a symbol of the world's resources - its wealth. The sons of Jacob were reaping the riches of the world, but Joseph outdid them all.

In the end his brothers would be forced to acknowledge him. It was a dream of the control that Joseph was to have over the resources of the world. The dream was ultimately fulfilled in Joseph's control over the resources of Egypt.

Then there was the dream of the stars. That was a dream of position and power too. In Genesis 1 we are told that the sun and the moon are symbols of rule. They symbolize those set on high to control men. In a coming day Joseph was to be given command over the rulers of the world.

That was literally fulfilled in the high position of authority Joseph attained in Egypt, an authority so great that even Pharaoh bowed to his will.

Of course, that didn't all exhaust itself in the personal history of Joseph. The dreams go beyond Joseph to Jesus Christ.

There's coming a day when everyone will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Romans 14:11 says *For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God."*

Then all the resources and rulers of the planet will be under the command of Jesus Christ. Even Israel will acknowledge Jesus as Lord, just like Joseph's brothers finally acknowledged him.

Jacob listened to his son's dreams and was amazed. In fact, he even rebuked Joseph and said, "Man, this is out of line." But then verse 11 says *but his father kept the matter*

in mind. He pondered the matter just like Mary did when the angel announced she was going to give birth to the Son of God.

And the reason he pondered those dreams was because they were reinforcing what he had already realized was the destiny of His son.

When he gave him the robe that designated royalty and supremacy over the family, Jacob was saying what God was now saying through those dreams.

And as Jacob listens, he is astounded. He's thinking, "What is God doing? Is God saying that this is the destiny of my Son?"

But really, more than being for Jacob and the sons, the dreams are really for Joseph. And Joseph faces this test by believing God's revelation to him and not doubting.

You know he was already in lots of hot water with his brothers. They hated him so much they couldn't even talk to him without the anger and the bitterness pouring out. The last thing he'd want to do is infuriate these guys any more. He knew all too well that at least two of his brothers weren't beyond murder.

But Joseph speaks up. He believed the truth of God's message and he shares that, even though it enrages his brothers just like the Jewish leaders were enraged at Jesus for telling them the truth about himself.

Joseph didn't doubt God. Joseph accepted what God wanted for his life. He didn't buck it. He didn't fight it.

He didn't suppress it to keep the peace. He committed himself to it 100%.

Here is a 17 year old boy who resists the temptation to bow to peer pressure, to be puffed up with pride, and now to back out of God's will for his life by not trusting God.

Instead he has the victory in all three areas. The awareness of, and commitment to, God's revealed will for his life was a stabilizing force in all of his tests and trials he was going to face.

And Joseph was willing to do what God said and to stand up for what was right even if it isolated him from his whole family.

It's obvious in the beginning of the chapter that four brothers don't like him. After the coat incident all his brothers are angry and after the dreams even his beloved father seems perturbed.

Joseph knew what it meant to stand alone. He knew what it meant to have convictions and to stand for right principles, to obey God, even if his obedience isolated him from those around him.

The price of a firm commitment to Jesus Christ to obey and honor and serve him can often be high. And a lot of people don't want to pay it. A lot of people don't think it's worth it.

Why give up the opportunity for pleasure, popularity, making money, having a good time?

Why be pure, be holy? Why share Jesus Christ with others? Why endure hardness like a good soldier when everybody else is taking the easy way out?

Joseph was a young man who was willing to stand alone. In fact, that became a pattern for his whole life. And Joseph was honored by God. Today he is with the Lord and he has no regrets, nothing to be ashamed of, he only has praise from his Heavenly Father.

What a privilege to have 14 chapters of God's eternal Word recording the fact that he wouldn't compromise.

What really matters in this world? What really matters in this world is what really matters to God. The rest of life will be gone in a moment, in the blink of an eye. What God says is important. What God says really counts.

Joseph established himself and his life pattern in the midst of the tests he faced while he was still a teenager.

As a teenager, Joseph established a pattern of morality, righteousness, godliness, humility and commitment.

That was what allowed Joseph to literally change the world and effect the nation of Israel and God's program of Old Testament history.

As a teenager Joseph presents one of the most remarkable pictures of our Lord Jesus Christ in all of the Scriptures.

As Joseph was loved by his father, Jesus was loved by His father. As Joseph was destined to rule this world, Jesus is destined to rule. And as Joseph was hated by his brethren, Jesus was hated by his brethren.

Jesus Christ came unto his own and his own received him not. Instead they crucified him and like Joseph's brothers they thought they were rid of him until Jesus rose again.

The one they hated for his righteousness turned out to be the Savior.

Joseph saved his brothers from starvation. Jesus saves us from damnation.

How willing are you to stand up for what is right? Do you have a sell-out price? What would it take to cause you to compromise your convictions? How are you setting habit patterns of obedience that will strengthen you for the future?