

Aim of lesson

To show that jealousy and hatred can destroy one's character, but that accepting God's teaching on love can free us. Learning this lesson is often a painful process.

Bible background

Genesis 37; Psalm 22:16-21; John 19:23-24.

Outline of lesson

It's not fair!

Ask the class if they have brothers or sisters. Have they ever felt angry or hurt when a brother or sister received something good and they did not? Have they ever begrudged them getting a prize or doing well at school? Or ever thought 'it's not fair' or 'where's mine?'. If so, this lesson is for them!

A special coat

Read Genesis 37:2-4 together. Discuss the origins of the brothers' hatred. It may be that Jacob loved Joseph because he reminded him of Rachel, whom he had loved, but was now dead. The main point is that he did love him and showed it by the coat. The coat may have been many coloured or long-sleeved. It may also have denoted a special priestly function in the household. Whether this was so or not, it was intended as a special honour, a token of his father's love for Joseph and was seen as such by his brothers.

Joseph's dreams

Work through the first section in the workbook. Ask the class to look up and illustrate, or describe, the two dreams, in the boxes provided.

In Dothan

Read chapter 37:12-36, using different members of the class for the various characters.

Discuss the rest of the questions in the workbook, bringing out the effect that Jacob's actions had on the family. Note that although Jacob had singled out Joseph with the coat, God singled him out with the dreams. Members of a family will have different advantages and we must learn to accept and rejoice in them. Also draw out the development of the brothers' jealousy and hatred, and ask the class to consider what sort of people they were developing into.

Digging deeper

Joseph and Jesus

There are many parallels between the lives of Joseph and Jesus. Six are mentioned here:

- They were shepherds
- They were loved by their father
- Both had a special robe – Jesus' robe was made of a single piece of cloth
- Their brothers (in the case of Jesus the Jews) hated them
- They plotted to kill both
- Both were placed in a pit / tomb, but were raised

You may like to start a chart of parallels, to which you can add in coming weeks – there are some other suggestions in subsequent lessons.

Relevance to our lives

Ask the class how they can put into practice this week the attitude of being pleased when someone else succeeds. Ask for specific suggestions of situations they might meet and what they might say to express their pleasure.

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to see how our words and actions affect other people. Teach us to be pleased when others succeed, and to be grateful for all that we are given.

Other suggestions for activities

A 'comic strip' form of illustration, showing the different steps in the story would reinforce it well for younger students.