The Story of Joseph

Michele and I had a great time this past weekend hiking the Lake Trail at Hickory Knob State Park. I highly recommend it although it does involve a 3 hour round trip. For local walks we often drive to different neighborhoods for some variety. Sometimes we go to Foxchase where we almost bought a house before we decided on the home in which we presently live. The home in Foxchase was a split level and we referred to it as the Brady Bunch house due to its similar appearance to the famed house of the tv series. Most of you probably remember “The Brady Bunch” which chronicled the idyllic life of a family created when a couple marries, each bringing three children from a previous marriage into the household. The children bond easily as the happy family embarks on a new life together. Like most tv shows, it bore little resemblance to real life. In chapter 37 of Genesis sibling rivalry is taken to the level of physical violence perhaps due to the fact that the brothers came from 4 different mothers. This chapter marks the beginning of a long chain of events that led to the establishment of Israel as a nation of God’s chosen people. It also introduces us to a lengthy study of the character of Joseph who is the focus of almost all of the remaining 13 chapters in Genesis. While verse 2 reads “This is the account of Jacob”, the rest of Chapter 37 is mostly about Joseph and his brothers. He seemed to have a particularly strained relationship with the sons of the maidservants Bilhah and Zilpah. Of his 11 brothers, only Benjamin was his full brother born to Rachel, the rest were half-brothers born to Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah. Often today we see division in families where second (or more) marriages bring together a forced collection of siblings. Unfortunately, just like many situations in the Old Testament the friction usually revolves around money. Joseph’s troubles with his half-brothers are like those of Ishmael and Isaac writ large. Joseph’s coat of many colors given to him by Jacob was symbolic of Jacob’s choice of Joseph as his favorite son. This was natural since Joseph was the firstborn son of Rachel whom Jacob loved much more than Leah.

In verses 5 through 10 Joseph described dreams he had which further enrage his brothers. In his dreams, Jacob saw sheaves that he and his brothers had bound in the field and his brothers’ sheaves were bowing down before his symbolizing his dominion over them. He went even further in his next dream in which the sun, moon and 11 stars also bowed before him. His dreams were prophetic of the family’s future in Egypt where Joseph would be de facto ruler of Egypt during years of famine. The eleven stars could represent his 11 bothers and the sun and moon could represent his parents. His dream could also be prophecy of what is described in Revelation chapter 12 “A great sign appeared in heaven a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth” (Rev. 12:1-2). This passage is symbolic of the birth of the early church with the 12 stars representing the 12 apostles and the sun representing Jesus. It is thought that Joseph was 17 at the time having the vision of a prophet but not the maturity. Matthew Henry wrote “Joseph was more of a prophet than a politician, else he would have kept this to himself, when he could not but know that his brethren did already hate him and that this would but the more exasperate them. But, if he told it in his simplicity, yet God directed it for the mortification of his brethren. Observe, Joseph dreamed of his preferment, but he did not dream of his imprisonment. Thus many young people, when they are setting out in the world, think of nothing but prosperity and pleasure, and never dream of trouble.” Joseph saw the glory he would achieve but did not understand the hardship he would have to endure. I recall a study on spiritual gifts led by David Richardson in which he remarked about prophets “We don’t need many of these”. Prophets are truth tellers but their honesty can be brutal with little regard for the feelings of the hearers. While Joseph was telling the truth about his dreams, there was no reason to share those dreams with his brothers.

Joseph is seen as a type of Christ. Below is a link to an article that has a listing of similarities between Joseph and Jesus with scriptural references. Next week we will continue our study of chapter 37 as Joseph is attacked by his brothers and sold into slavery.

[How is Joseph a Type of Jesus? » Reasons for Hope\* Jesus](https://reasonsforhopejesus.com/how-is-joseph-a-type-of-jesus/)