

Ponderosa Bible Church  
Sermon-Based Small Group  
March 18, 2024

-A Facilitator Guide-



# Genesis 37:1-36

**For the Facilitator:** *For small group facilitators who haven't heard this week's teaching, we recommend watching the video "Perils of the Pit" on our YouTube channel before joining the discussion.*

### **"Digging Deeper" Fellowship time:**

**Fellowship time suggestion:** Hello everyone, and welcome to your first week of small groups. I hope this is an amazing and rewarding experience for you as you facilitate your small groups. ***This week for your "digging Deeper Fellowship Time," we want it to be fun for you. So, ask the members of your group to participate in a game of "two truths and a lie." Each member must tell two truths about themselves and then a lie. The goal of the game is for each person to guess which statement is a lie.*** In playing this game you will get to know each other better. Have fun with it, and do your best to get each member of your group to come out of their shell. Do your best to keep it to half an hour. (:

### **Sermon Based Study Questions:**

**For the Facilitator:** *As a small group leader, your primary role is facilitating a discussion, not teaching a lesson. Your job is to help group members discuss and understand the lesson taught by the pastor. It would be best if you aimed to bring out personal applications of the Sunday message during the discussion by asking questions such as "How does this apply to you?" or "What have you learned?". The goal of the sermon-based small group is to foster conversation, encourage fellowship, and deepen the study of the Sunday Sermon. The guide is not meant to be followed word-for-word but instead used as a reference to promote discussion. You don't have to ask every sub-point under a question, but you can use them as suggestions to guide your discussion. The study's success is not measured by how much of the guide is covered but by how well the group members engage in fellowship and deepen their understanding of the Sunday Sermon.*

**This week's passage:**

**Genesis 37:1-36**

“Jacob lived in the land of his father’s sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

These are the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen 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? Or 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.” 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.

Now his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” And he said to him, “Here I am.” So he said to him, “Go now,

see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word.” So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, “What are you seeking?” “I am seeking my brothers,” he said. “Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock.” And the man said, “They have gone away, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.” But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, “Let us not take his life.” And Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes and returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?” Then they took Joseph’s robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in



the blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, “This we have found; please identify whether it is your son’s robe or not.” And he identified it and said, “It is my son’s robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.” Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, “No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.” Thus his father wept for him. Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.”

### **Questions from the study guide:**

1. Why did Jacob love Joseph more than the other brothers?

**\*\*Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion\*\***

A. How did his love for Joseph affect his relationship with his other sons?

**-or-**

B. In what ways may’ve Joseph’s brothers been justified in how they felt about Joseph?

• **For the Facilitator:** *Jacob's love for Joseph is often explained by the phrase "son of his old age." However, the commentaries fail to provide any clear explanation of this phrase. While it could be interpreted in different ways, my best guesses are: a) Jacob loved Joseph the most because he was his youngest child, b) Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons because they had already moved out of the house while Joseph still lived with him, or c) Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons because Joseph still respected and looked up to him as a young man. Despite these possibilities, there remains a lack of clarity on the matter.*

## 2. What caused Joseph's brothers to hate him so?

**\*\*Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion\*\***

A. In what ways may Joseph have caused the hatred his brothers had for him?

**-or-**

B. How did Joseph's brother's hatred for him help to fulfill the plan that God had for Israel?

• **For the Facilitator:** *The Bible gives a pretty cut-and-dry answer to this question by saying the following, “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 simple fact is that Jacob was repeating the same mistakes that his own father had made by choosing favorites. Esau was Isaac’s favorite, and Joseph was Jacob’s favorite. This seems to be a trend in the family of Abraham, and even though Jacob had seen his own father do this and probably detested it, he still made the same mistakes himself. Even though Christians are saved and forgiven by Jesus, it doesn’t mean that Christ changes our human nature, and sometimes we have to carry the mistakes of our past around for a while in order to become sanctified enough to disown them.*

### 3. Which brother protected Joseph from death?

**\*\*Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion\*\***

A. Why do you believe that Reuben was protecting Joseph?

**-or-**

B. Why did Reuben feel like such a failure when he was unable to save Joseph?

• **For the Facilitator:** *Reuben is an interesting person. He was right there with the brothers who were hating on Joseph and even plotting his death, but when the brothers had determined to act against Joseph, he did his best to rescue him. This tells me that Reuben may have been a bit of a quiet person and even a follower. He may have been the oldest, but others like Judah and Levi clearly led him around. However, what is to be respected about Reuben is that when evil was about to happen, he stepped in to rescue his brother.*

4. What relationship did the Ishmaelites have with Joseph and his brothers?

**\*\*Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion\*\***

A. How may have Joseph's relationship with the Ishmaelites have contributed to them choosing to purchase Joseph as a slave?

**-or-**

B. Why would the Ishmaelites have been antagonistic toward Joseph and his family?

• **For the Facilitator:** *I find this topic to be quite amusing, particularly because the Ishmaelites were actually Joseph's cousins. They were descendants of Jacob's uncle, Ishmael, and were therefore considered part of Jacob's family. What makes this story so interesting is that it highlights the "Ishmael breeding program." It is highly likely that Ishmael was still alive at the time this story takes place, or had only passed away within the last five to ten years. Yet, there were already enough Ishmaelite descendants to form a group of slave traders, which is quite remarkable. This means that Ishmael must have had a lot of children in a very short amount of time and that his offspring did the same. At the time Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites as a slave and taken to Egypt, Jacob's family likely consisted of around thirty-five to forty individuals. However, by the time they arrived in Egypt, Jacob's family had grown to seventy. In contrast, Ishmael probably had at least five hundred descendants or more. This makes sense given that a prophecy had been given to Abraham that Ishmael would have ten princes come from him, which implies that he would have a large family. Hence, this is why there were Ishmaelites in this story.*

5. How did Joseph become a servant in Potiphar's household?



\*\*Ask ONE of the following UNLESS you think that asking both will make for a better discussion\*\*

A. How did Joseph, being a servant in Potiphar's house, help him to accomplish God's purposes with Abraham's family?

**-or-**

B. How does Potiphar show that he does not believe that Joseph tried to rape his wife?

• **For the Facilitator:** *Joseph became a servant in Pharaoh's house because the Ishmaelites had sold him to Potiphar.*

**For further study, please check out:** *Psalm 37:12, 105:17, Genesis 47:22, Jeremiah 38:6, Lamentations 3:53, and Acts 7:9.*

**PLEASE READ, VERY IMPORTANT!!!** How you close your meeting is very important so even if you do not get through all the questions and even if you stick on one point for far longer than you anticipated, please decide how you plan on ending your meeting before it has even started. It would even be good to choose a talking point to end the meeting on about ten minutes before it ends. Also decide who is going to pray to close out the meeting. Ending a meeting in an abrupt manner leads to a very awkward meeting. So have your last talking point ready to go along with someone chosen to pray in order to close the meeting smoothly.