

#1 – JOSEPH THE DREAMER (Adam Heather)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Genesis 37:1-11

Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, 'Listen to this dream I had: we were binding sheaves of corn out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered round mine and bowed down to it.'

His brothers said to him, 'Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?' And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. 'Listen,' he said, 'I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.'

When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, 'What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?' His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

1. Joseph was, as Adam said, "the favourite in a dysfunctional family." But the young man had two things in his favour: (i) His father loved him; and (ii) He had a dream – a dream which would come to define his life.
 - *Do you have a dream – a vision, or a clear sense of hope and definite purpose for the future, or are you more of a 'que sera sera / whatever will be will be' kind of person?*
 - *What do you make of the statement, "we only flourish when we have a dream – a desire – from God"?*
 - *The King James Version of **Proverbs 29:18** reads, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (NIV: "Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint"). What does that mean to you?*
2. The Hebrew Bible Scholar, Robert Alter, writes, "The first Revelation of Joseph's character suggests a spoiled younger child who is a tattletale. The next revelation, in the dreams, intimates adolescent narcissism, even if the grandiosity eventually is justified by events." Joseph may have had an extraordinary dream, but he wasn't exactly wise in the way he shared it! The dream gave Joseph a sense that he really could be somebody and achieve something important, but it would come at great personal cost and immediately turn everything in his life upside-down!
 - *What did you take from Adam's statement, "Be worried if God gives you a dream"?*
 - *What should we be 'worried' about?*
 - *Speaking about Joseph, The New Living Translation of **Psalms 105:19** reads, "Until the time came to fulfil his dreams, the LORD tested Joseph's character".*
 - *In what ways have you experienced God testing your character?*
 - *Did you enjoy the process? (P.S. You are allowed to say, "No"!)*
3. New Testament Scholar, Tom Wright, says, "All our language about God's future is a set of signposts pointing into a fog." Perhaps, as Adam suggests, our dreams – which are God's language about our future – are also "signposts pointing into a fog. They are not so much about knowing the future, but about knowing how to live today." Whatever dreams we carry, very little in life ever really goes to plan – at least, that is, to OUR plan. It was through dreams that Joseph drew near to God. "The Lord was with Joseph" and although he "didn't always know the way, he did always know God." We don't always know why things happen the way they do, but knowing God is with us is enough.
 - *Dreaming comes at a price. For Dr Martin Luther King Junior, his dream of racial equality in America cost him his life. Do you have a dream worth risking your life for?*
 - *How can we resurrect old dreams, plant new ones, and begin to dream again?*