

Family Matters

GENESIS 36–38

FIRST DAY: Introduction

God does not choose perfect people for His service. Rather, God perfects those He chooses and qualifies them for His work.

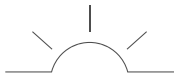
Having disapproved Esau, God chose to entrust Jacob and his lineage with His promises, covenant, and blessings. However, the sons of Jacob were rife with problems. These future tribal leaders were dishonest, hateful, jealous, angry, untrustworthy, betrayers, arrogant, insensitive, deceitful, fearful, lascivious, and spiritually immoral. Yet God did not reject the clan of Jacob. Rather, He used these brothers' own vices to discipline them, lead them to repentance, and bring them into conformity with His will.

God's choosing and discipline of Jacob's sons is a cause for hope to all believers. God is not looking for perfection from us, but a willingness to confess our sin and allow Him to work His holy perfection in our lives. Philippians 2:13 reminds us that it is God who works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure. God worked in the sons of Jacob, and He is working in our lives in order to bring us into the fullness of His promises, covenant, and blessings.

Ask God to perfect the work His has begun in you.

SECOND DAY: Read Genesis 36:1–43, 37:1–11

1. We will only be taking a cursory glance at the descendants of Esau listed in Genesis 36. However, what do you learn about the wives Esau chose for himself and his sons? Genesis 36:1–6



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Although related to Jacob through Esau, the Edomites (Genesis 36:9) and Amalekites (Genesis 36:12) became long-standing enemies of Israel.

- a. What does this convey to you about Esau?
2. Note and remark on the living arrangements of Jacob and Esau. Genesis 36:6–8
 3. Genesis 36:1–43 documents the genealogy of Esau. Skim over this genealogy and record anything of note to you.
 4. While Esau’s descendants multiplied, became leaders, and made great land claims, Jacob *dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger* (Genesis 37:1–2a). Jacob’s story then transitioned to the story of his sons. Remark on what happened when his son, Joseph, was *seventeen years old*. Genesis 37:2b
 5. From Genesis 37:3–4 contrast and comment on the relationship between Joseph and:
 - a. His father (verse 3)

(1) The *tunic* Jacob made Joseph was a garment indicating privilege, status, and perhaps designating him as Jacob’s successor. What problems do you see in Jacob’s decision?

(2) Use Genesis 25:28 to compare this relationship with that of Jacob to Esau and their parents. What do you see?

b. His brothers (verse 4)

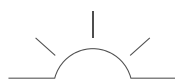
6. Joseph then *told* his family about two dreams he had (Genesis 37:5, 9), which exacerbated an already tense situation. Use Genesis 37:6–11 to fill in the chart concerning his dreams:

DREAM	DESCRIPTION	BROTHERS' REACTION	JACOB'S REACTION
Dream 1 <i>Verses 6–7</i>		Verse 8	
Dream 2 <i>Verse 9</i>		Verse 11a	Verses 10, 11b



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Dreams carried weight in ancient cultures as a form of divine communication, especially if the dream was given twice.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Dothan means *the place of two wells*. These two wells are still in existence today, one of which bears the name, *The Pit of Joseph*.

a. At this juncture, how would you characterize:

(1) Joseph

(2) Jacob

(3) Joseph's brothers

7. What do you find amazing about the fact that God chose to reveal His promises to Jacob's clan?

THIRD DAY: Read Genesis 37:12–36

1. One day when Joseph's *brothers* were out with *their father's flock in Shechem*, about fifty miles away, Jacob sent Joseph to check on them. *A certain man* directed Joseph to Dothan, fifteen miles further; there *he found them* (Genesis 37:12–17). What did Joseph's brothers conspire to do *when they saw him afar off*? Genesis 37:18

a. What does this convey about the intensity of their feelings?

2. Use Genesis 37:19–20 to record and remark on their conspiracy.

a. What does the word *conspired* suggest to you about the brothers?

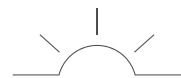
3. Cite the alternative plan suggested by Reuben in Genesis 37:21–22a.

a. Why did Reuben suggest this? Genesis 37:22b

4. Genesis 37:23–36 documents the violent treatment of Joseph by his brothers. Use these verses to describe and comment on:

a. What they did to Joseph (verses 23–25a)

(1) Remark on the fact that after doing this, *they sat down to eat a meal*.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Reuben's attempt to save Joseph was not necessarily out of fraternal concern, but more likely an attempt to regain his status as the firstborn son of Jacob.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Early documents dating back to the 2nd millennium (2000–1000 BC) indicate that the average price for a slave was between 15–30 shekels. Ironically, Joseph was sold as a slave to the descendants of Abraham’s slave, Hagar.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jacob deceived his father Isaac with goatskins (Genesis 27:15–16); consequently, he was deceived by goat’s blood.

b. Judah’s suggestion (verses 25b–27)

c. The sale of Joseph (verse 28)

d. Reuben’s failed rescue (verses 29–30)

e. The deception (verses 31–32)

f. Jacob’s reaction (verses 33–35)

(1) Consider that Jacob’s sons allowed their father to believe Joseph was dead for many years. What do you find most disconcerting about this?

g. Joseph’s fate (verse 36)

5. Joseph is in many ways a type or picture of Jesus. Use the chart to note a few of these parallels:

	JOSEPH	JESUS	YOUR TAKEAWAY
<i>Relationship with father</i>	Genesis 37:3a	Luke 3:22	
<i>Rule over brethren</i>	Genesis 37:8a	Acts 2:36 Philippians 2:9–11	
<i>Animosity of brothers</i>	Genesis 37:4b, 8b	John 15:24b–25	
<i>Sold</i>	Genesis 37:28	Matthew 26:15	

FOURTH DAY: Read Genesis 38:1–11

- Genesis 38 interrupted the story of Joseph to record an important event in the life of Judah. According to Genesis 38:1, what did Judah do *at that time*?
- While he was with the Canaanites, Judah *saw a daughter of a certain Canaanite* and married her. They had three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah (Genesis 38:2–5). According to Genesis 38:6, Judah *took* a woman named Tamar as *wife for Er his firstborn*. Use Genesis 38:7–10 to note and comment on the fate of Er and Onan.

- a. Although Onan's obligation was part of ancient culture, the Law of Moses addressed it further. Use Deuteronomy 25:5–9 to understand and remark on Onan's wrongdoing.
 - b. It would appear that Judah's oldest sons were irredeemable. What does this suggest to you about God's plans?
3. As was customary, Judah told Tamar to *remain a widow* in her father's house until his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry her (Genesis 38:11a). However, what did Judah intend? Genesis 38:11b
 4. From what you have studied thus far, what is your opinion of Judah and his lineage?
 5. Why is it remarkable to you that God would later establish the dynasty of Israel (the House of David) through Judah?

FIFTH DAY: Read Genesis 38:12–30

1. *In the process of time*, Judah's wife died. After he was *comforted*, he went with his friend Hirah to *shear his sheep*. When Tamar was informed of this, what did she do? Genesis 38:12–14a
 - a. Why did she do this? Genesis 38:14b
 - b. What happened *when Judah saw her*? Genesis 38:15–16a
 - (1) Clearly Tamar knew she would be able to deceive Judah in this way. What does this suggest to you about Judah?
2. Use Genesis 38:16b–23 to summarize what happened between Judah and Tamar.
3. *Three months after*, Judah was told that Tamar was *with child by harlotry* (Genesis 38:24a). What do you think of his reaction to this news? Genesis 38:24b

4. Use Genesis 38:25 to capture the plot twist in this story.

5. What drastic change do you see in Judah's attitude and life?
Genesis 38:26
 - a. Link Judah's confession with 1 John 1:9 and share your thoughts.

6. Describe the birth of Tamar's *twins* from Genesis 38:27–30.
 - a. As a son of Judah, Perez would become part of the Messianic line, an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Luke 3:33). Furthermore, Tamar was included in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1:3. What do you find most remarkable about this?
 - (1) How does the inclusion of these people into the Messianic line minister to you?

7. Share a way you see the grace of God at work in the family of Jacob.

