

What are the things that you love about your family? Some of the best gifts that God has given mankind are found within the home: spouses, mothers, fathers, children, siblings, love, sympathy, guidance, respect—the list goes on. Yet, while the home is filled with goodness, every household is cracked with corruption. Most of the time, the worst hurts we can receive in life come from others in the home: from spouses, mothers, fathers, children, siblings; from divorce, betrayal, abuse, neglect, favoritism, and arguments. When reading through the book of Genesis, this turbulent mixture of good and evil in the family is evident from Adam and Eve and their first two sons to Jacob and his twelve sons. Genesis 37 is the first chapter of the story of Joseph and it entails the hatred of the sons of Jacob against their other brother, Joseph.

Please read Genesis 37; I will summarize it here. When Joseph as seventeen, he **“was pasturing the flock with his brothers”** and **“brought a bad report of them to their father”** (37:2). Jacob, their father, **“loved Joseph more than any other of his sons...and 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”** (3-4). Eventually, Joseph had a dream that his brothers would all bow down to him one day. When he told them of his dream, **“they hated him even more for his dreams”** (8). Joseph had another dream that his brothers and his father and mother would all bow down to him one day. When he told his family, **“his father rebuked him...and his brothers were jealous of him”** (10-11).

Later, Jacob sent Joseph on a far journey northward to check on his brothers as they pastured the flock in the countryside. Joseph finally arrived in their region, but his brothers **“saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him”** (18). The brothers planned to kill him, throw him in a nearby pit, and blame his death on a wild animal when they told their father. The eldest brother, Reuben, however, spoke up and said that they should not kill him, but only throw him in a pit and leave him. **“So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe...and threw him into a pit”** (23-24). After Joseph was tossed down the pit, the brothers **“sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites”** on their way down to Egypt (25). Judah got the idea to sell Joseph to these traders on their way to Egypt in order to get rid of their brother and make a profit while doing it. So, the brothers **“lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph down to Egypt”** (28). The brothers then slaughtered a goat and dipped Joseph’s robe in the blood and sent the bloody robe back to their father Jacob. When Jacob saw

his son's robe, he believed that a fierce animal devoured him, and **“Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days”** (34).

Notice the process that led to Joseph's brothers almost murdering him, but enslaving him instead. It started with Joseph tattling on his brothers—most likely this bad report that he brought to their dad was true nevertheless. Their hatred for Joseph was bred by their father showing favoritism to Joseph. The love that was due to all of the sons was primarily given to Joseph. The brothers longed for their father's affection, but saw that Joseph received it instead and that they could never compete with him. When Joseph told them of the dreams which God had given him, his brothers were insulted and despised him even more. Eventually, their hateful words and silent treatment bled into a conspiracy to kill him. Speaking out loud, they devised a plan to kill their own brother. After they threw him in a pit to die, they did not lose their appetite, but carried on with their day, by eating a meal. At last, they realized that they could get the biggest bang for their buck if they still got rid of Joseph while making a little cash on the side; so, they sold him to some heartless strangers.

Behind all of the brother's words and deeds were hateful hearts. They hated him. Hatred even shows itself within the family. Do you hate? Have you ever hated a family member before, even for just a moment? Have you had that feeling of anger, aggravation, or provocation when you do not care what they think or feel; when you just want to burst out; when you insult or hit them back; when you do not want to speak anything to them; when it's hard to truly say 'I love you?' Jesus said, **“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire”** (Matthew 5:21-22). Jesus teaches us that sinful anger and hatred is what produces insult and violence. Shockingly, Jesus condemns sinful anger as worthy of hell-fire punishment, just like murder. Similarly, the apostle John later wrote, **“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”** (1 John 3:14-15). Once again, we are taught that hatred is the seed of murder—that it is murder in the heart. Those who hate are living in death. They are the ones who are dead. Also, they have no eternal life in them, but await the judgment of the second, eternal death.

What do you expect hate to look like? It's not always as obvious as we expect it to be. Look at Joseph's brothers. It started with envy. They were wronged by their father's favoritism and took it out on their brother, by wanting what he had so badly that they hated him for having it. Their hatred was manifested in not being able to speak peacefully to him. They could not say anything nice to him when they encountered him; their thoughts were always turned against him in some way. We have been told 'If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.' This may be decent advice, but it falls short of true kindness. Silent treatment is often hateful. Refusing to speak to someone—or even look at them—is a clear sign that we hate that person. Some people can aggravate us so much that we wish that they were not there. That's what we communicate when we withhold words or eye contact from someone: we wish they were not there. Is that not what the murderer wishes? Does not the murderer wish that someone was not there—that they did not exist—and then acted upon that desire successfully?

When we have hard or ill feelings towards someone, then we are failing to keep the second greatest commandment: love your neighbor as yourself. Breaking the second greatest commandment is an essential failure to living righteously before the Lord. Breaking this commandment also demands great judgment for sinning so fundamentally. Jesus says that hell is for those who hate, who insult, who are sinfully angry.

If we turn back to the story of Joseph in the final pages of Genesis, we see that Joseph actually prospered in Egypt, becoming Pharaoh's right-hand-man. Meanwhile, the rest of his family was trying to survive a famine, which forced them to go down to Egypt to buy food. As it turns out, they had to buy food from Joseph himself. Eventually, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and reunites with the rest of his family. When his family settled with him on the outskirts of Egypt, his brothers feared that one day Joseph would have his revenge. But, Joseph responded, **“Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear, I will provide for you and your little ones”** (Genesis 50:19-21). Joseph forgave them. He admitted their wrong, but he forgave them and promised kindness to them and their children. The reason he could forgive was because he knew God's good purpose was behind it all. He entrusted all of his life to God, and that allowed him to forgive. The Bible is a book full of forgiveness, even forgiveness to those who hate. Thankfully, we can come to Jesus to be forgiven of our hatred and then be sent back home to hate no more.