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GENESIS 37:1-4

Series: Understanding Your Roots

[PRAYER] Lord, I thank you for the things you've shared with me this week from your word. I ask that now you'd give me a clarity of thought and sensitivity to your Holy Spirit that you would speak through your word to people today, that people would be able to understand and hear what you'd have to say. That you would teach us all and we would be able to leave here changed people, growing as you continue to speak to us. We ask this in your name, amen.

Well I'm excited today because today we get to start the story of Joseph. Now the story of Joseph is a story that takes up a quarter of the book of Genesis from chapter 37 all the way to the end. More than a quarter of the whole book. So we're going to spend some time learning about Joseph.

We learn a lot of good things. You know basically the story of Joseph. That God gave him dreams and as these dreams kind of guided him in the beginning, later on he gets thrown in a cistern and he's taken off to Egypt and sold into slavery and all these things are going to happen in his life. We're going to take time and look at all of the stories. There are a number of different illustrations of applications for our lives, many principles from the life of Joseph. We're not going to rush through this. We're going to take it nice and slow and grasp as much as we can from this story. So that we can be the kind of people of integrity that Joseph was in the culture and the experience that he had. We want to be able to learn ourselves. How can we be Josephs in a culture that's even antagonistic toward us. I think you'll see some of those things in the man Joseph.

As we start the story today you can open up your Bibles to Genesis 37. When you do, you're going to see that we start with some background. We're going to get some of the basics down here about his family. We're going to look at his family because his family had some real challenges. There is some sibling conflict that exists in there, the relationships were challenging. Here's what I think we're going to get out of this today. We're going to see, I'm going to give you some glimpses of kind of overall what's happening, even outside of our passage today in Joseph's life because I want you to see there are three relational challenges that I think we experience in our lives. Whether there is sibling conflict or you're dealing with a marriage or you're dealing with coworkers or you're driving, you know anything that has to do with relationships of some kind, you're going to experience three different things that are internal inside of our hearts. We must have a plan for dealing with those because they expose themselves when we're interacting with other people.

Number one is going to be anger. We'll see it in this passage because these boys (there's twelve sons) are going to be so angry that they're hating their brother and even they're going to want to kill him. We've got to have a plan for dealing with anger. That's going to be very important.

Then there's going to be the foolishness, that's a second area. Foolishness happens all the time with kids as they're in sibling conflict. But foolishness is not recognizing the consequences of your present actions. Maybe Joseph was a little bit naïve, maybe a little bit foolish by sharing all he knew of the dreams. Maybe he shouldn't be sharing as freely as he was. I don't know. If he was, if he shouldn't have been sharing maybe that was a demonstration of some lack of wisdom shall we say. We certainly see the lack of understanding of the boys. Because they're going to go and they're going to throw their brother into a cistern and then they're going to sell him off to slavery. They're not going to recognize the consequences of their actions. It's foolish what they're doing and they themselves are going to come later on in their lives and they're going to say, "Oh these bad things are happening to us in life because of the mistreatment we had of our brother." They're going to live with that. They don't recognize the consequences of their current actions. Foolishness is a second area we see demonstrated in the passage that we want to consider in our own lives as well. What do we need to do in that area.

And thirdly it was to do with this area of selfishness. Selfishness is our self-focused way of thinking. We want to be first or we want to be best. That we're jealous because someone else has a coat and we don't have it (as is in our passage today). Or you remember when he's going to get into the discussion with the fellow prisoners that one of the prisoners he tells a dream and exposes the dream for them. But one of the prisoners gets back into service of Pharaoh, but he's only thinking of himself. It takes a long time for him to come back and remember Joseph.

We have a tendency to be self-focused. It takes place in any kind of relationship that we find ourselves in. So today as we look at this story, this story of sibling conflict and as it's brewing and starting up in their lives, I want you to think about your own relationships with people. Yes, sibling conflict is something we as parents deal with as we are trying to help our children to grow and to work together. So knowing how to deal with sibling conflict is important. But all of us need to be able to deal with these three areas in our lives because we all face challenges in relationships. We're going to see all of that take place as the story unfolds.

Look at Genesis 37:1. It says this: *Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. This is the account of Jacob's family line.* So we're moving in the story from a spotlight on Jacob to now to the rest of his family, particularly Joseph. So we're making this shift to Joseph and we're going to learn more about him.

Notice it says – *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.*

The first thing I want to note is that he's seventeen years old. I am encouraged whenever we see in the Bible God relating to children and youth. Why? Because God speaks to them. God initiates His work in people's lives often at a young age. Many of you either got saved or God called you as a young person. When you understand what God is doing inside of your heart as a young

person, you're just able to nurture that over time. Seventeen years old he's going to have these dreams. Seventeen years old he's going to leave his family and he's going to be taken off to Egypt. He's seventeen years old.

Now I don't know if you can remember back some of you when you were seventeen years old. Others of you are looking forward to being seventeen years old. Some of you are seventeen right now. It's a beautiful thing to watch how God works in a person's life at any age.

We see in the Bible how God called a young man named Samuel. He was just a boy at the time and he started speaking to him and revealing Himself to that young boy. Here we see Him relating to Joseph. But when Daniel and his friends were taken out of Jerusalem and they head to Babylon, God is working in their lives to help them have a sense of conviction. What are they going to do when they're faced with culture that is counter to what they know is right? God is working in their lives in a powerful way.

Paul writes to young Timothy who is just becoming a pastor as a young man and Paul is giving him advice. God is working in the lives of people and He loves to work with children and youth. It was Jesus who said, "*Let the little children come to me.*" Because He loves kids. It has to be a priority for us as we are trying to reach the next generation to recognize that God speaks to children and He speaks to you. That is not just something that Christianity is for adults. But we're very intentionally discipling children and youth. We want them to know what it means to serve Jesus Christ with all of their hearts.

Well that's the backdrop here for us with Joseph. He's only seventeen years old. The very first story we're told about him is he's telling on his brothers. Do you see that? It says that he *brought their father a bad report about them.*

Let's go back to our three areas that we're confronted with when we're dealing with conflict or we're dealing with challenges in relationship. We have anger. What's the solution that God has for anger? As you're developing a plan for managing your anger, what does God have for you? One is self-control. He wants you to be able to manage the emotion that's coming. So self-control is important. That's not all. It's also this sense of peace so that we get angry less often. Wouldn't that be nice? Not just to have a lid on it, but to get angry less often. So there's this plan that God has ordained in His word that He's growing us to be able to manage anger. That's going to be one of the issues we see even in this passage.

The second one, when you're dealing with foolishness what is God's solution for foolishness? Of course it's wisdom. To be able to grow in the wisdom to know how to respond in a wise way. Of course the solution for selfishness we see right in the Bible.

Let me take you to a story. There's a story about Jesus who was asked by two boys who were selfish and they said, "Hey Jesus, can we sit one on your right hand and one on your left hand when we come into the kingdom?" Isn't that the same kind of thing kids say today? "I want the best seat." They rush to the van to sit in the seat they want. Or they sit right in front of the TV. "Get out of my way! That's my seat!" "I want the best." "I want the first." "I want to be in the best seat." So they come to Jesus and they ask Him, "Can we have the best seat when we come

into your kingdom?” What was Jesus’ response? He said, “Well that’s not really mine to give. But I’ll tell you this one secret.” This is the secret to the selfishness category in all of our lives. He says this. Here’s the secret. He says to them, “Learn to be the servant. If you want to be a great in God’s kingdom, learn to be the servant of all.” So as you learn to be the servant, you learn how to give up your own agenda, you learn to think about other people, not just think about yourself. Instead of being self-focused, you’re thinking about other people. Selfishness is a problem. So as we’re trying to work on that, servanthood is God’s solution for thinking about other people not just thinking about ourselves.

So in this selfishness department, what takes place? What happens in the selfishness area of our lives? Well there’s this question about whether this is tattling or not. Because tattling is a problem in family life. So I’m going to tattle on my brother. Is Joseph tattling here or is Joseph doing something that’s good? You’ve got to be asking yourself that question. I mean as I’m reading the story I’m asking myself the question. Moses raises his flag up that says here’s the first story in his life that we’re learning about is that he brings this bad report. Was that a good thing or bad thing to do?

Here’s how I would suggest that we look at this. There are times when we as parents want to know what’s going on with our kids. We want the report to come and there’s other times when it’s not appropriate. We have to know both of those things. Right? When is it appropriate to report? Well if your brother is flushing the cat down the toilet, then we want to know that now. Don’t tell me you’re snitching on your brother. We’ve got to know that now. Okay? If your sister is building fires in the bedroom we want to know that now. There are problems going on that we need to be able to address. But tattling is different than that. Tattling is intentionally reporting something to get someone into trouble to make me look good. If I’m tattling on someone I want to look good because I’m the whistleblower and I want the other person to get in trouble.

When is it appropriate to tattle and when is it not? Well that’s a hard question. It can require a lot of wisdom to know when to do that. But I know that tattling is a problem in many families. It’s a form of selfishness that goes on.

Now let’s look at Joseph. Is he doing the right thing or wrong thing? Well there’s no indication here in the passage. We aren’t given any details about the story, which is fascinating. We’re just told that he brought this bad report. It’s my sense that he’s not tattling. We don’t have any indication that he’s doing something wrong. But he is aligning himself with the truth and with his dad instead of aligning himself with the brothers. That’s going to be the source of some sibling conflict. He’s doing what’s right, he’s reporting this offense. But it’s going to create some challenges, some relational challenges. Brothers are going to hate him for a number of reasons, but this apparently is one of them. Because this flag goes up by Moses saying here’s something you need to know about Joseph. He takes a stand for doing what’s right. He reports something even though there’s going to be some pressure, some backlash about him. So he goes and he reports this this bad report about them.

Now there are different ways that parents can handle sibling conflict. One of the things that they can do is what’s going to happen with Israel or Jacob is he’s going to favor one son. That’s

dangerous. But it's equally dangerous to treat everybody equally. We'll come back to that in a minute.

Here's what some parents do. They say, "Alright, you guys just fight it out. Let me know who wins," and they walk away. There are other parents who say, "Okay, you guys can't play with each other for the rest of the day because you're being mean to each other," and so on. That's not going to do any good. At some point the bell is going to ring and they're going to be back in the ring again and they're going to be fighting it out. They've got to learn how to deal with this.

I think that Jacob misses a great opportunity to teach his kids how to manage their anger, how to deal with their foolishness, and to deal with their selfishness. That's something that's learned in family life. We learn it in family life so we can apply it elsewhere in life. I would suggest that the first class in sibling conflict is the home. The first class in relationship training is sibling conflict. It's like a school and it has those three classes that we need to work on. We all need that. And if you didn't get it at home then you're going to find out in life that there are difficulties. You're going to find people that are hard to get along with and people that are irritating and annoying, people you don't like. We have to be able to deal with all of that. I think Jacob missed the boat here.

Let's see what it says about him. Verse 3 – *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.*

I think that obviously Jacob made this mistake of saying I'm going to favor this one boy. He didn't make a mistake by favoring him. He made a mistake by not favoring the others. Every one of us has this need inside of our heart to be loved and admired and cared for and accepted. We all have that need inside. I feel sad for these other guys that are saying I want to be loved by the father. I want to be treated special. I want to be valued.

So sometimes parents make this mistake of valuing one child and making it known. That's dangerous. But the other opposite extreme that's also equally bad is to say I'm going to treat everybody the same in this family. Everybody gets treated the same so that we don't have any competition or comparison. That never works if you start treating everybody the same. Buy Billy some shoes, so we've got to buy Mary some shoes. And we've got this child's going to go to bed at this time, so this child's going to go to bed at this time. So everybody gets treated exactly the same. Do you know what that does? It increase comparison and competition in children. They start saying, "That's not fair. I didn't get it." And when you hear the words "that's not fair" that's an indication that the person is saying I want to be treated equally. Well fair doesn't mean equal. So we find ourselves caught in that loop. We get into a difficult experience. Some kids start counting the sprinkles on their cupcakes to see if they got the same amount as somebody else, to see if they're valued. We do not. You and I, we do not want to be treated equally. We want to be treated special.

Joseph was treated special. That was a good thing that Jacob did. He made a beautiful coat for his son. That was a good thing. It was the right thing to do to build and create a special coat just

for Joseph. But he should have done something special for each of the other kids. Maybe he makes a special staff for the second one. Maybe he makes a special ring for the third one. It doesn't have to be the same for everyone. In fact every person is unique and special and they need to feel like they're the favorite. If you've got more than one child, I think it's good for you to say to every one of your children, "You're my favorite. You're my favorite." Every one of your kids are your favorite. Why? Because that ministers to our hearts. We want to be special. We don't just want to be treated like everybody else. We want to be valued. We've got something inside of our heart, this hole inside of our heart that needs to be filled with love, it needs to be filled with worthiness and acceptance and value. It's there waiting. It's a privilege of a parent to come in and say, "I value you. You are special."

Joseph had that value of his father. He appreciated that coat that his father gave him. I can feel for the other brothers because they have a need inside of their hearts just like you and me. Value me. I want to be special. So they're mad and they don't know how to handle this value that they have. But it's this value inside of their hearts that they really need and want. So each one of our children as we're working with children need to be valued.

And then of course in our lives we recognize that's what God does with us. He does not treat us equally. Did you know that? God does not treat us equally. He treats each one of us as special. When He's handing out spiritual gifts, He doesn't give us all the same gift. He gives everybody a special gift, a unique gift. That's the whole purpose of 1 Corinthians 12. Remember He says the body is made up of many parts. The hand can't say to the foot, "I don't need you." Some person is going to be an eye. And then it say the weaker parts of the body are not indispensable. In other words you can't look at his person "You're just an eye; we don't need you. You're just a hand; we don't need you." No, you don't do that. Every person is valuable. Do you know which one is weakest in the body? It's the one that's not you. You think the other one is weaker because it's not you. It's this sense that we want to be valued. So 1 Corinthians 12 is all about spiritual gifts. We have those gifts and God has created us to be different, special, and unique. He's given us that special value.

Think about the parable of the landowner who had three servants and he gave one five talent (that's representing money), he gives the second one two talents, and the third one one talent. Now if I'm a two talent person, I can't look at the five talent person and say, "That's not fair. How come he gets five and I only get two?" I can't look at the one talent person and say, "Hey, look at me. I'm better than him. He only got one." No, we can't do that. We take what we have and we are stewards. That's the whole purpose of the passage. Be a steward of what you have. Don't compete and compare yourself to someone else. When we start competing and comparing ourselves to others we end up like the brothers in the story who end up hating their brother when really the problem was they needed to get the value from the father. That's what they needed to do.

We have a tendency to look at other people instead of look at what God's doing in our lives. I just think that's a reality. That's what happened at the end of the gospel of John. Let's imagine Jesus being the parent at this moment. Jesus is telling Peter how he's going to die. That's what's happening at the end of the gospel of John in this last chapter. Peter, this is how you're going to die. Peter looks at Jesus and he says, "*What about him?*" Just like a kid. He says, "What about

him?” pointing at John. Jesus’ response is a beautiful response. Jesus says to Peter – “*What is to you if I allow him to remain until I come again?*” In other words what Jesus is saying is you work on your relationship with me. Don’t worry about anybody else. You focus on what’s going on between us. What a beautiful statement. I value you. I don’t treat you like everyone else.

I think that’s why Hebrew 12 is this picture of a race. You’re running the race. And when you’re running the race you’re not looking at the other people who are running. I don’t look at you and you don’t look at me and see who’s running the fastest. Because it says our *eyes are focused on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*. We’re running our own unique race before the Lord. He’s the one we’re following. He’s the one we’re racing with. We’re not racing with all those people around us. They’re just there. But we’re not competing with them. There’s this sense of value that God gives us each one in a special and powerful way. We need that.

Here’s the problem I think. We grow up in families where this is supposed to take place. Where we’re supposed to have a Jacob who comes and loves everybody. We all grow up in imperfect families. Even if you grew up in a great family like I did we have to realize that parents are broken people. So there’s many cases in which you didn’t get everything you needed from your family of origin. It just didn’t happen.

Now you can develop like the brothers. You can be angry and you can say, “That’s not fair. How come I didn’t get a robe? I should get a robe. I didn’t get one.” So you can be upset about that. Or you can recognize this very fact about God that He says, “I want to be your Father. I want to adopt you into my family.” You see I think God designed the family to be this place where value is demonstrated and grows. But the family is a broken place. So every one of us come out of our family with this big hole in our heart that’s partially filled maybe, but it’s not completely filled as a demonstration that we need God as our heavenly Father to fill it. We need the love of the Father. When we have the love of the Father it does something to us that is just powerful. It gives us a sense of value. That we’re treated special.

So if you’re angry today about your childhood or what happened growing up in your childhood, you need to recognize that really the solution is seeing God as the heavenly Father and then God has created in the family a safety net called the church. This is the place where we’re able to grow and learn and we’re able to practice the things we didn’t learn in our family of origin. Now we can practice them in God’s church and we can interact with each other and learn how to manage our anger, learn how to deal with our foolishness, learn how to deal with our selfishness. We can do that within the family of God. Why? Because the family of God has perfect people in it? No. No. We wouldn’t be able to deal with it if all the people were perfect. We’ve got imperfect people in the family of God. So when you start serving on a team at Calvary Chapel Living Hope, there’s going to be some working that needs to happen. God’s going to do some work in our hearts because we’re all imperfect people. But we’re relying on our heavenly Father who’s giving us the value, He’s giving us the completeness that we need. It’s just a beautiful thing that God has done for us. If we get our eyes too focused on the earthly things we become like the sons here that were so angry *they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him*.

Well I want to shift the story here for a moment. If you would do this with me. Let’s go from the picture of the whole family. Let’s just look at Joseph and look at the whole story from Joseph’s

perspective. Would you do that with me for a minute? Because I admire Joseph. I'm proud of him. Because he gets a coat that he knows represents the father's love for him. He's got this coat and he wears the coat. I really like it that he wears the coat because he's different. He's okay being different. He's going to go around because he knows the father loves him. So he's different. He wears the coat.

I think that God has given each one of us a coat to put on and wear. But there are some people who check their coat at the door of culture and they say, "Whoa. I'm going to put my coat aside here. I don't want people to know that I'm different." The difference that God has given to us is magnificent. Because when you wear the coat that God has given to you and you walk around with that coat on, other people look and they say, "I want a coat like that. Where did you get that coat?" And you can say, "I can tell you exactly where I got that coat because you can have one too." God wants to give every one of us this coat that we put on.

I was just thinking about it this week about how so many people need that coat of value and representing the love of the Father. So many people are going around in life today with this longing inside for value and purpose and acceptance and worthiness and love that they don't have. I wear the coat and I know what it looks like and I'd be happy to tell you where I got the coat. I can't give you my coat. You've got to get your own coat from the Father. He wants to give you one. And you'll experience that love and that value in the same way that I experience it in my own life. So that's why we wear the coat out there. So I started thinking about this and I came to several passages of scripture. I just want to show these verses to you, talk about how we wear the clothes that God has given to us.

Notice it says in Isaiah 61:10 – *I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.* You see that's how you get the coat. You come before the Lord and you say, "God, I want to get saved. I need salvation in my life. I need the value. I need the love. I need all those things that you promised me." So when we do that, we accept that salvation, it's like we put on this cloak, these clothes, this righteous clothing that God gives us. We're clothed in righteousness, we're clothed in salvation because that's the privilege that we have of following the Lord. That's what Isaiah 61:10 says.

Look at Isaiah 61:3, a few verses before that. It says – Put on *a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.* Or some translations – *a spirit of heaviness.* There are people today, many people right around you, where you live, work, and wherever. They have a spirit of heaviness that they're carrying around all over the place. That's how they live. Despairing, discouraged, afraid. You have something that you're wearing that they're saying, "Wow, what is that?" Well it's this garment of praise. It's this ability to be positive in a negative world. It's this ability to enjoy what God wants to do inside of my heart that makes every part of my life glow. It's just positive. It's just a garment of praise instead a spirit of despair.

Look at Ephesians 4:22-24. It says – Put off *your former way of life, your old self* (that is put off like a garment), *which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

You see God wants us to put on this garment that is just different. We put off the old and put on the new. There's this special value that we have. And it's not something that we are. It's not Joseph who has earned anything here. It is the robe that his father gave him that represents the love of the father. In the same way it's the righteousness and holiness of God that makes up the robe. It's not because I've done anything great that I get a robe. It's because the Father loves me that I get a robe. And that robe is made up of His righteousness and His holiness. That's what other people see in this picture. I love that verse.

My favorite one is the one in Colossians, the last one there. Colossians 3:12 says this: *Therefore, as the elect of God* (the special ones; the elect are the chosen ones), *holy and beloved* (the special valued ones), *clothe yourselves with hearts of five things* and they tie into those three challenges that we have. Notice the five things.

One is *compassion and kindness*. We need compassion and kindness in our lives when we become self-focused and we have the selfishness problem in relationships. We need compassion that thinks about things from the other person's point of view. We need kindness that lets other people go first instead of wanting to be first or best. That's going to help us deal with the selfishness component that we need in relationships. So God is saying put on compassion. *Clothe yourself with compassion and kindness*.

Humility is going to help us deal with our foolishness because we need wisdom and wisdom comes when we recognize we don't know the answers. We need help here. So humility will help us greatly in dealing with our own foolishness and times that we really need God's wisdom.

And then *gentleness and patience* of course are ones that tie into anger. Where we all need more gentleness and patience to help us deal with our anger challenges that we have. You see what I imagine here is God saying when you get dressed in the morning you put on your shoes and you put on your pants and you put on your shirt. Be sure to clothe yourself with humility. Be sure when you get up in the morning and you look in the morning you say, "Oh wow, I need to put a little compassion on here. I need a little kindness on here." So when you leave your room, you leave your house, you're dressed for the occasion. The occasion of being out into the world where people are watching you and where you're interacting with others. You want to put on the things you need in order to handle the challenges that you're going to face in the world.

Psalms 1 says this: *Do not walk* (that's using your feet) *in the counsel of the ungodly, don't stand in the way of sinners, and don't sit in the seat of the scornful* (those who laugh at sin). He says don't do those things. Be careful what kind of clothes you have on, where your shoes are going to take you, where your pants are going to sit. I mean choose those things wisely. I just love the picture here.

One of the things I'm impressed with Joseph is he wore the coat. Don't be afraid to wear the coat. It represents the love of the Father. Yes, there's a lot of people who are going to hate you for wearing the coat. There's a lot of people who are not going to understand why you wear that coat. But the reality is it represents the love of the Father. It represents that deep need that all of us have. There are going to be some people who look and you say, "Boy, that is a cool coat you got there. Can you tell me about it?" Well let me tell you. It represents the fact that I'm loved

because my Dad made me this coat. It's a special coat that my Dad... "Oh your Dad made you that coat?" Yeah. My Dad. It's the love of the Father woven together and I wear that proudly and enjoy it faithfully because it's a special coat for me. It represents something that God is doing inside of my life.

People want that coat. You have the coat. I want to encourage you to go out and wear it. I just think that's the message that God has for us. We've got a lot more lessons to learn about Joseph, but I'm sure proud of him wearing this coat around, representing the love of the father in his own life.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do want to ask that you would touch us in a way that helps us be so proud of the fact that you love us deeply in our hearts. There are so many people lacking that love and value and they just need the coat. So Lord, give us the courage and wisdom to wear it, to share it, and to bless other people. Lord, thank you for your word. Use it in our lives today. In Jesus' name, amen.