

# JEALOUSY, THE EVIL THAT HARMS THE FAMILY

## GOLDEN TEXT

“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” (James 3:16)

## USEFUL PRACTICE

Jealousy is a work of the flesh and only the fruit of the Spirit is able to overcome the bad consequences of this feeling.

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Genesis 37:1-4, 11, 18, 23, 24, 28**

1- Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

2 - 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.

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.

4 - 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.

11 - His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind

18 - But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

23 - So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing.

24 - and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

28- So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

## **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

**I) To reflect** on the consequences of favoritism and jealousy in Jacob's family;

**II) To identify** the evils that jealousy causes in relationships;

**III) To understand** that man needs to get his heart guided by the Word of God and not by his carnal feelings.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The story of Jacob's sons is not only moving, but dramatic. Joseph, the patriarch's beloved son, was the object of his brothers' jealousy. It is true that Jacob certainly favored him. Therefore, he became a trusted person for his old father. Joseph reported all his brothers' evil deeds to the family's patriarch. For that reason, they regarded him as a snitch and deserving of their hostility. Today's lesson is not intended to deal with the general aspects of Joseph's story, but to emphasize this conflicting relationship within Jacob's family. Let us see the consequences for a family in which envy and jealousy are present.

### **I - FAILURE IN TREATING THE CHILDREN**

#### **1. Jacob's favoritism.**

In Genesis 37, we read that “Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons” (Gen. 37:3). It is possible that the patriarch sensed that there was something special about Joseph. However, regardless of being the son of his old age, Joseph was one of the many sons he had fathered. Naturally, when they are aware of their paternal and maternal role within the home,

parents realize the differences in personality and temperament of each of their children. Therefore, it takes a lot of attention in the relationship with them. In LESSON 2, we studied about the problem that was caused by the favoritism of Isaac and Rebekah between Esau and Jacob. Here, in the story of Joseph, we will see that Jacob's favoritism produced jealousy and envy among the brothers, the serious consequences of this practice within the family.

## **2. Jealousy in the midst of favoritism.**

Jacob did not consider the consequences when he presented his son Joseph with “an ornate robe” in a clear display of favoritism. This triggered jealousy among the other children, who understood that their father took them for granted. Now Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, and when the older ones felt alienated from their father's love, they were filled with fury. They saw that this special attire signified favoritism on the part of their father and, therefore, “they hated him” (v.4).

## **3. Envy does not allow one to understand God's plans.**

In addition to this gift from their father to Joseph, there were also Joseph's dreams that always put him in a higher position over his brothers. The dream of the sheaves of grain and the dream of the heavenly bodies bowing down to Joseph (vv.5-9) were revealed to his brothers, they made them understand that Joseph was being arrogant and disrespectful towards them and, therefore, they rejected him. The dreams had a prophetic character, but his brothers understood it as a presumptuous attitude on Joseph's part. They could not see what would happen a few years later, when Joseph was made ruler over Egypt (Gen. 41:41-43).

# **II – JEALOUSY AS A CAUSE OF CONFLICTS**

## **1. The ornate robe: the symbol of contempt.**

The traditional clothing of ancient people was at most two colors, and was made of thick linen threads. Joseph's “ornate robe” put him in a prominent position in relation to the other sons (Gen 37:3). This confirmed Jacob's feeling of favoritism for Joseph. The jealousy derived from this bad attitude of the patriarch caused sad consequences in Jacob's family.

## **2. Jealousy: the agent of family conflict.**

Joseph's brothers felt ignored by their father. On the other hand, because he was favored by his father, Joseph acted in a naïve, immature and arrogant way. His brothers, with their pride hurt because of their father's favoritism for Joseph, would not even listen to Jacob's favorite son. For this reason, they were filled with resentment and hatred, even wanting to put

an end to their brother's life. Jealousy is a feeling that stems from selfishness. It is like an infection that spreads throughout the sick body. Envy, resentment and hatred generally grow out of jealousy, as the wise Solomon declared: “[...] jealousy arouses [...] fury” (Proverbs 6:34). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul shows that everything that causes strife and dissension has its origin in the flesh (1 Cor. 3:3). Jealousy is a work of the flesh.

### **3. The extent of jealousy.**

In this lesson, we have analyzed jealousy in sibling relationship, but it is present in many other relationships. Jealousy can bring problems to marital life, sincere friendships and professional relationships, etc. Generally, where jealousy is present, there is more displeasure and disgust than happiness. In an environment where jealousy prevails, mistrust, insecurity, control and possession remain. Although everyone is jealous, as it is a human feeling, the line between controlled and uncontrolled jealousy is very fine.

## **III - THE EVIL OF JEALOUSY**

### **1. Jealousy can cause family tragedies.**

Reports of marital tragedies in which jealousy is the cause are very frequent. There are many cases in which people harm others because of jealousy. It was no different in the time of Jesus, when the priestly caste became jealous and envious because of the extent of our Savior's earthly ministry (Mark 15:10).

### **2. Jealousy among the people of God.**

If obsessive jealousy, in general, arises on the part of one of the spouses, almost always ending in violence, separation and mutual offenses, unfortunately, jealousy can also undermine the relationships of individuals who were once close among the people of God. Thus, out of jealousy, one slanders, defames and offends a brother in Christ or a ministry coworker. May the Holy Spirit guard our hearts, so that we bear the fruit of love, and “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (Galatians 5:26).

### **3. Overcoming jealousy.**

First, you need to feed your mind with the things of God (Phil 4:8). What we think and what is in our heart determines our actions (Proverbs 4:23). Second, it is very important to know if the feeling of jealousy is impacting and compromising your quality of life. If the answer is yes, it is important to go to your pastor for help. Based on the Word, he will advise you wisely.

And finally, consider very carefully what the apostle Paul taught about love: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud" (1 Corinthians 13:4). The Word of God is still the best antidote for treating negative emotions.

## **CONCLUSION**

The emotional ardor called "jealousy" must have its streak of moral, physical, and spiritual destruction stopped. The apostle Paul advises us to behave decently and avoid dissension and jealousy (Rom. 13:13). The only way to stop the destructive power of jealousy is to develop the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22). It develops our soul for the practice of Christian virtues and, at the same time, weakens human emotions arising from the vices of the soul.