

Aim: Dealing with jealousy, unfairness and anger

Joseph's family was in many ways what we would call a dysfunctional family. Family's everywhere experience jealousy and anger, but most people don't go to the extremes that Joseph's brother did.

Something you need to understand is that emotions like anger and jealousy are a normal part of being human; all of us experience them; but learning to understand them and what to do with them is an important part of becoming an adult.

Let's look at the different people in Joseph's family and talk about what they could have done to make things better.

Joseph's father - What did he do that made the problems in his family worse? (Jacob loved Joseph more than his brothers; he gave him a special present; he did not notice how the other brothers were feeling.)

I read an article in the Signs magazine recently of a family discussing who Mum's favourite child was; they decided she didn't have a favourite, but then the Mother said that she did have a favourite; the one who was the most sick at the time, or the furthest away etc.

Parents usually love all their children but sometimes they have trouble showing them, and that can cause jealousy in a family.

Joseph – What did he do that made the problems in his family worse?

- He told on his brothers. People don't like to be told on; especially if it's done loudly; of course if the person is breaking the rules or doing something dangerous then you should tell an adult. Do you have any rules at home about when to tell and when not to?
- He told them his dreams. Have you ever heard someone described as "stuck up"? People don't like it when they think that someone else thinks they are more important. Perhaps Joseph should have told his dreams only to his parents rather than to his brothers.

Joseph's brothers – What did they do that made the problems in the family worse?

- They were angry because Joseph told on them when they did something wrong. When we get in trouble we should stop and think: "Am I wrong? Did I do the wrong thing?" Part of becoming a mature adult is being able to accept responsibility for our own actions; when we can do that, we can accept that although people sometimes say and do things that annoy us, they might be saying them because they care about us; then we will stop being angry with them.
- They let the anger and jealousy grow in them (younger brothers can be annoying at times.) But when we leave anger or jealousy to grow inside us, at first it may just make us unhappy but it will eventually affect our actions, as it did when Joseph's brothers decided to kill him. It can also affect your health; people who have lots of anger or worry, over several months or years, will become sick because of it.

Read Ephesians 4:26 – Will something worse happen if you're still angry when the sun goes down? Not necessarily. What the verse is saying, is that anger must be dealt with in a timely manner; allowing anger to remain for hours, days, weeks or even longer is a waste of time and as Ephesians 4:27 says, gives the devil a "foothold" – a way to enter your life.

What do you do when you feel angry or jealous? (Throw things, cry, yell, tell an adult?)

Read Proverbs 29:11

What should you do when you feel angry or jealous or something like that?

- Don't do anything straight away; try to work out what you are feeling and why.
- Talk to a parent or teacher you can trust: they can help you work out what you are feeling.
- Decide if you should do something about it: If you are playing a game, suggest taking turns, or doing something else.
- Pray about the problem; pray about what you are feeling and pray about the person you are angry with. God will help you understand and control your feelings.

Sometimes we can't change the things that we are angry about, there are times when the only thing we can do is to give the problem to God to deal with. That means that we should not worry about it anymore and if you do find yourself worrying again, tell God about it again and then try to stop thinking about it.

The Prayer of Serenity is a good one to remember: *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.* – Reinhold Niebuhr