

Example

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[0 : 0 0] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! And as always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can even check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for listening to God's Word being preached this morning. We are excited to get into His Word, but most of all, we want to let that Word get into our hearts and change us into His image. Now, Albert Schweitzer once said this. He said, example isn't the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing. Now, my wife grew up in this community outside of kind of the St. Omer area, close to the Rush County line, and she had one brother who was about four years older than her. And while he's a follower of Jesus today doing just fine, as a kid, he had to learn everything the hard way. You ever known someone like that? Who knows? Maybe it's even you, right? But he always had to test the limits, defy authority, couldn't take anyone's word for it, but he had to find out for himself. And it became common for her dad to take a little trip back to the woodshed with her brother. And well, Bethany said she didn't know exactly what happened back there, but he always came back crying because he got a spanking. And because of this, she learned from his example and never had to go back there. See, there's much to be learned from bad examples. And there are some of you who grew up in maybe rough environments that you wouldn't wish on any child, and yet your life is completely different because you forgave, you healed, you learned from that poor example. And then there are the good examples. You know, with this being Father's Day, I was so blessed to grow up with a dad who chose to approach his marriage and his children differently than how he grew up. And while my dad is far from perfect, just like us, I was blessed as a kid to have a very stable home life, being loved by both of my parents, and I daily watched the example of my dad as he modeled what a life of integrity and hard work looked like. And then when we came home, when he would come home from at least a 10-hour day of very hard, strenuous work, he'd spend the rest of the evening playing basketball or wrestling with us kids, enjoying every minute of it. And I'll tell you one thing as an adult that has meant the world to me, so many times when I'm talking to someone, they'll say to me, hey,

I met your dad the other day, and he just went on and on about how proud he is of you. And I sure hope that I have taken that good example he has modeled, and I've passed it on to my kids, although there's no perfect parent here. So happy Father's Day to you dads. And even here at FCC, we like to take this opportunity to celebrate all those with XY chromosomes, all boys, regardless of age. You are appreciated, you are loved here at FCC, and it's okay to be the masculine man of God pursuing holiness that you were designed to be by the God of the universe. So as we come here in week number two of our series over Old Testament Joseph, feel free to grab your sermon outlines. You can do that by going to the YouVersion Bible app under events, under First Christian Church at Greensburg, and then you can see it. But go ahead and do that if you'd like. Go ahead and grab your Bible. Turn to Genesis 37.

So easy to find. First book of the Bible, okay? And if you remember last week, we just sort of took a 10,000-foot view of not only Joseph's life, but also this thread that weaves itself throughout Scripture that ultimately leads to the Messiah, Jesus. And I simply wanted to just paint the big picture of Joseph's life and even tell that story to anyone who's maybe never heard it. So if you didn't get a chance to hear last week, go to the website, check that out, FCCGreensburg.com. But today we're going to zoom in, and we're going to start at the beginning of Joseph's story. And if you remember last week, as this story opens, you can almost hear that chant, can't you? Jerry, Jerry, Jerry. Because listen, this is some real dysfunction going on, and yet our God is pretty good at taking messes and turning them into a mission. So the key word today is simply this, example. Example. Because like Schweitzer said, it's not just the main thing. Man, for many, it's the only thing. Or as President Teddy Roosevelt said, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. The example that we live out that shows that Christ-like love, compassion, kindness. So let's start off today with an example for parents. On this Father's Day, an example for parents, and it's simply this, reject favoritism.

Reject favoritism. Listen, as a parent of three, it is easy to maybe connect with one child better than another at times. It's easy to even have a mini-me that possibly you butt heads with, to put it mildly.

[5 : 42] It's easy to have the daddy-daughter connection or the mother-son bond. It's easy for a parent to live through their child's achievements in sports or cheerleading or dance or gymnastics or whatever, showing favoritism to that child. And yet we are called to love every child the same, pouring into them, raising them up to first love Jesus. So let's jump into our story here.

You should be in Genesis chapter 37, and let's start in the first verse. It says, Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of 17, 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. 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. Okay, so if you remember the story of Jacob a little earlier in Genesis, he grew up with favoritism. Okay, he also grew up that way. His dad, so he knew the bad side of it. His dad preferred his rugged brother Esau, but his mom, Rebecca, favored him. So the dysfunction seemed, isn't this often what happens because we don't deal with stuff?

Dysfunction seemed to carry down to the next generation. And then if you know Jacob's younger years, he met a beautiful lady named Rachel. He absolutely adored her. So he worked seven years for her father, Laban, so he could marry her. And yet Laban deceived him, and he ended up marrying his other daughter, Leah, instead. I'm telling you, I could hear it. Jerry, Jerry, Jerry. I'm telling you.

And so Jacob worked another seven years so he could marry his true love, Rachel. Married to both sisters, Leah was able to have six children, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun. And yet Rachel, his true love, could not have children at first until she has Joseph, whose name means a fruitful vine.

Now, look at verse three with me one more time. It says, now Israel, that's another name for Jacob. 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. It says that the favoritism stems from having Joseph in his old age.

[8 : 25] But you know what? I also have a strong feeling that his favoritism for Joseph also carried over from his love for Rachel and the heartbreak that she couldn't have children for all those years.

So how does this favoritism manifest itself? You know, at the time, Jacob has 11 children, and daddy is showing obvious favor over Joseph compared to the rest. But it also says that Jacob gave him this ornate robe. You've probably also heard this called a coat of many colors, a technicolor dream coat. I kind of picture it like my cool coat from the early 90s. Okay. You remember those old starter jackets in the early 90s? I had one of the Phoenix suns and it was bright and colorful.

And yes, I really wore that thing. But whatever Joseph's robe coat looked like, it was something special that would have set him apart from his brothers. It was absolute favoritism. And I love how in the book of James, as we go to the New Testament, James, as he always does, just very bluntly deals with this topic. Here's what he says, starting in James 2 verse 1. He says, My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. So those who are redeemed, those who've been transformed, okay, he says this, must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and then a poor man in filthy clothes comes in.

If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, here's a good seat for you, but you say to the poor man, you stand there or sit on the floor by my feet. Have you not discriminated among yourselves, it says, and become judges with evil thoughts? See, one thing I love about our God is in this, what God is even doing in our church family here, is that we see visitors every week. And if that's you, if you've visited with us and maybe you're just listening on the radio today, we're so glad that you have. We hope that you can see the love of Jesus in this church family.

We're not perfect, we're not going to be, but I hope it's real and sincere. But from time to time, someone will come up to me, like a regular attender, member of our church, and they'll say, hey, did you see that so-and-so is here? And it's usually a prominent member of our community who people know. And while I want to treat them with utmost love and respect, listen, I refuse to treat them better than anyone else who walks in these doors because I grew up not having the prominent last name, the son of a mechanic riding in the back of a truck a little dirty from the auto repair shop. And you know what? I had a great childhood, despite the snooty stares from the hoity-toity, okay? So listen, whether you're the mayor or the town drunk or whatever you are, you are loved, and you have a place in this family as we seek to let Jesus have all of us.

[11 : 31] And listen, this dysfunction from Jacob wasn't good for him because it created arrogance toward his siblings. It wasn't good for the brothers either because it created bitterness towards baby bro Joseph and probably daddy too. And not only is this a lesson for parents, but it's also something that's important for every part of our lives. How dare I ever, ever lessen someone's value when God says that he loved them, created them in his image, and the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

Praise God for that. And yet, we're all guilty of it even in small ways. But I can't help but go to Psalm 139. Starting in verse 13, David cries out a beautiful truth about every single one of us.

He says, For you, God, for you, God, created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well.

And then many years later, Jesus went to the cross, not for the healthy, but for the sick, for you and I, for all of us. So church, let's reject favoritism. Let's show biblical love to whoever God puts in our path. Rich, poor, black, white, purple, XY, XX chromosome, Democrat, Republican, independent, pastor, pub owner, Popeye's worker, born, unborn, the list goes on. Because each of us were uniquely designed to be used by an awesome and gracious God. Reject that favoritism that if we're honest, is just insecurity, isn't it? And while we always strive toward the holiness of God's grace that it calls us to pursue. So this is not making an excuse for anyone to live a lifestyle outside of what God calls us to live. But we are called to treat everyone the same and love everyone equally. So we reject that favoritism. And then second example is for siblings. Choose unity. Now, before we jump into this, understand that this is not saying that we should ignore the truth, that we should let unhealth fester by avoiding confrontation, sweeping things under the rug. The church is notorious for doing this.

Instead, we have a heart of unity in everything. Look at Genesis 37 again with me. Let's pick up where we left off in verse 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. Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, listen to this dream I had. We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it. His brothers said to him, do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us? And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he said.

[14 : 52] Verse 9, then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. Listen, he said, I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and 11 stars were bowing down to me. When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, what is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you? His brothers were jealous of him, but then it says this, his father kept this matter in mind. So listen, Joseph is already on his brother's poo-poo list because of something he can't control, his father's favoritism. But what makes it worse is he's strutting around in this colorful robe, telling dreams about how he's going to rule his brothers, and listen, he's the baby. We talked about this last week. He's the baby of the family. You don't do that. You get beat up, okay? I know from experience, you don't do that. He's clearly a product of his father's favoritism, and he likes to be the golden boy at the expense of his brothers. So Joseph at 17 years old, so he's young, he had done three things to alienate his brothers. Tattletale tells us right there at the beginning, he was a tattletale on them, gave a bad report about them. Number two, he flaunted that coat. And then number three, R.T. Kendall tells us that he abused the gift, the dreams that God had given him as he should have probably just kept it to himself. In other words, his motives were not pure in why he shared them as he could surely see and feel the hatred his brothers already had toward him. Now, unfortunately, Joseph and his brothers not getting along didn't end with their generation. Every one of us listening to this who have siblings, especially multiple siblings, you understand the pain of disunity, the pain of a fractured family. Tell me if you ever heard this one before. Parents pass away, it's time to talk inheritance, and everyone just humbly accepts the will and works together flawlessly. Probably not. Now, it can happen, and I've seen it, but it's rare. Probably 90% of the time, there's a fight over land or money or possessions. Those grudges can even go down to the grave over what? Stuff. Stuff that doesn't even matter in the end. Usually just pride and selfishness and entitlement rearing their ugly heads. And I know Joseph was young, and we've all put both feet in our mouth at some time, probably more than once, but the wise choice would have been to love his brothers choosing to keep his mouth closed about the dreams. Even choosing a humble stance on the fancy robe, maybe wearing it when daddy said he had to, but keeping it in the closet the rest of the time. And then on the other side, the brothers could have chosen as the older, wiser siblings to see through his immaturities and realize that they couldn't control his cockiness or their father's partiality. All they could do was honor God in every situation, but their jealousy mixed with their hurt would cause them to make choices that went against everything they knew was right. See, it's wise advice to realize that regardless of what others do, we can choose to do the right and the godly decision. We can choose unity. See Romans 12, 17 and 18 says, do not repay anyone evil for evil. I don't know about you, but that's hard for me. Man, I am a justice person. I like to teach lessons. Do not repay evil, anyone evil for evil. It says, be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Have you ever met someone who seemed like they had everything going for them and you were kind of had the tendency to be envious, but then you realized, oh wow, they're, they're really sweet and they're really humble too. No need for me to be jealous. I had a friend a couple years older than me in high school who was that way. I mean, the girls chased him. He won prom prince and prom king, and yet he was the most humble guy. He didn't view himself as a popular kid. In fact, he didn't even hang out in the popular crowd. He was usually working or playing basketball with me.

I was two years younger than him. I mean, it made no sense for him to be around me. Instead, he just treated everyone, regardless of their high school reputation, which by the way, doesn't matter in the end. But regardless of that, he treated everyone with kindness. And the reason he got voted prom king was because no one could say a bad word about him without lying. Now to bring this heart of unity back to the church, back in 1706, Matthew Henry, the famous commentator, he said, when we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people in all conditions.

Ouch. That's hard. I struggle with that. You struggle with that. So hear me. We are far from perfect here at First Christian Church as a church. You can find flaws in every one of us, starting with me. But one thing I love about this church family is the spirit of unity that flows through it. I can't tell you the joy I felt two weeks ago being gone a month for my sabbatical.

I just felt when I came back, the love of this church family just wrapping around us, welcoming us back home. And what I love to see as our church is growing in spiritual maturity is that when disunity rears its ugly head, and it will, it always does, not just the leadership, but the church family is starting to call that out. The church family is starting to urge others to pursue biblical unity.

[20 : 55] And I'll tell you, as a church gets healthy, you can feel it the second you walk in that building on a Sunday morning or a Wednesday night. There's joy. There's laughter. There's peace. There's hospitality. There's kindness. There's a friendly and welcoming spirit, and it's contagious.

And so whether we're talking the church or your personal life or even your family, just like Romans 12 told us, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Choose that unity. And yet, as we'll see throughout this series, I'm amazed at how our God came through in the mess of Israel's family, and he did incredible things for his glory and for our good.

Church, let's be examples of unity as far as it depends on us. And then last, let's be an example for everyone. Here's the example for everyone. Pursue humility. Pursue humility. There's a movie from several years back called Seabiscuit. It was pretty well known, so maybe you've seen it. It's about an undersized horse, an oversized jockey, an overly aged trainer, and an owner who says he's too dumb to know the difference. And we see this improbable racehorse do more than anyone thought possible. And there's one scene where Seabiscuit's jockey, a guy named Red Pollard, has someone cut him off in a race. And it causes him to veer from the race plan so that he can get revenge. He goes after that jockey. I mean, he's going crazy, berserk. And they end up losing the race because of his actions. And when the owner and the trainer are confronting him, why did you deviate from the plan?

All he could say was, he fouled me. He almost put me in the fence. What'd you expect me to do? Let it go? And the trainer says, well, yeah. Did he put you in the fence? But all he could see was the harm that had been done to him. The revenge that he had to get. And after he yelled again, he fouled me.

The owner looks at him and says, son, why are you so angry? You know what? As we look at the first part of Joseph's story, that's all about favoritism, hatred, arrogance, revenge. Maybe you can relate to that. Maybe you can, because you know what? We live in the real world. Maybe it was something terrible that was done to you. Maybe it was words spoken that have scarred you. Maybe you weren't the favorite.

[23 : 32] That rejection plays over and over in your mind. It is so easy, whatever it is, to let the rage and the bitterness fester inside. It changes us and not for the good. And trust me, you can hold it down for a long time, but at some point it will come exploding out in some way and it will be completely destructive. And don't forget, no matter how badly we've been wronged, our Savior can one-up us. He came into this world to seek and save the lost. He came to show us the heart of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven. He came to set us free, to give us joy and peace and hope like we've never experienced before. And yet he was mistreated, lied about, conspired against, beaten, arrested, a crown of thorns and a skull, forced to carry his cross to Golgotha. He was nailed to it, gave us innocent life for our guilty ones. So when I step back and I look over my situations that have happened in my life, those who I thought wronged me, even sadly the grudges that have torn me up inside,

I can't help but to find comfort and wisdom in Jesus's example. Because no matter what you and I have faced, listen, he's faced more and he understands. But watch what Paul says in Philippians 2, 5-8.

He says, in your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. You know, it is amazing what happens when we reject favoritism, choose unity, and pursue Christ-like humility. How all our relationships will change because we have been changed. Pride starts to die.

That chip on my shoulder starts to get filed down. We start to look like Jesus, dealing with things in healthy ways, walking in the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and just like Joseph's life points to the Messiah Jesus. We talked all about that last week.

[26 : 10] We have to humble our hearts, humble our desires before him, laying them down at the cross, saying, Jesus, my life is yours. Do as you please. And here's the paradox of life. When you die to self, you can live life to the full in Christ.

Let me say it again. Okay, here we go. I just need you to listen to this. When you die to self, you can live life to the full in Christ. So here's your challenge for this week. I'll leave you with this. It may be painful, but take a walk, get alone, start to ask the Lord to just reveal to you those grudges that you've held, the forgiveness and honesty that need to come into that. Let him lead you to reconciliation as you start to heal and you start to live out the purpose that he has created you to walk in.

Learn from the ultimate example of Jesus and then let your example shine out, showing the power and the grace of your Savior.

Amen? That's what we're called to do. Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for just how faithful and good you are. Thank you for how you are always working, even in the hardest things we've dealt with, to draw us closer to you, to bring healing to our hearts, to bring reconciliation in our lives, and Lord, to ultimately use us for your glory. So take our hearts, make us more like you, Jesus. Help us to have just that heart that says, Lord, here am I. Send me. We love you, Jesus. We pray all of this in your precious and your holy name. And God's people said, Amen and Amen. Hey, real quick, if you're listening to this and God has just been working on your heart, maybe you want to talk about following Jesus. Maybe you have some faith questions first. Maybe you just want to learn more about our church here at First Christian Church of Greensburg. Once again, I'm the lead pastor. My name is Ray Sweet.

Please reach out to us. Here's a couple ways you can do that. You can call us 812-663-8488. Once again, that's 812-663-8488. Go ahead and ask for me or you can go ahead and email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com. Hey, I'm so grateful that you tuned in today. God bless you and I hope you have a great week.