

## When Life Hits The Pits | Emma King | Genesis 37:12-24

This is not a fairy tale. This is family drama (and I should know because I've had my fair share of them!). Let's be honest: Genesis 37 is not just a Bible story—it's practically a **reality show episode**. You've got "The Favourite Child"; a bunch of tired siblings; some "dream drama"; a questionable fashion choice; and one big emotional meltdown.

**If ancient Israel had ITV2, this would've been on  
*"Keeping Up with the Sons of Jacob."***

We don't need to look far to relate to this one. Every family has a Joseph. And every family has a few brothers who wish Joseph would chill out. It almost makes us feel better that there were family dramas even in biblical times! **This is a story of what happens when people let jealousy take hold.** It's not hard to relate. Most of us have been in families, jobs, or friendships where favouritism, comparison, and quiet resentment start to build up.

And like Joseph's brothers, **we all reach that moment of decision: What are we going to do with these feelings?**

Let's talk about the brothers—not as villains, but as people like us. Joseph's brothers are tired. Tired of hearing about Joseph's dreams. Tired of seeing that special robe. Tired of always feeling like they're second-best in their father's eyes. And when emotions boil over, things get dangerous. They weren't born jealous, but years of being overlooked took a toll. Their father Jacob doted on Joseph - he gave him the robe and listened to his dreams. That kind of treatment doesn't just wound—it hardens the heart.

Ever been in a family where love felt uneven? Where your achievements got a mere nod, but someone else's got a celebration? Some of us may carry that even now—memories of being the "invisible child," the "less successful sibling," the one who had to earn everything while someone else was handed it. The one who was "different"

This may be an unpopular opinion... but I kind of feel sorry for the brothers... That's the space the brothers were living in. And that pain turned into **a plan**. The moment Joseph shows up, they don't greet him nicely. "Oh, how lovely! Joseph has just travelled for over 50 miles for 4 or 5 days to check on us!" These guys are *sick* of Joseph. "Dad gave him a fancy robe? Great. Now he's dreaming about ruling over us? Amazing." You can practically hear them muttering, "*Well, la-dee-dah, Joseph.*" So, they grab him. They see red and all they see is Joseph shows up, strutting in his coat like he's on the runway. The brothers see him coming and go straight into, "Let's kill him." But they didn't actually want what Joseph had. Envy took over them and they just wanted to ruin him. This isn't just about a robe. As is often the case in an argument. This is years of feeling unseen. This is years of hurt and anger bubbling under the surface until SNAP! It's a family reunion turned hostile. A moment when emotions that were never dealt with **explode into something irreversible**.

We may not throw people in pits, but let's be honest. We've shut people out of our lives. But was that really helpful or did it make it worse? We've talked behind someone's back because it was easier than dealing with our pain. But does that help? We've let jealousy shape our attitudes, our relationships, even our faith. Jealousy doesn't need a reason—it just needs a little history and a vulnerable moment. And when we act on it, we usually regret it.

But thank God for Reuben. He didn't do everything right—but he did **one thing** that mattered: He took a step back from a heated situation and said "Whoa! Hang on a minute!" He said, "Let's not kill him." Many of us have been in situations where we may have had a message, and we've responded in fits of frustration and anger... only to make things ten times worse! Sometimes doing the right thing starts with doing **a little less of the wrong thing**. So, let's give Reuben a moment. He's the older brother, and he tries to intervene. "Let's not kill him. Let's just... throw him in a hole and think about it."

So, I guess we should *tentatively* say "Thanks? Sort of?" This is like someone saying, "Don't send the angry email—just put it in your drafts... and *then* plot revenge." He's not exactly a saint here, but Reuben reminds us: **sometimes doing a little less crazy is a step in the right direction**. Sometimes, you don't need a perfect plan—you just need someone in the room willing to say, "Let's just take a breath and think about the consequences of our actions." Reuben reminds us that even in the middle of bad decisions, **one voice of reason can still make a difference**.

This is how Joseph ends up in a pit. They toss him in. No water, no snacks, no Wi-Fi. He's sitting there like, *"Okay, I didn't see this on my dream-board."* A dry, dark hole in the ground. The pit represents a place of despair and isolation. It represents a place of spiritual emptiness.

This image is a foretelling of how Jesus would feel in the Garden. Betrayal and suffering. And maybe that's where some of us are today—not literally, but emotionally.

- A friendship that once felt close has turned cold.
- A family conflict has left you feeling trapped.
- Your own emotions got the best of you, and now you're sitting with regret

But the pit isn't always punishment. Sometimes it's the **consequence of unchecked feelings**, choices made too fast, and wounds that never healed. But it's a place where things get real. There's no more pretending in the pit. It's where God meets us—**not with easy answers, but with clarity**. In the stillness. In the silence. In the weight of what just happened.

Psalm 88:6 says "You have put me in the lowest pits, the darkest depths"

### **But it is not the final answer.**

The pit is where illusions drop, and reality sets in. It's not a fun place—but it is an honest one. And sometimes God lets us feel the pit—not to punish us, but to **pause us**.

Let's take a moment to ask:

- Are you one of the brothers, wrestling with jealousy?
- Are you Reuben, trying to slow down the chaos?
- Are you Joseph, stuck in a pit of confusion?

Let's be the kind of people who stop the spiral before it leads to regret. Let's be honest about our emotions—and brave enough to deal with them.

Wherever you are, here's the good news: **God sees the pit.**

And even when you're surrounded by emotional drama,

*He's not afraid to climb in with you and start redeeming the mess.*

## **So what do we learn from this?**

Joseph's brothers let jealousy simmer until it boiled over into violence. If we don't deal with our envy, resentment, or feelings of being overlooked, we may act out in ways we'll regret. Let's take our emotions to God before we take them out on people. Honest prayer beats passive-aggressive behaviour every time. The brothers were so focused on Joseph's coat and dreams and envy that they forgot their own value and identity. Comparison makes us forget what God has given us. It turns us into rivals. So, let's celebrate each other's wins. God has enough "coats" for everyone.

Most of the brothers wanted to harm Joseph. Reuben didn't go along with the crowd—he spoke up and redirected the situation. One voice of reason can interrupt a crowd's momentum. Leadership doesn't always mean being the loudest—it means being *the most courageous*. So maybe in our family, friend group, or workplace, we should be the one who says, "Let's slow down and think before we act."

Joseph ends up in a pit—alone, vulnerable, and likely wondering what just happened. The brothers walk away thinking the problem is "solved. Pits—those dry, lonely, confusing moments—are often the places where our hearts become teachable. If you're in a "pit" season, don't waste it. Ask, "What can I learn here?" And try to remember that even when people let us down, God is still working.

This story is so messy. So many of us can resonate with it because life is really messy! It's full of anger, dysfunction, favouritism, and regret. But God doesn't give up on this family. In fact, He uses this very moment to move history forward. Our worst moment isn't the end of our story. God's grace is bigger than our bad days

**God meets us in the mess. He teaches us through our mistakes. And He can use every part of our story—even the pit.**

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Loving God, thank you for meeting us even when we're messy. Thank you that we can always rely on you to be with and to guide us. Help us to, love others better, and recognize when we're heading toward a 'pit moment.' Help us speak peace like Reuben and resist the urge to act out our worst emotions. Help us to forgive, even through the pain.