

Everyone knows the way Jacob treated Joseph with respect to his sons. Look at the effect of Jacob's favoritism; it is to split the family! This situation worsens through the actions of Joseph himself, who seems to enjoy the role of being the favorite. Joseph tattles on them, then tells them his dreams which glorify him before his brothers and his father. The brothers hated him yet more for his dreams and his words. They were jealous because he was the favorite and they weren't.

So when the brothers find themselves confronted with Joseph far from home, they decide to get rid of him. They are going to solve their problem in their own way, instead of looking to God for help. We know the story of how they sold him into slavery to some traders on their way to Egypt. Then the brothers fix up a lie for their father's ears, who begins from that day to live in deep mourning for his lost son. In "solving" their problem, they now have a bigger one: they have to live with the overpowering sorrow of their father, as his whole life is ruined and they have to watch him grieve every day. This grief shows that Joseph is really still the favorite in the eyes of their father.

They also soon realize that there is another favorite son: their brother Benjamin. When they finally have to go to Egypt to buy grain, the master there demands that if they are to come back they must bring their youngest brother. Jacob is so afraid of losing the last of Rachel's sons that the family is in quite a pinch before Jacob finally lets him go. It is interesting to see how the brothers now treat this new favorite.

We know the rest of the story, how Joseph finally revealed himself after he found that the brothers had learned their lesson. But the lesson we want to see here is that many times when we try to fix our problems, they are just made worse. When we try to get rid of something, the replacement is even worse. We must learn to rely on God and his way and not our own strength.