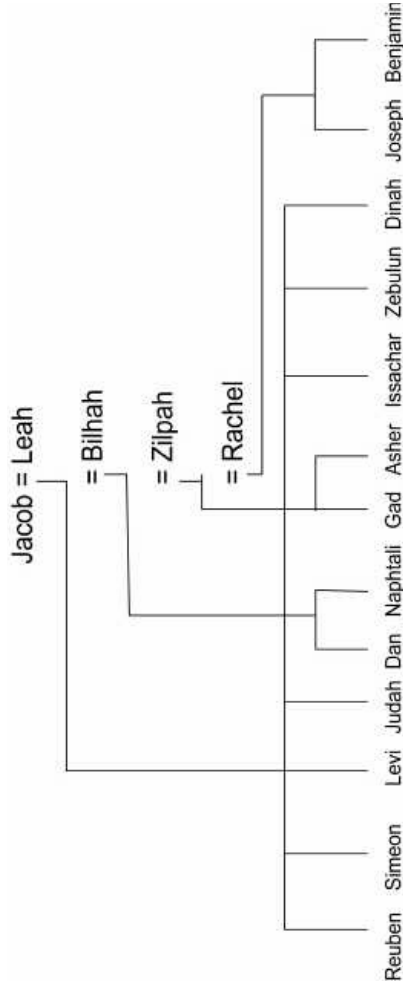


Family under control ?



Jacob's handling of his dysfunctional family shows us what St. Paul meant by *Fathers*, do *not exasperate your children*. Joseph's provision for his father and his brothers show us a more godly pattern of family life.

Welcome

Think about your favorite families in books, films or on TV - the Railway Children, the von Trapp family, the Simpsons? Why do you like them? Perhaps you would like to be like them - perhaps you think you are like them, but wish you weren't!

Worship

Psalm 107: 1 - 9, 33 - 43

Read this psalm, perhaps over a piece of meditative music. Spend a few minutes afterwards silently thanking God for his guidance and his blessing on you, or your family or the family of the church.

Word

Background

As a young man, Jacob, deeply in love with Rachel, had been tricked by her father into marrying her older sister Leah first. This caused resentment between the two sisters and they vied with each other to bear him the most sons, even using their maids to help. So here's the family: -

The sons of Leah - Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun

The son's of Bilhah (Rachel's maid):- Dan and Naphtali

The sons of Zilpah (Leah's maid): - Gad and Asher

The sons of Rachel: - Joseph and Benjamin

The one daughter, Dinah, was the last of Leah's children

Discuss

1. Read Genesis 37:1 - 8
 - a. What reason does the passage give for Jacob treating his sons differently? What other reasons can you deduce from the background? What were the consequences of Jacob's behaviour?
 - b. What tempts you to treat family members, friends, or people in the church with favouritism or less than fairly?
 - c. Joseph was clearly a gifted child. What was wrong with the way Jacob dealt with him? Should we deal with gifted children differently from others?
2. How could Joseph have dealt with his dreams more sensitively? Often we **know** we know better than our parents. How should we deal with them at these times ?
3. Read Genesis 45:25 - 28 & 47.1-12.

When Joseph's dreams were fulfilled, his whole family came to him for help and he provided for them.
Given that we do not have access to the riches of Egypt and that they had no access to the benefits of the welfare state are there

still lessons we should learn from the way Joseph provided for his family? If so, what are they?

4. What lessons can we learn from these passages about our relationships within the family of the church:
 - a. with God our Father?
 - b. with our brothers and sisters?

More bible passages

Read at home to prepare for the group or to take things that interest you further

1. Have a look at Jacob's marital history in Genesis 29 & 30
2. On favoritism see James 2: 1- 10.
3. Ephesians 6.1-3 talks about our relationship with our parents.
4. I Timothy 5: 1 - 12 gives some principles for caring for family members and members of the church family.

Witness

- Share any concerns you have in your own family relationships. Pray for each other.
- As a group there will be people you pray for regularly. Pray today especially for them in their relationships with family/friends
- Begin to plan for your next social time or perhaps for some form of outreach. This may have something to do with supporting family life - or it may not!