

Lesson 2

Surviving The Building Process

Part 1

Anyone who has ever attempted to build his own house knows about the unexpected costs, delays, and obstacles that pop up. Construction itself involves conflict. A saw comes in conflict with wood as it cuts it to the right size. A hammer comes in conflict with a nail to drive it into a beam. The greatest building project of all is the construction of character in a person's life and that, too, involves conflict. Character is formed as an individual overcomes the obstacles in his or her life. It is a long, strenuous process that is agonizing until the finished product is seen. Joseph's character was first formed in the arena of his home where he learned to successfully deal with life's obstacles.

Lesson Aim: To help teens learn that character is built by overcoming obstacles.

Objectives: The teens will...

- discover why righteousness evokes hatred in wicked people
- find Biblical principles that will help them when persecution for having character comes
- commit to supporting each other in building character.

Text: Genesis 37 shows the intense sibling rivalry that existed in the household of Jacob. The favored son, the bad report, dreams of greatness, and plots of evil make this chapter of Genesis one of the most dramatic and intriguing in all of the Bible. Joseph, because of his character, was both honored by his father and hated by his brothers. With seemingly no intention, Joseph became the object of loathing to his ten brothers. This hatred was an obstacle Joseph would successfully deal with in the process of character construction.

What You Need: Two boxes of sugar cubes, 4-6 ping pong or Nerf balls, a table, a bright flashlight, black construction paper, copies of the "Lean On Me" handout, and pens

The Lesson



Warm Up: (What you need: two boxes of sugar cubes, 4-6 ping pong or Nerf balls, a table) Ask four volunteers to come forward and participate in a contest. Set up a table in front of the group and have two volunteers stand behind it. These are the “Builders.” Give each Builder a box of sugar cubes. The Builders will try to build the highest sugar cube tower they can in one minute. Give the other two volunteers ping pong or Nerf balls and have them stand ten feet in front of the table. They are the “Wrecking Crew.” While the Builders construct their sugar cube towers, the Wrecking Crew will try to knock the towers down by throwing the balls at them (have someone from the audience retrieve the balls for the Wrecking Crew). At the end of one minute stop the game and see who has the highest tower still standing. Award the winner a candy bar or something else sweet.



Bridge: Say, “The whole time the Builders were attempting to construct their towers they had to fight off the Wrecking Crew. This is exactly what happens when you try to build character in your life. Ephesians 6:16 says that Satan is constantly throwing obstacles and temptation in our way to stop our Christian walk. When Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the enemy was so close and threatening that the people had to work with one hand and carry their weapons in the other (Neh. 4:16-18). Joseph knew what it was like to try to build his character while his brothers tried to tear him down.”



Content: While building character in his life, Joseph constantly faced the problem of his wicked brothers. He had to deal with their hatred and jealousy.

Joseph Was Faithful In Times Of Animosity vv. 1-11

He Was Hated Because He Was Favored
By His Father vv. 1-3

Joseph was a special son to Jacob because of his birth and his behavior. Joseph was the first-born son of Rachel, Jacob’s favorite wife. When he entered the family, he immediately stole the spotlight and his father’s heart.

Joseph also pleased his father because of his behavior. Joseph was not the spoiled brat he could have been. His father’s favor could have turned him into the type of child who would use his position to punish his brothers. He respected his father because he knew God had placed Jacob over him as a parent. Joseph was also responsible. Jacob could trust him to do a job without having to check up on him.

Joseph’s brothers also hated him because of Jacob’s obvious favor. Verse 3 says that Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved Joseph’s brothers. This drove his brothers crazy with jealousy. Jacob also made a special robe for Joseph that was a symbol of his favor. In those days there were two kinds of robes, long-sleeved and short-sleeved. Short-sleeved robes were worn by servants and long-sleeved robes were worn by rulers or leaders. Joseph, as a seventeen year-old, was given a ruler’s coat while his brothers in their thirties and forties wore servant’s robes. Verse 14 seems to indicate that Joseph was given a job that did not require him

to do the same hard work his brothers had to do. All these displays of affection by Jacob contributed to the growing hatred of his ten oldest sons for Joseph.

Many teens live in a family where one child is favored over the others. It hurts to know your parents favor or give more attention and privileges to your brother or sister. The Bible shows that God loves all His children the same and that favoritism is wrong!

He Was Hated Because His Life Revealed The Wickedness Of His Brothers v. 2

One of the reasons his brothers hated him so much was that Joseph's character made his brothers' lack of it so much more obvious.

Object Lesson: (What you need: A bright flashlight, black construction paper) Turn out the lights in the room and make it as dark as possible by covering windows with shades or black construction paper and closing doors. Say, "This is what the world is like without any Christian influence. Everyone can do whatever they want and no one cares because the darkness hides their actions. John 3:19-20 says 'And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd.'" Turn on a bright flashlight and shine it around the room. Take the time to shine it in everyone's faces as you say, "When a Christian enters a group of unsaved people, his life is like a light that exposes the true nature of the unbelievers' lives. It has one of two effects: wicked people will either hate the one who shows them the depravity of their ways or be convicted by the believer's life and drawn to God for cleansing."

Joseph Was Faithful In Times Of Adversity vv. 12-36

The Expression Of His Brothers' Hatred

Joseph's brothers expressed their hatred for him **verbally**. The usual greeting among Hebrews was *Shalom* meaning "Peace." It would be the same as saying "Hi, how are you?" Joseph's brothers could not greet him with *Shalom* because they did not wish peace for him.

Joseph's brothers were also **vengeful**. When Joseph arrived to check on his brothers, they plotted to murder him. With Joseph out of the way they could continue in their irresponsible and wicked lifestyles.

Their hatred was lastly expressed **visibly** in their actions in verses 19-24. When Joseph arrived, they violently stripped him of his special robe and threw him into the cistern.

Small Group Study: Say, "When you try to live for God, you will encounter obstacles. Two of those obstacles will be animosity and adversity." Divide your teens into several groups and have them look up the following verses and report on the truth about opposition when living for God.

Neh. 6:1-2—Others will plot to stop you from living for God

Matt. 5:11-12—People will insult you and make up awful stories about you



John 15:18-19—The world will hate you because it hates Jesus Christ
2 Tim. 3:12—Everyone who lives a godly life will suffer persecution

Now have your teens look up these verses and report on what their reaction to persecution should be.

Matt. 5:12—Rejoice (be happy) and be exceedingly glad (lit. “shout for joy”) because your reward in heaven is great.

James 1:2-4—Consider it a reason to be joyful because it produces patience which produces completeness.

2 Tim. 3:14—Continue in the things you have learned.

The Extent Of His Brothers’ Hatred

Joseph’s brothers hated him so much that they sold him into a life of slavery to total strangers. They disposed of him as one would a piece of trash.

Have you been abandoned by your friends or family? Do you feel worthless and useless? God cares about you and he knows your situation. Even though your closest friends may hate you, God always, always loves you. Nothing you do can make God stop loving you. The next time you feel unloved, remember God’s love never stops!

Through all of this Joseph kept his faith in God and was faithful to God. He never questioned God or fell apart emotionally. He knew that no matter what his brothers did to him God was in control and would keep him safe.



Closing: (What you need: Copies of the “Lean On Me” handout and pens)

Joseph had to overcome obstacles on his own but God often allows us to lean on and support other Christians in time of trial. Turn to Daniel 3. In this famous scene Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego are faced with bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar or being thrown in a furnace. There is no doubt that their moral support for one another helped them stand up to the king.

It is always easier to overcome obstacles and the hatred of others when you have a friend to lean on. Young people who are faithful to God can support each other through times of persecution and hardships in their lives. Have your teens turn to Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and have a volunteer read it out loud. These verses show the importance of having a friend who can help you when you face difficult times.

Distribute the “Lean on Me” handout to all your students and have them sign their names at the bottom. Challenge them to post it in their lockers or bedrooms where they can be constantly reminded of their duty to lift each other up in persecution and trials.