



+ **YOU**

**Sermon Series:** How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls  
**To be used with Session 1:** The Pitfall of Betrayal

**Sermon Title Possibilities:** Dream Killers  
**Scripture:** Genesis 37:1-5, 19-24, 26-27

**Connection with Unit Theme:** Use this outline to complement the small group study "*How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls*." According to Merriam-Webster, a pitfall is a hidden or not easily recognized danger or difficulty. Pitfalls are not obvious. But God is at work despite life's pitfalls, even when it doesn't seem obvious.

**Introduction:** In the movie *Dream Killer*, 17-year-old, Mia Rodson, an aspiring singer, wins her high school talent show competition and a chance to work under the tutelage of a famous producer. However, her best friend Lindsay and Lindsay's mother, Ellen are not happy, believing that Mia stole Lindsay's opportunity at stardom, and in an extreme act of betrayal, plan to destroy Mia's career.

A betrayal is when someone very close to you, violates your trust or confidence by an act of unfaithfulness. The most treacherous betrayal in Scripture is Judas' betrayal of Jesus by an infamous kiss of unfaithfulness (Luke 22:47-48). In this Scripture session, Joseph is hated by his brothers and is betrayed by them in an effort to "kill" his dreams. However, his siblings' actions are not the only acts of betrayal. Even so, in the midst of his brothers' betrayal, God remains faithful because He "is a friend that sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

### 1. A Brother's Betrayal (vv. 1-2)

We don't mind people with physical weaknesses (2 Cor. 12:7-9), but we tend to disregard or even "cancel" people if they make mistakes or have character flaws. We currently live in a society that will write people off for things they've done in the past.

The *New York Times* said, "You can do something stupid when you're 15, say one thing and 10 years later it will shape how people perceive you ... we all do cringey things and make dumb mistakes and whatever. But social media's existence has brought that into a place where people can take something you did back then and make it who you are now."<sup>1</sup>

The first betrayal in this passage is Joseph's betrayal of his brothers (v. 2). Joseph was working *with* his brothers. The text never indicates that Joseph was his brothers' supervisor or that Joseph's father sent him to spy on his brothers. If the work was being done incorrectly, it was as much Joseph's responsibility as it

was his brothers. Joseph should have addressed the problem with his brothers, first. Joseph's actions were a betrayal of his brothers' trust and confidence.

But thanks be to God that He doesn't "cancel" us based on our past, and that He can use our imperfections and work to mold imperfect beings into the perfect image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). The apostle Paul writes, "I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

## **2. A Father's Betrayal (vv. 3-4)**

The second betrayal is Jacob's betrayal of his sons by playing favorites. Unfortunately, Jacob was perpetuating what he experienced as a child (Gen. 25:28). Every child is different, and parents must respond to each personality uniquely. However, there is a vast difference between differential treatment based on uniqueness and preferential treatment based on gender, appearance, personality, or biological children over stepchildren. Jacob's love for Joseph more than his other sons was a betrayal of his responsibility as a parent to love his children equally (the same) and treat them equitably (impartially).

"Unfortunately, the consequences of parental favoritism are what you might expect — they're mostly bad. Disfavored children experience worse outcomes across the board: more depression, greater aggressiveness .... And it's not all rosy for the favored children either—their siblings often come to resent them, poisoning those relationships."<sup>2</sup>

But God shows no favoritism (Rom. 2:11), nor does He show partiality (Deut. 10:17). When parents show favoritism or partiality, they betray their calling as parents and fail to reflect the love of God toward their children.

## **3. The Brothers' Betrayal (vv. 19-24, 26-27)**

The third and most obvious betrayal is by Joseph's brothers. Joseph's brothers already hated him because his father loved him more, but their hatred grew because of his dreams (vv. 4-8). "Dream killers" are "haters" for multiple reasons. However, their primary reason for hating is because they often feel like you've stolen something that rightfully belongs to them. In his brothers' minds, Joseph had stolen their father's love, loyalty, and now he was dreaming about ruling over them. So, they decided to kill him (v. 18). But "we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

**Conclusion:** Despite Joseph's betrayal, his father's betrayal, and his brothers' betrayal, God was at work in Joseph's life. Despite Jacob playing favorites, it was God's favor that protected Joseph's life. God worked through both Reuben's desire to save Joseph and Judah's plan to profit from Joseph to ultimately preserve Joseph's life for His

greater purpose. Joseph would later articulate this same sentiment to his brothers: “You planned evil against me; God planned it for good” (Gen. 50:20).

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1. “Tales from the Teenage Cancel Culture.” *New York Times*. Downloaded from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/31/style/cancel-culture.html>.

2. Shrira, Ilan. “When Parents Play Favorites.” *Psychology Today*. Downloaded from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-narcissus-in-all-us/200901/when-parents-play-favorites>.