Beneath The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat: The real story of Joseph. Introduction (Genesis 37)

'*Genesis*' means '*Book of beginnings*'. These beginnings include God's creation of the whole universe, his renewal of the earth after the destruction of the great flood, and the beginning of God's new Family-of-Promise through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But Genesis not only puts us in touch with God's ongoing faithfulness and blessing to his fallen creation, it also honestly addresses some of the brokenness that all people experience in this world. So as we begin studying this account of Israel's family let's keep in mind that this episode is actually connected to our lives through the great all-encompassing drama called, 'The History of God's Salvation of the World' (i.e. The Bible). It only stands to reason that, in order to save the whole world, God would begin by demonstrating his grace and love to Jacob's sinful and dysfunctional family. The Bible will become more relevant and meaningful to us as we see God working out salvation history through the lives of very ordinary and flawed people who are just like us.

Read 'The account of Jacob' in Genesis 37 and reflect on the following questions:

1. Although the final 14 chapters of Genesis focus mostly on Jacob's son Joseph, why is this story called 'the account of Jacob [or Israel]' (Genesis 37:1 - 4)?

2. The early verses of chapter 37 set the scene of the tension that existed between Joseph and his brothers. Describe the nature of the relationship that emerges from these early verses (37:2 – 4).

3. How did the bad relationship between Joseph and his brothers affect the way they responded to his first dream (37:5 – 8)?

4. How was Jacob's response to Joseph's second dream both similar and different to that of his other sons (37:9 – 11)?

5. Explain how verses 12 – 20 reveal some of the ignorance of both Joseph and his father in regard to the level of hatred that Joseph's brothers had for him.

6. Why do you think the eldest son Reuben (and to a lesser extent Judah) wanted to save Joseph from being harmed by the other brothers (37:21 – 30)?

7. Reflect on how Joseph's coat becomes both a symbol of his father's love for him and his brothers' hatred of him (compare 37:3 – 4 to 37:31 – 34).

8. What further things do the final verses of this chapter (37:34 – 36) reveal to us about the broken nature of this family? Where is God in all of this?

9. To what extent can you relate to this broken family?