

*Introduction:*

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**The Coat**

I first realized my existence as the threads of my life were being spun together in the hands of a skillful Craftsman. After He had spun all the fibers necessary to complete the different parts that would make me, He took the different spools of thread he had made and dyed them into many beautiful colors. Then after some time of drying he began to arrange and re-arrange the different colors of thread. It took five days for Him to finally get the colors arranged in the order He wanted them, then He started the weaving process. With His skillful hands He placed each thread color in just the right place to make a very unique and beautiful piece of cloth. I was not done though; I was just ready for the next stage of my existence.

Being carefully wrapped and placed on the back of a camel I traveled many days across the desert to a strange land. Finally reaching my destination I was placed in a shop with many wonderful things. There were other pieces of cloth there but none of them were like me. My Maker had made me unique, even strange, and with many beautiful colors. I was there for what seemed like a long time. Then one day a woman walked into the shop and took me with her over the hills to a large tent she called her home. She carefully wrapped me up and placed me in a basket.

It seemed like forever before she took me out of the basket and unwrapped me. She laid me out flat, and for several days just kept looking at me. She would turn me one way and then another. Then she would fold one corner or side over and stand back to look at me. Then she would straighten me out and run her soft hands over me to smooth me out flat again. Then again she would stand back and just stare at me.

Finally she brought a young man in to see me. His eyes widened when he first saw me. I heard him say to the woman. "Is this for me?" The woman replied, "When I am finished with it, it will be yours." She had the young man stand up straight and tall with his arms stretched out. She folded me in half and held me up against his back. She draped me over one shoulder and then the other. She folded me over his head and down over his shoulders. She turned and twisted me in every imaginable way. Then she pulled me off of the young man and sent him away. She laid me down, smoothed me out and left me lying there for several days.

Finally she came back to me. This time she had an old man with her. He picked me up and rubbed me against his face. She took me and folded me over and held me up in front of the old man talking about the young man she had introduced me to. The old man had a big smile on his face when he left the tent that day.

The next day the woman took me over to a part of the tent that had a beautiful thick carpet on the ground. She laid me out flat and smooth, and began to measure and

mark small lines on me. When she was finished marking me she grabbed a sharp knife and brought it toward me. The next thing I remember is that I am folded neatly and laying in the basket again.

Several days passed before I saw anyone again. The woman, the old man, and the young man came into the tent. They all seemed to be very excited. Smiling and talking with each other. The old man playfully shoved the young man who had to jump over the basket I was in to keep from stumbling to the ground. Then with tears in her eyes the woman took me out of the basket and handed me to the old man. He unfolded me and put me on the shoulders of the young man. The woman had made me into a new form that day on the rug of the tent; a form that fit over the young man perfectly.

The young man thanked the old couple and ran from the tent. The young man wore me every day. Even on warm days he would wear me in the cool of the morning. Taking me off when it got warm he would carefully fold me and lay me over a rock. Each evening when he came back to his tent he would carefully shake the dust out of me and after folding me he would place me in a basket until the next morning. On cold nights he would take me out and use me for extra warmth.

One day when we went out into the field to work a strange thing happened. Some men stripped me from the young man's back and threw me into the dirt under a bush. They took the young man and threw him into a deep pit. After some time they pulled him out of the pit and exchanged him for some money. He was taken away in a caravan and I never saw him again.

I had no idea what might become of me. The men who had thrown the young man in the pit finally came over and picked me up out of the dirt. They slaughtered a goat and dipped me in the goat's blood. I had never been treated like this in all of my existence. Everyone I had ever encountered had treated me with great care and value. After dipping me in the blood of the goat they took me to the old couple that had given me to the young man. The old couple began to cry. The woman was screaming out such a sound it frightened me. Then the old man told a servant to take me away. The servant carried me out of the tent and threw me into a campfire.

And so the relationships between brothers pretty much carried on the way they had nearly from the very beginning of time. And without some kind of change the relationship between a man and his brother would carry on the same way it always had, with hate and resentment and jealousy.

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*Brothers: The Result of sin*

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### **Cain & Able:**

The encounter between the brothers of the young man with the many colored coat was nothing shocking or new. In fact the relationship between the first two brothers in history ended in a similar way.

[Genesis 4:3-8 \(NIV\)](#)

[3] In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. [4] But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, [5] but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

[6] Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? [7] If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, **sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.**"

[8] Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, **Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.**

From the disobedience of a simple command not to eat from one certain tree, to the murder of a brother, in one generation; sin had taken its hold on mankind.

### **Joseph & His Brothers:**

The young man with the many colored coat was named Joseph. The men who sold him into slavery in Egypt were his brothers.

Genesis 37:17-18 (NIV)

[17b] ...So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. [18] But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

Genesis 37:23-24 (NIV)

[23] So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing— [24b] and they took him and threw him into the cistern...

Genesis 37:28 (NIV)

[28] So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

I told this story from the point of view of the many colored coat because it gives us an outside perspective of the tragedy of sin. My brother and I did not always get along very well but to sell him into slavery or kill him seems unreasonable to me. Now that we are adults we get along very well. I would credit that, to the change in the relationship I have with my Lord that affects every aspect of my life. There are times I have had to ignore some very selfish behavior to maintain our relationship. I guess the point is that sometimes hate for a brother does not have to show itself in the drastic examples we have looked at so far. Take for example the relationship between Moses and his brother Aarom and his sister Miriam.

### **Moses & Aaron:**

Numbers 12:1-10 (NIV)

[12:1] Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. [2] "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they

asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this.

[3] (Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)

[4] At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out to the Tent of Meeting, all three of you." So the three of them came out. [5] Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the Tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward, [6] he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.

[7] But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. [8] With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" [9] The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them. [10] When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam—leprous, like snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had leprosy;

Simple jealousy had brought Aaron and Miriam to stand against their brother Moses. They had forgotten their place. They had forgotten that Moses was God's chosen man to do a very specific task for God. They had been chosen to follow Moses.

The Greek word for brother is not limited in its use to just a sibling brother or sister. The Greek word is 'a-del-phos' (g80), it denotes unity, a fellowship of life based on identity or origin, members of the same family, tribe, countrymen, one of the same nature, a fellow man was regarded as a brother. You and I would be considered brothers and sisters in the right context of the use of this word for brother.

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### *Relationship Mending:*

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We have seen bad relationships and I think most of us have had bad experiences that we can testify about. But what about making a good relationship out of a bad one, is it possible?

#### **Cain & Able:**

Sometimes, like in the case of Cain and Able, the relationship can never be repaired on this side of eternity.

Genesis 4:9-13 (NIV)

[9] Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

[10] The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. [11] Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. [12] When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

[13] Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear.

Sometimes, like in the case of Joseph and his brothers, God can use the circumstances of life to bring about conditions that allow us to repair broken relationships. A lot has happened to Joseph since his brothers sold him into slavery...

Genesis 45:3-15 (NIV)

[3] Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

[4] Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! [5] And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. [6] For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. [7] But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

[8] "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. [9] Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. [10] You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. [11] I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

[12] "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. [13] Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

[14] Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. [15] And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

Sometimes, like in the case of Moses and Aaron the natural ups and downs of interpersonal relationships never destroy or damage the relationship beyond the ability to be repaired. Especially if God enters the picture and people are submissive to Him.

Numbers 12:11-15 (NIV)

[11] and he said to Moses, "Please, my lord, do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed. [12] Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother's womb with its flesh half eaten away."

[13] So Moses cried out to the LORD, "O God, please heal her!"

[14] The LORD replied to Moses, "If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days; after that she can be brought back." [15] So Miriam was confined outside the camp

for seven days, and the people did not move on till she was brought back.

But what does this have to do with us today?

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*Conclusion:*

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In his writings John calls us to a higher standard in our relationships with our brothers. It is an echo of the same standard of relationship that Jesus called His disciples to.

1 John 4:13-21 (NIV)

[13] We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

[14] And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. [15] If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. [16] And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. [17] In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. [18] There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

[19] We love because he first loved us. [20] If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. [21] And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

The church takes certain stands against hot political issues these days.

- Abortion (against)
- Homosexuality (against)
- The definition of marriage (as between one man and one woman)
- The schooling of our children (to promote a political agenda or indoctrinate)
- The restrictions of reasonable scientific teaching

These are all hot topics these days and it seems like they really come into focus during a highly charged political atmosphere in a major election year. The church must take a stand and let the views of God be known. However, there is one topic that stands out above all others – the abortion issue. Anyone who approves of the murder of innocent children stands against the Word of God and against the Constitution of the United States of America.

Edmund Burke said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Edmund Burke is mainly remembered for his support of the [American colonies](#) in the dispute with King [George III](#) and Britain that led to the [American Revolution](#). He served for many years in the [British House of Commons](#) as a member of the [Whig](#) party.

I cannot in good conscious leave you in the dark concerning an event that will take place in our country on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008. We will have the privilege to vote. A

privilege that many of our countrymen have bled and died for. When we take that privilege, we must have the Word of God in one hand and all the truthful resources of knowledge in our other hand. One good source has been made available in the bulletin today. And then we must vote according to the truth of God's Word. For too long the majority of the church has stood by and done nothing. It is time to let the voice of God be heard in our land, and His followers will be His mouth piece on Election Day.

However, we must not let our passion become a justification for hate. We must not hate our brothers whom we disagree with. John makes it clear; we must love our brothers and sisters. Love is the one thing that will eventually win the day. Jesus' attitude was a good example of that love. Voice our opinion – yes. Cast our private vote – yes. Hate our brothers – never.

Please stand for a closing prayer.