

## Sowing and Reaping / Jacob & Joseph

**Erica:** Robert and Ruth have worked hard all their lives. They both enjoyed their careers and were considered by many to be good workers. They gave all their time and energy to their jobs. But their five children really seemed to get in the way as Robert and Ruth worked hard to do well in their jobs and earn good money. To be honest, it seemed that they enjoyed their jobs and career challenges far more than raising children.

**Carol:** Hello, this is Carol and I welcome you to *Women of Hope*. And, how are you today, Tammy my friend?

**Tammy:** I'm doing really well thanks Carol.

**Carol:** Tammy & I hope you're well too. Are you sitting down to listen, or are you keeping on with some work? Whatever you're doing we hope you enjoy our time together.

**Tammy:** This sounds like a rather sad story doesn't it! We have Erica with us today to tell us this story about two parents who she's called Robert and Ruth.

**Erica:** Yes Tammy, it *is* a sad story...Have you ever heard of the *law of the harvest*? It simply says: you reap what you sow.

**Carol:** Yes...when you sow say...tomato seeds...and take care of them and water them, you will see them grow. Soon you'll be picking fresh, delicious tomatoes.

**Tammy:** That's right...and it's the same with our family isn't it! It sounds like Robert and Ruth were not very interested in sowing much into their children's lives. Tell us more Erica...

**Erica:** At first it hurt the children that their parents were never around, not even for special days, or for school or sports events...but they soon got over it. The children learned to look after themselves...much to their parents' relief. They became used to their parents going away on many trips and going to endless meetings. They learned to cope with having very little attention from them. They found other meaningful people in their lives to fill the empty space left by their parents.

The years have passed now and Robert and Ruth are in their late 60's. Retirement has arrived and all their children are married and live their own lives. *They* now have no time for Robert and Ruth and rarely call or write. Any family gathering is usually a forced event...strained with tension and deep unresolved issues. No one dares to mention the past...there are no happy photo albums around.

Robert and Ruth cannot understand why their children don't seem to be interested in them...and they don't seem to want to do anything to help them. Robert and Ruth feel angry and frustrated. They feel they deserve more attention and time from their children. Unfortunately, they didn't think *the law of the harvest* applied to them. They now expect to find love and acceptance where they sowed rejection and not much interest; they demand admiration and tenderness where they planted only weeds of selfishness. They expect to *reap* what they didn't sow!

**Tammy:** This *is* a sad story – just as I thought. We’re talking about *the law of the harvest* today. What you sow is what you reap...

**Carol:** And if you have a garden, you will know just what Erica’s been talking about – we can’t expect a lovely crop of fresh, juicy tomatoes if we don’t bother planting the seeds and taking care of them can we? And in just the same way, we can’t expect our children’s love and attention when they grow up, if we as parents have never given them any love and attention.

**Erica:** This has been a serious lesson for Robert and Ruth to learn. Today they are a sad, pathetic couple...all alone. They feel rejected in the later part of their life. Instead of finally being able to enjoy their children and grandchildren, they hear...*I’m sorry, we’re busy, we can’t come today!* This is the same message they gave their children long ago.

Friend, if you had the same kind of experience as Ruth and Robert’s children then listen carefully. The message they heard: *I have more important things to do than be with you*, made them feel rejected. If as a child you sensed this message often enough you probably still have feelings of worthlessness. You may feel resentment towards your parents. And your love for them may have turned cold. Perhaps you’ve learned to live with these feelings and you think that it doesn’t matter now.

But you know, it’s a mistake to think that your childhood doesn’t matter any more. The fact is that our childhood never leaves us...it casts a long shadow for years to come. It leaves a permanent mark on the way we think, the way we view life, and the way we view ourselves. Deep down we can feel we are not good enough, not worth anything, and not secure. Those feelings can stay buried deep inside...and they don’t go away.

And if those who gave birth to you couldn’t make you feel loved...then it’s not surprising if you think there must be something very wrong with you. You may never actually say these words, but deep down you may feel that you just aren’t worth much. You feel the emptiness deep inside yourself.

If our parents do not give us a positive role model and a loving example, this can affect our *own* parenting skills. We may find ourselves making the same mistakes our parents made. How can we tell our children we love them if we never heard our parents say it to us?

**Carol:** That is so true Erica. If a parent does not show love to their child and doesn’t have time for them – the effect can go on and on right through the child’s life. But isn’t it good to know that it doesn’t have to spoil your life. You may be able to start an honest talk with your parents, and slowly rebuild a more loving relationship. You may be able to understand now why your parents didn’t give you what you wanted back when you needed it. And hopefully, now you may be able to forgive them and move on, feeling free to love.

**Erica:** And even if that’s not possible, as an adult you can think again about who you are, and what your qualities are. Value yourself. Listen to the opinions of people who love you now. Most of all, remember that God loves you more than the very best mother or father. You are worth so much in his eyes. Start seeing yourself as God sees you, rather than going on feeling - and maybe acting - like a rejected child.

**Tammy:** As you listen to Erica today on *Women of Hope*, maybe you identify more with Ruth and Robert. Perhaps you've been too busy in *your* working life to spend much time with your children.

**Erica:** You may have *felt* like you were doing the right thing – working hard and providing for your family, but your children were left alone much of the time. You didn't realise that they were starving for your love and affection. Maybe today all your children have grown up and somehow they never have time for *you*. Now they don't show *you* the *love* and *tenderness* you feel you deserve.

If you understand the simple *law of the harvest*, are you able to admit that maybe the seeds you sowed so many years ago were actually thorns? I beg you – do not waste another day. Your children need to hear you say: "I'm sorry, please forgive me." One expression of regret and repentance may open a great big door of love. Children of *all* ages *do* forgive their parents and you may find that the rest of your life can be turned around by this simple act. It may take *time* for your children to forgive you. They may need to *see* you change your attitude. You may need to make an extra *effort* to be there for them...and do things for them and their children, before they will trust that you really *do* love them. So don't leave it any longer! It's not too late to tell – and show – your grown children that you *do* love them; and it's not too late for them to return your love.

**Carol:** This might not be an easy thing for you to do. It might take a lot of courage. But your children need to know – even though they are grown up now – that you *do* love them and you didn't *mean* to hurt them.

You're listening to *Women of Hope* where we've been talking about *the law of the harvest*. And by now, I'm sure you know what that is: You reap what you sow.

**Tammy:** If you, as a parent sow love and tenderness in your children's lives, they are likely to grow into loving and tender adults. If you spend time with them and encourage them, then when they grow up they will want to spend time with you – and encourage you in your later years. They will also know how to take care of their own children.

**Carol:** I'm reminded of a very old story from God's word, the Bible (taken from Genesis Ch 37) about a man called Jacob. ...He was the grandson of Abraham and an ancestor of the Israelites.

Jacob had 12 sons but he loved one most of all...Joseph. Jacob loved this one son so much he had a special lovely tunic made JUST FOR HIM. Now Jacob wasn't a poor man, in fact he was very wealthy and he could have given each one of his sons a lovely tunic – but he didn't. This caused heartache to the other sons and they hated the one special son so much they decided to kill him.

One day, Joseph came to visit them out in the field where they were working. He was wearing his beautiful clothes and he started showing off to them... The 11 brothers thought here was their chance... At first they threw him into a deep pit while they made plans on how to get rid of him. But as they sat down to eat they saw some slave traders coming by on their way to Egypt so they decided not to kill him. Instead they sold him to the slave traders for 20 pieces of silver. Then they took his tunic, his special lovely tunic, ripped it and dribbled goat's blood all over it. They took it to their father and lied, saying: "We found this. Examine it to see whether it's your son's robe." Jacob recognized it and said, "It *is* my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has eaten

him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!" Of course, Jacob's grief was unbearable and he refused to be comforted... [That's the end of this part of the story from God's word.]

**Tammy:** As we hear this story we may think, *how awful...those brothers did a terrible thing, how could they lie so callously and unashamedly to their father and then watch him grieve so much?*

Would it surprise you to know that this is *exactly* what Jacob had done to his *own* father, when *he* was a young man? Let me tell you this part of the story from God's word. (Taken from Genesis Ch 27)

You see, Jacob had a twin brother called Esau and even though they were twins they were totally different... Esau was very hairy and Jacob wasn't; Jacob loved staying home by his mother, while Esau loved hunting and he was his father's favorite son.

But years later as their father Isaac lay on his death-bed, nearly blind, he called Esau and said, 'Take your bow and arrows and go hunting for game. Cook me my favourite tasty dish, and then I will give you my final blessing... Jacob's mother was listening to this and she wanted *her* favourite son to receive the blessing instead.

So while Esau was away hunting, she quickly made Isaac's favourite meal with some goat meat. She told Jacob, 'Take this to your father and pretend to be Esau. Then he will give *you* the blessing.' But the problem was the hairy arms! She cleverly covered his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skin of young goats. She took Esau's clothes and made Jacob put them on, then sent him into the father's tent with the delicious meal she had cooked, including fresh bread.

When Jacob came in, pretending he was Esau, he had to lie to his father. Not once, not twice but three times.

This is how it's written: Jacob took the food to his father. "My father?" he said. "Yes, my son," his father answered, "Who are you - Esau or Jacob?" Jacob replied, "It's Esau, your first born son."

The father asked, "How did you find the wild game so quickly, my son?" "The Lord your God helped me; he gave me success," Jacob replied.

The father said to Jacob, "Come closer so I can touch you and make sure that you are really Esau." When he touched Jacob's hands covered in the goatskin he said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau. Are you really my son Esau?" he asked again. And Jacob replied: "Yes, I am."

**Carol:** Three deliberate lies – and now, all these years later, his *own* sons deliberately lie to *him*. No one can escape the law of the harvest for it is written: "You cannot fool God, so don't make a fool of yourself. You will harvest what you plant." (Galatians 6:7 CEV)

**Tammy:** Well, Jacob certainly did, didn't he? When he was quite young he deceived his father when his father was on his death-bed and almost blind. He pretended to be his older brother so his father would give *him* the blessing that's reserved for the eldest.

**Carol:** And now here he is, many years later when his own sons have grown up, and they come to him to deceive him. You remember how they deceived him don't you?...That's right, they brought *his* favourite son's special tunic – all covered in the blood of a goat. They said they had found it in the field. They knew that their father would think he'd been attacked and killed by a wild animal... And they let him mourn for this special son.

**Tammy:** Remember *the law of the harvest*? That's it...we reap what we sow. Jacob sowed lies and deceit when he was young. He told three lies, didn't he?...so that he could have the special blessing that should have belonged to his brother. And now, when he is old his own family deceive him.

**Erica:** My friend, if you are still at the stage of life where you're planting seeds into your children's lives, I hope this story encourages you to think of what you're planting. Are you planting seeds of love, patience, truth and understanding? One day when you grow old you will reap this harvest and you will be rewarded with the warmth of your growing family beside you.

**Carol:** Thank you Erica. What you say is so true. It's very important for us to be loving and helpful to our children, so that when they are older they will know how to be loving and helpful to *their* children.

**Tammy:** And the bonus is – that they are more likely to be loving and helpful to *us* too when *we're* old.

**Carol:** But let me say this, dear friend: though the *law of the harvest* is an important principle to remember, we should never feel that it's too late. We can ask God to help us to make changes in our families, even if things were not done right in the past. God shows *us* grace and kindness that we don't deserve. He loves us, he forgives us when we come and sincerely say we're sorry. And God loves to turn sad situations right around and give us new beginnings. So why don't you ask for his help today?

**Tammy:** You're still with us – here on *Women of Hope*. We often tell you how much we love to hear from you...and we mean it don't we Carol?

**Carol:** Oh yes – we love to hear lots of things...how you feel about our time together on the radio...what you're struggling with – so we can pray for you.

**Tammy:** ...and we love to hear about the things that have made a change in your life.

**Tammy:** It's time for us to go now. We pray that God will touch *your* heart and be with *you too* until we come together again soon on *Women of Hope*. Goodbye.

**Carol:** ...and have a great week filled with God's blessings.