

Are the Children the REAL Problem in Your Blended Family? Part 2: Favoritism Destroys Fellowship

Having lived --- and still living in a blended family home, we have made many mistakes toward developing a family relationship with each other and all of our children. But if we had to pick one mistake that had the most negative impact in our family, it would have to be *showing favoritism*. When we feel a special bond with one child, the other children know it --- and they will resent us for it.

Favoritism can happen in all families --- both nuclear and stepfamilies --- but it is far more prevalent in stepfamilies.

Favoritism within a family will always create a dysfunctional family.

There is a vivid story in the Bible that shows the far-reaching, negative impact that favoritism can cause. Jacob had twelve sons, and probably many daughters.

Genesis 37: 3 reads, "Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him."

Favoritism always exposes itself. We will always do more for those that we love the most.

Continuing the story, *Genesis 37: 4 says, "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him."*

Favoritism breeds hatred, dissension and division. You may want all of your children to love each other, get along and enjoy each other, but favoritism will destroy fellowship. Favoritism will destroy unity.

Please note here that it was Jacob's attitude and actions that created the strife. Joseph may have played on the favoritism, as he told his brothers about his dreams (*Genesis 37: 5-11*). It may have seemed cool to Joseph that he was "chosen" by his Dad, and that he had something over his brothers. But, Joseph did not create the favoritism. His father created it. His father chose to "favor" Joseph over his brothers.

In *Genesis 37: 17-27*, Joseph's brothers plot to kill him, but then gain an opportunity to sell him into slavery. They sold him for 8 ounces of silver, and then told their father that Joseph was killed by a wild animal.

Get this --- they disposed of their favored brother. Their reaction to their father's favoritism is focused against the favored child, not against the father. The mindset is, "if we get rid of Joseph, Dad will love us again."

The story goes on to say that Joseph was in slavery in Egypt for years, spending 7 of those years in prison. He was separated from his family for many years. The rest of the story of Joseph's life is pretty incredible! Go read it!

Jacob, Joseph's father, never intended to cause Joseph to be hated and sold into slavery and separated from his family for so many years. After all, Jacob loved Joseph more than all the others. But look at the outcome --- very devastating!

If this can (and does) happen in a nuclear family, between brothers and half-brothers all striving for the affection of their father, think about how easy this can happen in a stepfamily environment! Stepparents have a huge job to dissolve any favoritism that exists in their new family. The task

involves opening their hearts to children who are not their own. It really is not that tough --- but it requires a willingness to “choose” to love the new children in their home the same as they love their natural children.

Do you want your family to become a true, loving safe-haven for all family members?
Do you want all family members to respect each other --- holding each other in high esteem?
Do you want the best for your family?
Do you want the best for your children?

THEN GUARD AGAINST FAVORITISM IN YOUR HOME!

- Realize that the parents create the favoritism, not the children.
- Realize that the children will do whatever they can to elevate their parents' love for them, including negative actions.
- Guard against spending more time with the children who like doing what you like to do. Spend your time equally with all of them.
- Display acts of kindness equally to all of your children, not just your natural children.
- Make the choice! Choose to love all of the children in your home EQUALLY.
- Give each child purpose and responsibility in your home.
- Let each child know that they are very important to you.
- Let each child know that they are a vital part of your family --- even those children who do not live with you.
- Vacation together. Do not leave anyone out.

Have a great “family” summer!

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