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## SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

*"Then they said to one another, 'Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.' Reuben answered them, saying, 'Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood,'" (Gen. 42:21-22). It took twenty years before the jealous brothers of Joseph began to feel any sense of guilt or conviction for selling him to Midianite traders bound for Egypt. They returned back home to their father with Joseph's coat drenched in goat blood and callously allowed Jacob to be misled into unthinkable sorrow by the deceitful evidence they placed*

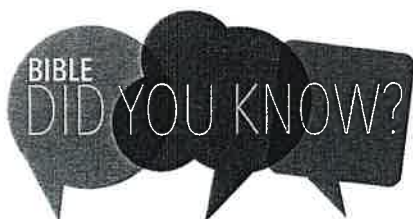
*before him. Twenty years later, they begin to feel a sense of guilt for their treachery when in astounding irony, they are now forced by Joseph to return back to their father with news that one brother, Simeon, has been left captive in Egypt. (Hmmm...sounds vaguely familiar...going back home to their father while one brother is left in Egypt leading Jacob to believe the absent brother is dead. "Their father Jacob said to them, 'You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more..." Gen. 42:36). But how could they not see it? How could they not see their wicked deeds as Joseph was begging them for his life, but twenty years later, once they realize they must leave another brother captive in Egypt and go home to tell*

their father of it they begin to consider that maybe getting rid of Joseph wasn't such a great idea? The same question could be asked in regards to David. He schemes of a way to have Bathsheba, then schemes of a way to get rid of her husband, and doesn't feel the least bit guilty about it until Nathan tells him a story about a rich man who takes a poor man's only beloved little ewe lamb to feed a stranger so he doesn't have to use his own flock. Or how about Judas, who schemes of a way to give up Jesus to His enemies and doesn't begin to feel the sting of conviction until he sees Jesus being led to Pilate to be sentenced to death. And then there's Paul, standing by holding the coats of an angry mob stoning the preacher Stephen to death, who doesn't feel the least bit of remorse or guilt about it until he is blinded by a light on the road to Damascus and is asked by Jesus why he is persecuting Him. Before we shake our heads in disbelief and utter the phrase, "How could they," let's examine ourselves and examine the powerful force motivating their sins which inevitably blinded them from

seeing that there was anything wrong with what they were doing. The soul gripping passions of jealousy, lust, greed and religious pride blinded these individuals from seeing their sins. Has it ever blinded you? Perhaps you have never physically stripped someone else of a fancy new coat they had and threw them down a manhole (once when I was 6 I pushed a kid off his big wheel and took off down the street with it, but we didn't have any manholes on our block). But perhaps you have found yourself silently cursing their very existence or verbally stripped them with your venomous words in gossip and never thought twice about it. Perhaps you have never pushed someone off the curb at the exact moment a bus was speeding down the street so you could marry their spouse. But perhaps you have told lies to conceal illicit desires you had no intention of giving up. Perhaps you have never betrayed someone for 30 pieces of silver. But perhaps in a greedy pursuit of financial gain you betrayed your moral principles and found convenient ways of justifying it. Perhaps you have never physically assaulted someone

who disagreed with your religious views. But perhaps you have verbally thrown stones with your words and felt it is fair play in the defense of your faith. Never underestimate the vulnerabilities that passions such as jealousy, lust, greed and pride open us up to and often never even realize the sins we are committing when consumed by them. *"For from within, out the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man," Mk. 7:21-23.* When the heart is left unguarded to the blinding passions of jealousy, lust, greed and pride, we become vulnerable to proceeding with a variety of sinful behavior that becomes too easy to engage in and justify. Instead of looking at the behavior of Joseph's brothers in disgust and incredulity, let it be an opportunity for the Great Physician to give us a complete check up on the spiritual condition of our hearts as we allow Him to

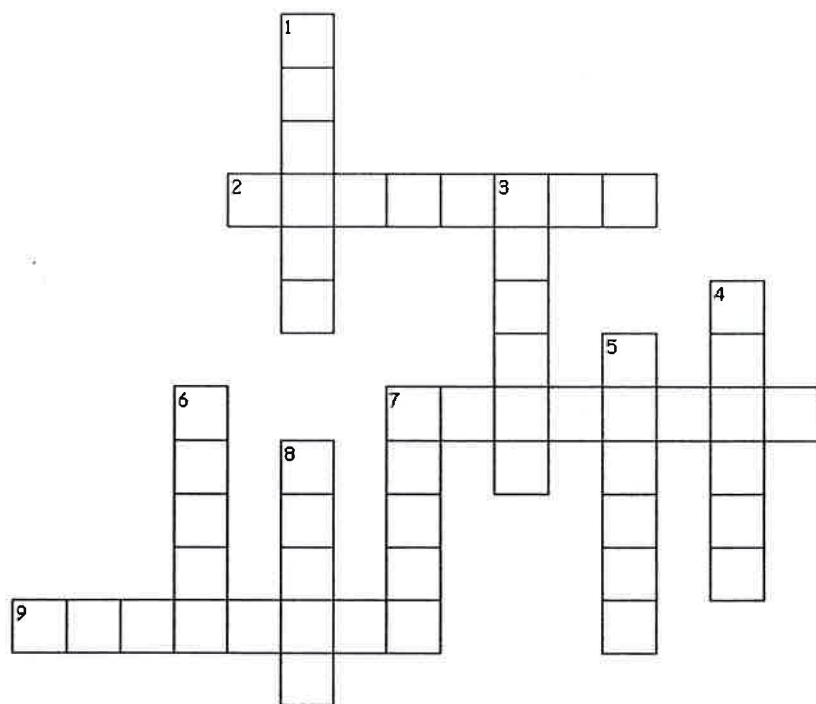
examine every area. Instead of being content to read the Physician's notes on the diagnosis of Joseph's brothers, turn your attention to the Physician's diagnosis of your own condition. Don't make the mistake of David when he heard Nathan's story of a rich man's sinful behavior and respond to Moses' story of Joseph's brothers by saying, "What a bunch of rotten boys!" Perhaps, just like Nathan, Moses is trying to tell us, "Behold, you are the one." - Daniel Ruegg



***The faithful brethren at Colossae had love for all saints. "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing..."***

***Col. 1:3-6***

# The | | | | | | | | | |---|---|---|--|---|--|---|---| | U | L | T | | M | | T | E | |---|---|---|--|---|--|---|---| | | | | | | | | | | |---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---| | C | R | | S | S | W | O | R | D | |---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|



## ACROSS

2. Wife of Philip, married to Herod, hated John the Baptist (Mk. 6:17-19)
7. Condition of disciples' hearts as they witnessed miracles (Mk. 6:49-52)
9. Jesus had this response to the unbelief of His hometown (Mk. 6:4-8)

## DOWN

1. Apostles were sent to preach this message (Mk. 6:12)
3. Hands left unwashed were thought to be this condition (Mk. 7:2,5)
4. Number of baskets of leftovers picked up at feeding 5,000 (Mk. 6:43)
5. An impure heart, according to Jesus, is what does this (Mk. 7:15,23)
6. Result of any sick who touched the fringe of Jesus' cloak (Mk. 6:56)
7. Beheaded John the Baptist (Mk. 6:14-16)
8. Apostles were sent to preach by Jesus in this grouping (Mk. 6:7)