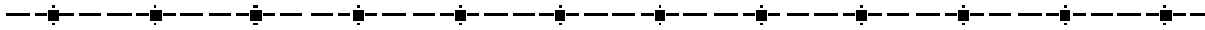


GOD'S BIG PLAN

Jacob's Favorite Son Genesis 37, 39-40

Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 50:20; Psalm 105; Matthew 5:21-26, 38-48; Acts 7:8-15; James 1:14-15



Lesson Goals: To see that sometimes God allows bad things to happen to good people.
To see that God never leaves those who trust Him and follow Him.
To see that God has a plan for our lives, that we cannot always see.

Scripture Memory Happy is the one whose help is the God of Jacob. Psalm 146:5a (HCSB)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself so much with this story that it can be told as a STORY, not as "He said. . . She said" or read. But, to reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson: Let's review what we have learned so far about God's Big Plan. (Review the previous stories, encouraging more and more students to share.)

Who did God first make a promise with about the land of Canaan and family, or descendants, in great numbers like the dust on the earth and the stars in the sky? (Abraham.) Was the promise only for Abraham? (No.) Who else did God make this promise with? (Abraham's son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob.) What did God do for Jacob that reminded him of God's promise? (He gave him twelve sons, the beginning of the new nation, or people, He had promised. God changed his name to Israel; a new name for the new nation. And God brought Jacob back to the land promised to him.) What had Jacob promised if all of this happened? (That God, the God of his grandfather Abraham and the God of his father Isaac, would be his God, as well.)

READ: Genesis 37:1-4 (Remember to hold the Bible, opened, throughout the story.)

Jacob, or Israel as he is also called, had chosen the true God as his God. God was doing all that He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob was living in the land that God had promised to Abraham so many years ago. Israel lived there with all twelve of his sons. Many of them were grown by now and Joseph, Rachel's first son, was already seventeen. They were shepherds, all of them. They were not a great, big, happy family, though. Israel loved Joseph more than all the others. He loved him so much that he made his son a very special coat - a very colorful coat. Joseph's brothers saw that their father favored him and they hated Joseph for it. They hated him so much that they couldn't even speak to him nicely.

To make things worse, Joseph had a dream. In Joseph's dream, he and each of his brothers were cutting wheat in a field and bundling it up. Joseph's bundle rose up and the eleven bundles of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin bowed down to his bundle. Joseph told all of this to his brothers and they hated him even more than before. Joseph even had another dream. In the second dream, Joseph saw the sun, moon and eleven stars bow down to him. When he told his brothers and his dad, they wondered if Joseph really thought that all of them were going to bow down before him one day. Joseph's brothers were very jealous of him. Jacob kept thinking about it all.

One day, after the dreams, when Joseph's brothers were away taking care of their sheep, Jacob sent Joseph to check up on them. Joseph obeyed his father and went. The brothers saw him coming while he

was still far from them. Joseph's brothers had been angry with Joseph and they hated him. That anger and hatred led them to make some terrible plans. Joseph's brothers planned together to kill him! When he arrived, they ripped off his colorful coat and threw him in a deep hole. Reuben, the oldest, stopped them from killing Joseph. He was planning to rescue Joseph later, but while he was away, Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave to some travelers headed to Egypt. And then they made up a terrible lie. They covered Joseph's coat with blood and convinced their father, Jacob, that he had been killed by a wild animal. God allowed Joseph to be sold by his brothers because God had a plan.

Meanwhile, Joseph arrived in a land that looked nothing like the land of Canaan where he had come from. Egypt was a very different place. They dressed differently. They wrote and spoke differently. They lived differently. But God was with Joseph, even when he was sold to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar was captain of the Pharaoh's, or king's, bodyguard. Joseph worked for Potiphar and it didn't take long for Potiphar to realize that God made a success out of everything Joseph did. Potiphar put Joseph in charge of everything he owned! Everything of Potiphar's was better because Joseph was in charge.

(For younger students, this section can be condensed to "Someone accused Joseph of doing something that he didn't do and he went to jail.") Joseph was a very good looking young man. Potiphar's wife liked looking at Joseph. Potiphar's wife wanted to be more than a friend to Joseph. Joseph told her, "No. Your husband has put me in charge of everything. The only thing he hasn't given me is you. I cannot sin against God by doing this." Joseph wanted to please God and do what was right. He knew that being more than a friend to Potiphar's wife was wrong. Potiphar's wife bothered Joseph every day, but Joseph wouldn't listen to her. Then one day Potiphar's wife got all of the other servants out of the house and tried to trap Joseph. He knew it would be bad to stay, even to tell her no, so Joseph ran. He ran so fast that his coat came off in her hand. Potiphar's wife made up stories and Joseph was thrown into jail for something he didn't do.

But even in jail, God was still with Joseph. The jailer finally put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners! Two of the prisoners had worked in the pharaoh's house, but were in jail because they made Pharaoh mad. One night they both had dreams, but were upset because they didn't understand them. Joseph knew that God could help him understand the dreams. He told the first man that in three days, he would be back at work for Pharaoh. Joseph asked the man to remember him and tell Pharaoh that he shouldn't be there. The other man's dream, though, meant that he would die in three days. And in three days, things happened exactly as Joseph had said! But the first man forgot about Joseph when he started working for Pharaoh again.

Review:

Now, let's review what you have learned. Who wants to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

What would Joseph do? The man who worked for Pharaoh had forgotten about him. Had everyone forgotten about Joseph? (No. God remembered Joseph. God had been with Joseph all the way from Canaan.) How did Joseph handle all the bad things that happened to him? Did he fight back when his brothers sold him? (No.) Did he stay angry and fight with everyone he met because his brothers had mistreated him? (No. Joseph made good choices and did a good job whether he was a slave or in jail.) Did Joseph just give up when bad things happened to him? (No. He trusted in the God his father had trusted in. He knew that God could be trusted to do what was right, even when everyone around him was doing wrong.)

Joseph's brothers hated him and wanted to hurt him. Potiphar's wife was mad because she didn't get what she wanted and so, she punished Joseph. But God had other plans. In our next story we will see what God had in mind.

And no matter what others may be doing to you, God has a plan for you, too. Will you trust Him and follow Him even if you don't understand it all? Will you let God take care of you the way Joseph did?

Planning for Next Week
Lesson 12 • Joseph Rules Egypt!
Genesis 41-50

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: "God is So Good"

SHARE: Last week, we talked about how God gave Isaac a wife! Who remembers her name? It was Rebekah! Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Jacob had thirteen children! Can you count to thirteen? One-two-three . . . Twelve of those children were boys! But instead of playing together and taking care of each other, these boys didn't like one of their brothers. Joseph, one of the younger brothers, was daddy's favorite! Jacob gave Joseph things that he didn't give the other sons. So, Joseph's brothers were very jealous.

In their jealousy, Joseph's brothers did a very bad thing. They sold Joseph to men who would take him to a far away place. There he would be a slave. Joseph traveled for many, many days. When they arrived in Egypt, he was sold to a man named Potiphar (**Pot**-if-far). Even as a slave, Joseph was a good boy. He did everything he should. Joseph obeyed God. Potiphar saw that Joseph was a good boy and put him in charge of everything that he owned!

And then, another bad thing happened. Someone blamed Joseph for doing something he didn't do. And even though Joseph had done nothing wrong, he was thrown into jail! Has anyone ever blamed you for doing something you didn't do? Did you get in trouble? If you did, it's pretty scary, huh? Did you get mad? Well, Joseph didn't get mad. He didn't complain and argue. Joseph kept obeying God and doing good things. Even the jailer could tell that Joseph was doing what was right. The jailer put Joseph in charge of the jail and the prisoner. God was with Joseph all the time, even when the bad things happened. God will be with you, too.

PRAY: Thank you, God, for taking care of me, even when bad things happen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Create a song, chant or rap to accompany the memory verse. It's short enough to repeat several times.
- Make reviewing all of the lessons fun! Using dark paper or a sidewalk and chalk, illustrate each of the stories covered so far. When each "masterpiece" has been completed, give each student the opportunity to tell which story they illustrated and then to retell the story.
- Walk like an Egyptian! Talk about Joseph's trip to Egypt. You might even want to find Egypt on a map.
- Try out some sheep crafts. Joseph and his brothers were shepherds. Make headbands with construction paper. Attach "wooly" ears.
- Write in hieroglyphics. Try Egyptian Name Translators on the internet. They will allow you to type in a name and will supply the closest symbol for each letter.
- Dig deeper. If you teach older children, youth or adults, discuss the following.
 - 1) The jealousy, hate and anger of Joseph's brothers - Use the following verses to spur the discussion. Matthew 5:21-26, 38-48.
 - 2) Joseph's integrity - Job 31:1; Matthew 5:27-31; James 1:14-15.