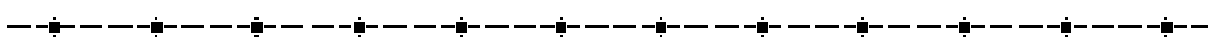


GOD'S BIG PLAN

Joseph Rules Egypt! Genesis 41-50

Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 15:13-14; Psalm 80, 105:16-23; Proverbs 16; Acts 7:1-16; Hebrews 11:21-22



Lesson Goals:
To see the importance of obedience to God.
To be reminded that God keeps His promises.
To see that God can make bad things turn out for good.

Scripture Memory We know that God is always at work for the good of everyone who loves him. Romans 8:28a (CEV)

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.)

Where was Joseph at the end of the last story? (In jail.) Had Joseph done anything wrong? (No. Potiphar's wife accused him falsely.) Did anyone else know that Joseph was innocent? (God did.)

What did Joseph do for the two prisoners who had dreams? (With God's help, he told them what their dreams meant.) What happened to the two prisoners? (One died in three days; the other, the pharaoh's cupbearer, returned to Pharaoh in three days.) What did Joseph ask the cupbearer? (To remember him, to help him be freed.) Did the cupbearer remember him? (No.) Had Joseph been completely forgotten in jail? (No. God knew where he was and was with him.)

READ: Genesis 40:23-41:1 (Remember, hold the Bible, opened, throughout the story.)

Pharaoh had a dream. In his dream, he was standing by the Nile River. Seven fat, healthy cows came out of the river and started munching on the marsh grass on the banks of the Nile. Then, seven more cows came, but these cows were skinny and looked sick. The sick, skinny cows ate the seven fat cows but then they still looked skinny. Pharaoh woke up after his dream then fell asleep again. He dreamed a second dream. In this dream he saw seven heads of grain sprout out of one stalk. They were beautiful, plump, good, and healthy. Then, seven more heads of grain sprouted. They were thin and dried up and swallowed up the plump heads of grain. Pharaoh woke up again. His dreams worried him. He sent for magicians and the wise men of Egypt, but no one understood the dreams. No one could tell Pharaoh what his dreams meant.

And then, after two years of freedom, the cupbearer suddenly remembered Joseph. He told Pharaoh about Joseph and they brought him out of the jail, cleaned him up and presented him to Pharaoh, the leader of Egypt. "I've heard you interpret dreams," was Pharaoh's response to meeting Joseph. Joseph was clear and bold; "I can't interpret them, but God will give you an answer." So Joseph listened to Pharaoh's dreams. "Both of these dreams are really one dream. God is telling you what He is about to do. There were two dreams because God has decided, it is settled and will happen soon." Joseph continued explaining what it was that would happen soon. "The seven healthy cows and plump heads of grain mean that Egypt will have seven amazing years of great crops and lots of food. The seven sick cows and dried up heads of grain mean that a famine is coming. This famine will be so bad that all of the extra from the first seven years will be forgotten about. It's going to be awful!" Joseph counseled Pharaoh, "You should look for someone who is really wise, and very intelligent. For the seven wonderful years that are coming, they should save one-fifth of everything that is grown. It can be saved, guarded, and then used when the famine comes. Pharaoh knew that he was

looking at the intelligent, wise man who could do all of this! He put Joseph in charge of EVERYTHING! The only one greater than Joseph in all of Egypt was Pharaoh.

And just as God had showed Pharaoh, there was abundance in Egypt like they had never seen, seven years of it. Then came the famine. The famine covered the whole earth and Joseph opened the storehouses where they had guarded grain for seven years. People came from everywhere to buy grain from Joseph. When Jacob, Joseph's father, realized that there was grain in Egypt, he sent his ten oldest sons to buy grain. When the sons of Israel arrived in Egypt, Joseph was ruling over the land and he sold grain to those who came to buy. As his brothers approached him, they all bowed down to him and Joseph remembered the dream that God had given him so many years before—the dream of the bundles of wheat bowing down to his bundle. His brothers didn't recognize him. Dressed as an Egyptian, Joseph looked very different than he had as a shepherd boy. Joseph sold them grain but demanded that if they wanted more they must return with his brother Benjamin. Simeon would be held in jail until they returned. When they finally did return, they came with gift for Joseph from his homeland: honey, pistachios and almonds. Joseph decided to test them and called them to his home. The brothers were very nervous, even afraid, but found out they were being invited to lunch. Joseph favored Benjamin, who received more food than anyone else. Joseph watched his brothers for any signs of jealousy. When Joseph sent them away with grain, his own silver cup was hidden in Benjamin's bag of grain. It looked as if Benjamin had stolen the silver cup and Joseph acted as if he would keep Benjamin as his slave. It was then that Joseph realized there was no more jealousy and hatred among his brothers. They offered to serve in Benjamin's place and blamed themselves for all that was happening. If they hadn't mistreated Joseph so long ago . . .

Joseph couldn't stand it any longer. He sent everyone away but his brothers and then he cried so loudly many people in Egypt heard him. "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold. Don't be upset. God sent me here to save lives! God isn't going to let us die off; He promised to make us a great nation. Go back and get dad." When Pharaoh learned that Joseph's family was in Egypt, he offered them wagons and food for the trip back to Canaan. Pharaoh even offered the best land in Egypt for Joseph's family. When Joseph's brothers returned, they brought their father Jacob, their wives and all their children. There were more than 70 in all! God reminded Jacob of His promise, "Don't be afraid; to go to Egypt. I'll make you a great nation there. I'll go with you and I will bring you back, too." Israel did become numerous. God was keeping his promise and when the time came for Jacob to die, he wanted to be buried in the land God had promised him. Joseph had him embalmed, wrapped up like a mummy, and many from Egypt went with him to bury his father. Joseph's brothers began to worry that maybe Joseph had held a grudge against them and would try to pay them back for selling him to Egypt. Joseph cried over this. He comforted them and spoke kindly to them, reminding them, "You meant evil against me when you sold me, BUT God meant it for good to keep people alive. Don't be afraid, I'll provide for you." And Joseph did just that. When he, too, came to the end of his life, he asked his family to promise him something. You see, Joseph took God at His word and God had told his great-grandfather, Abraham, that this wonderful nation would be strangers in a land that wasn't theirs. They would be slaves for 400 years. But God would one day bring them out. Knowing and trusting this, Joseph asked that his body, that would also be wrapped up like a mummy, one day be taken back to the land God has promised His people.

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?

These wonderful men, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now Joseph, believed things about God that they had never seen and couldn't really understand. They trusted God to do exactly what He said He would do. They trusted Him when it was easy and they trusted Him when it was hard. They knew that God had a great big plan and that He wanted them to be a part of it.

How about you? Do you trust God? Do you believe, even when you can't begin to imagine how it might all work out? Do you trust Him when it's easy? Will you trust Him even when it's hard? Do you know that God has a great big plan and that He wants you to be a part of it? It's true! He loves you enough that He showed you. He sent His one and only Son to die in your place, for the sin you did. Will you choose Him? Do it today. Don't wait!

Planning for Next Week
Lesson 13 • God Hears His People
Exodus 1-4

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

SHARE: Last week, we talked about a wonderful young man named Joseph. Joseph went to jail for something he didn’t do. Then one day, he was free. He was taken to clean himself up and to get a haircut. Then he was taken to meet Pharaoh, the ruler over all of Egypt. Pharaoh had dreams and even though no one else could tell him what they meant, Joseph was brought in to help. In Pharaoh’s dream, he was standing by the Nile River. Seven fat, healthy cows came out of the river and started munching on the marsh grass on the banks of the Nile. Then, seven more cows came, but these cows were skinny and looked sick. The sick, skinny cows ate the seven fat cows but then they still looked skinny. He dreamed a second dream. In this dream he saw seven heads of grain sprout out of one stalk. They were beautiful, plump, good, and healthy. Then, seven more heads of grain sprouted. They were thin and dried up, and swallowed up the plump heads of grain.

Joseph was clear and bold: “I can’t tell you what your dreams mean, but God will give you an answer. Both of these dreams are really one dream. God is telling you what He is about to do. There will be seven amazing years of great crops and lots of food but a famine is coming. This famine will be so bad that all of the extra from the first seven years will be forgotten about. It’s going to be awful!” Joseph told Pharaoh, “You should look for someone who is very intelligent. You should save grain and guard it. Then it can be used when the famine comes. Pharaoh knew that he was looking at the intelligent man who could do all of this! He put Joseph in charge of EVERYTHING! The only one greater than Joseph in all of Egypt was Pharaoh.

When the famine came and there was no food for the people to eat, Joseph opened the storehouses where they had guarded the grain. People came from everywhere to buy grain from Joseph. His brothers even came! His brothers didn’t recognize him. Dressed as an Egyptian, Joseph looked very different than he had as a shepherd boy. Joseph sold them grain but told them to come back with his brother Benjamin. Joseph decided to test them. Joseph played favorites with Benjamin, who received more food than anyone else. Then, when Joseph sent them away with grain, his own silver cup was hidden in Benjamin’s bag of grain. It looked as if Benjamin had stolen the silver cup and Joseph acted like he would keep Benjamin as his slave. Joseph watched his brothers and knew there was no more jealousy and hatred. They offered to serve in Benjamin’s place and blamed themselves for all that was happening. If they hadn’t mistreated Joseph so long ago . . . Joseph sent everyone away but his brothers and then told them, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold. Don’t be upset. God sent me here to save lives!

PRAY: Thank you, God, for taking care of me.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Play hopscotch! Assign a word or two to each hopscotch box. When they reach the end, what would have been the number "10", they will have practiced the verse, part by part, several times. Be sure to include the reference.
- Have a Mummy Relay. Form two teams. Choose one person from each team to be "it." Provide each team with a roll of bath tissue. Play begins as each team wraps "it" with bath tissue. The team to "mummify" the selected player first, wins.
- Make paper bead necklaces. Form beads by cutting paper into long triangles. Beginning at the base, roll the triangle towards the point to form an oblong bead.
- Try Egyptian crafts! Coloring pages, hieroglyphics, bracelets, etc. will be enjoyable for students of all ages.
- Provide checkers or mancala. Games like these were popular in ancient Egypt.
- Bring snacks like Joseph's brothers brought to Egypt; honey, pistachios and almonds. Be careful to make yourself aware of your student's food allergies.