

JOSEPH'S DREAM

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: GENESIS 37:1-11



A man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Joseph was favored above his brothers – Jacob gave Joseph a special coat, setting him apart from his brothers. And in Genesis 48:22 and John 4:5 we learn that Jacob gave to Joseph the only ground he owned in Canaan. Although traditional translations of Joseph's tunic are that it was a richly ornamented or colorful coat, the actual Hebrew translation is that it was a long coat with long sleeves. This type of coat would not be worn by a laborer, but rather a manager or official. It is likely that Joseph was appointed heir over his older brothers. This favored treatment left Joseph's brothers jealous.

Joseph's brothers were jealous of him and hated him – Joseph is introduced in contrast to his brothers in Genesis 37:2. Joseph brought his father a bad report. We have already come to know his older brothers as independent and ungodly. In Genesis 34, without their father's approval they killed Hamor, his son Shechem, and all the men in the city in revenge for Shechem violating their sister. This left Israel a "stink to the inhabitants of the land" (Genesis 34:30). Joseph is spoken as Jacob's favorite and was given a coat which demonstrated the favor of his father for him over his brothers. Joseph's brothers were filled with hatred and could not even speak peacefully to him.

God gave Joseph two dreams – God gave Joseph two dreams. Though Joseph could have shared these dreams with greater humility, his dreams came from God. Because of Joseph's lack of wisdom he didn't serve his brothers who were already jealous. His brothers responded with a deeper hatred. Later, when he walked toward them in the fields and they plotted to murder him they said, "We will see what will become of his dreams" (Genesis 37:20). Their plot was more than a plot against Joseph, the dreamer. They were sinning so their plot was against God.

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Where is Jesus?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

God used Joseph's dream to save the infant nation of Israel from famine. Joseph's dream would eventually lead him to Egypt which set the scene for all of Jacob's children and grandchildren to move to Egypt during the famine. After many years of blessing, Israel became slaves in Egypt, and finally they came out of Egypt under Moses.

This was not the only time God used a dream to protect His great plan of salvation. God spoke to another Joseph, Mary's betrothed, in two dreams. First, God instructed Joseph to take Mary as his wife and in a second dream God instructed Joseph to flee to Egypt. When the threat was over God called Joseph back out of Egypt. What happened to Israel in the days of Jacob and Joseph and Moses was a prophetic foreshadowing of what would happen to Jesus in the days of Herod.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

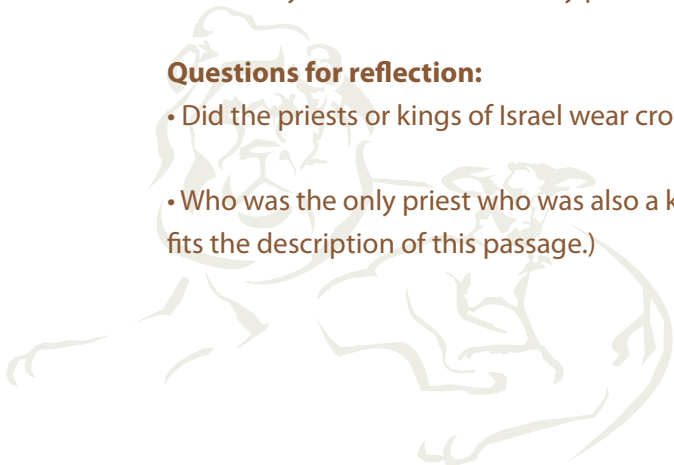
Bible Passage: Zechariah 6:11-13

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus is the high priest who would receive the crown. The high priests of Israel wore a turban, not a crown. Jesus is the priest who would also be king and sit on the throne. Revelation 19:12 tells us He will wear many crowns. He is the only priest bearing the glory of God.

Questions for reflection:

- Did the priests or kings of Israel wear crowns? (The kings wore crowns.)
- Who was the only priest who was also a king able to bear the glory of God? (Jesus is the only one who fits the description of this passage.)



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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY**BE A DOER OF THE WORD**

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

JOSEPH SAYS

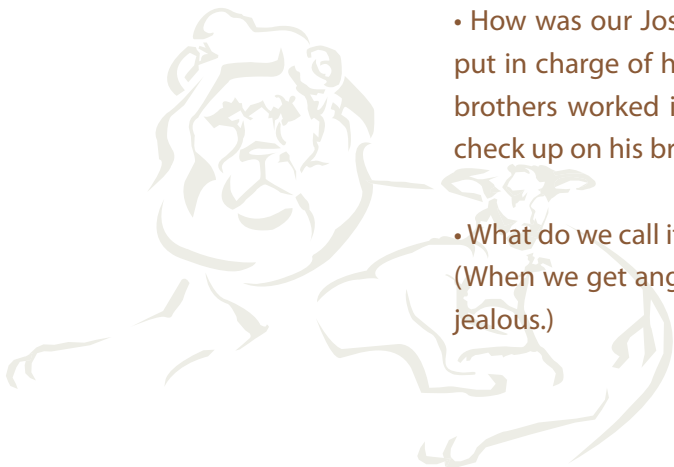
Play this game like Simon Says.

Pick a person to play Joseph. The person who gets to call the commands is in charge and is trying to catch the others.

If he says, "Joseph says jump up and down," then everyone else must jump up and down, or do whatever reasonable command is given. If he simply says, "Jump up and down," without first saying "Joseph says," then anyone who does the command is out and must sit down.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Why did you like being Joseph? (He was special and was the one who got to give the commands.)
- How was our Joseph like the Joseph in the story? (The Joseph in the story was put in charge of his brothers and given a special coat to set him apart. While his brothers worked in the fields, he stayed home with his father and only went to check up on his brothers.)
- What do we call it when we are angry at a person for having something we don't? (When we get angry at someone for having something we don't it is called being jealous.)



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THE MAN IN CHARGE

Supplies

- long-sleeved dress shirt
- a broom and dust pan,
- a bag of confetti from a party store

Some Bibles describe Joseph's coat as a multi-colored coat, others describe it to be richly ornamented. The actual Hebrew only tells us that it had long sleeves. James Boice, in his commentary on Genesis, suggests the coat represented authority, and a manager, not a laborer, would have worn long sleeves. At the beginning of the chapter, Joseph is in the field with his brothers. After receiving the coat, Joseph remains behind, only going to check on them for his father. In any case, the coat was a special gift to Joseph alone that made his brothers jealous.

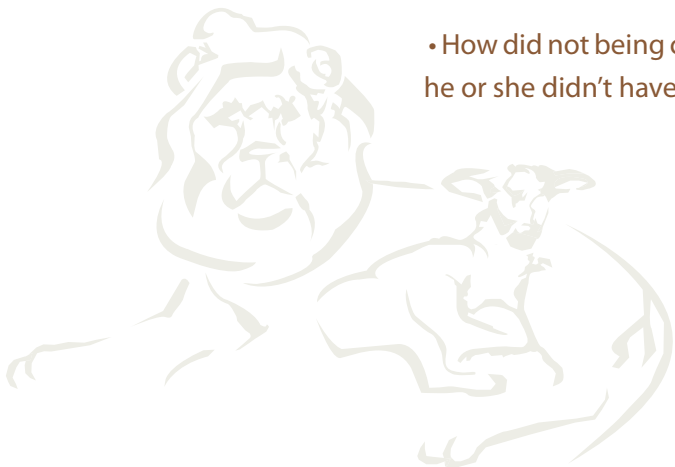
Prior to the start of class, sprinkle the confetti across the room. Once class begins, ask the children for a volunteer. Give the long sleeve shirt to the volunteer and ask them to put it on over their clothes. Then explain to the class that the confetti on the floor and furniture is going to need to be cleaned up. Tell them that everyone has to help except the person in the shirt. Their job is to tell you when you have missed a piece and to let you, the teacher, know when someone is not doing their job.

Tell the volunteer to go around the room and give the following commands.

- He should announce that everyone should clean up the area around their chair.
- He should hand the dust pan and broom to two children and have them do the common area.
- He should give certain children breaks, and instruct someone else to clean their area.
- Any poor attitudes or even complaints should be brought back to the attention of the teacher.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How did not being chosen as the volunteer make you feel? How did you feel when he or she didn't have to work and you did? (Elicit that the children felt jealous.)



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- How is this situation similar to our Bible story today?

Tell the children that although the translation of the Bible describes Joseph's coat as a multi-colored coat, it was likely that the significance was not in the garment's color, but that it gave him authority over his brothers.

(The child in the long-sleeved shirt was put in charge of the rest of the children. Joseph was given special attention by his father just as the volunteer was given special attention. Also, Joseph reported his brothers' misbehavior to his father in much the same way that the volunteer reported infractions of his or her classmates to the teacher.)

- How did God use the sin of Joseph's brothers for good? (It was Joseph's brothers' sin of jealousy that motivated them to take revenge and sell Joseph into slavery, which all was a part of God's plan to preserve His people through a later famine.)

JEALOUS OF A BLESSING

Supplies

- one blindfold
- a box of three different varieties of cookies (each variety should have enough cookies for each person in the class to get one)

Hide all but one of each of the cookies and then pick a volunteer from the class to come forward. Ask them if they would be willing to be your taste tester. Blindfold them and then sit them down in front of the class. Have them taste each of the three cookies one at a time giving comments as to what they taste like to the class out loud. Ask them to report to you and the class which one tastes the best. Give them second bites of the cookies to be sure their decision is final. (The object here is to goad the class into jealousy, so you might say things like, "I'll bet you didn't think you were going to get such a great treat for being my volunteer.")

After they are certain of the best tasting cookie, take off their blindfold and show them the remains of their choice for best cookie and give them the name of the best tasting cookie. Give them the leftovers and have them return to their seat.

Ask the class for a volunteer (hands should go up quickly thinking there are more cookies to eat). Pick a volunteer and use them to read today's passage.



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Then ask the class the following questions:

- How did you feel when you didn't get to be the one to taste test the cookies? (They will likely say they wish they were the one to taste the cookies, but steer them toward the word jealous and its meaning.)
- How are you like Joseph's brothers? (Joseph got special treatment by his father, as did the person who tasted the cookies. We were jealous like Joseph's brothers.)
- Does anyone know the end of the story? What were Joseph's dreams all about? (The dreams represent the time that would come when Joseph's brothers would bow down to him for food during the famine.)
- So, in the end, were Joseph's dreams good news or bad news for his brothers? (They were good news. It would be through Joseph's leadership that God would provide for them and prevent them from starving. God would use Joseph to preserve the nation out of which would come the Savior, Jesus Christ.)
- Was anyone here jealous of the taste tester? (Explain that if they had trusted that God had a plan to bless them, they wouldn't have been jealous, the same lesson Joseph's brothers learned.)
- In the end, was the taste test good news or bad news for all of you? (They should be puzzled by the question. After a moment, tell them, "The taste test was good news. What you didn't know is that our volunteer was actually choosing the cookie I would give each of you.")

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children make a small bundle of grasses to remind them of the story. This requires a bundle of wild oats or other grasses with their blooming heads (available at some craft stores for arrangements) and a ball of twine. Cut the stems so they are a manageable length. Give each child three stems and a piece of twine.

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FOR OLDER GRADES

Supplies

- pencils
- paper

Divide the children into groups of five. Have them compare the dreams in Genesis 37:5-11 with their fulfillment in the later chapters of Genesis (chapters 42 and 43). Have them write down the chapters and verses where these dreams were fulfilled. Then come back and discuss the fulfillment of these dreams as a class.

Ask the following questions:

- How did God bring salvation to Israel through the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams? (Joseph was brought to a place of authority in Egypt. He had food set aside during years of plenty. Later, Jacob and his family would be preserved and move to Goshen.)
- How was this salvation critical to our salvation? (God had purposed that Jesus would be born into the line of Israel. Had all of Israel died of starvation in the famine, Jesus would never have been born. God preserved His people and, in so doing, preserved us.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Hatred – Hatred, as an expression of sin, is an intense anger for a fellow person.

Paul, in Galatians 5:20, calls hate an obvious act of the sinful nature. He says that those who act with hatred "will not inherit the Kingdom of God." On the other hand, we are commanded to have righteous anger when we "hate what is evil" according to Romans 12:9. Jesus said that the world will hate us because of Him if we follow Him, see Mark 13:13.

