

JOSEPH INTERPRETS THE DREAMS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: GENESIS 40-41



God controls all things, even our dreams.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The Lord blessed Joseph – One might think that God had abandoned Joseph to allow him to be falsely accused and sent to prison, but it was all a part of God's plan. When in prison, the favor of God on Joseph was evident again.

God showed Joseph kindness and granted him favor with the warden of the prison, and once again Joseph found himself in charge. God gave Joseph success, but Joseph was faithful in his duties as well.

This freedom in the prison allowed for Joseph to have contact with the cup bearer and the baker, the next step in God's plan.

Interpretations belong to the Lord – Since God is the giver of dreams, He is also the interpreter of them. Joseph didn't claim to be able to interpret dreams on his own. He recognized the authority and rule of God over the dreams. God, in turn, gave Joseph the interpretation of the dreams of both the cupbearer and baker.

Events transpired just as Joseph had said, but the cupbearer forgot Joseph. Once again, it might seem like God has abandoned Joseph. But when Pharaoh had a dream of his own, Joseph, still in prison, was easy to locate. In the end Joseph was not forgotten.

Joseph directed Pharaoh to God – After hearing Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph pointed Pharaoh to God. Joseph told Pharaoh that God was communicating to him the future of Egypt. God was communicating to him that there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Joseph went on to give Pharaoh wise counsel. After hearing Joseph's counsel Pharaoh placed Joseph in charge of Egypt, and Joseph was blessed by God. Joseph's position administrating the years of plenty, set the stage for the salvation of Israel in the years of famine. Another chapter of God's intervening salvation of His people Israel began to take shape.

It is easy to boast in our accomplishments. Joseph had accurately predicted what would happen to the cup bearer and the chief baker. Pharaoh, concerned about his dreams summoned Joseph based on his reputation. Rather than boast, Joseph gave the glory to God for what had been done. Joseph understood that his understanding of dreams was all of grace.

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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.

Where is Jesus?: Like Joseph, Jesus was a righteous servant who was numbered among transgressors unjustly. Like Joseph, Jesus was and used of God to bring salvation for His people.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

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: Deuteronomy 18:15-19

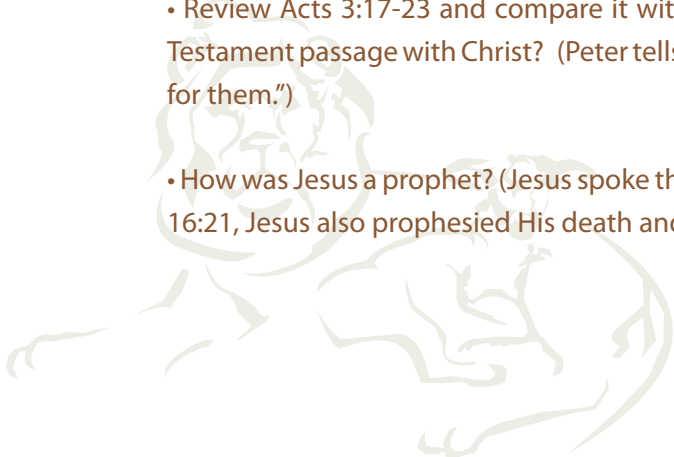
Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus is the Prophet, like Moses, who would come from among the Israelites. This would not be an ordinary prophet, but one who stands as God Himself among the people. When John the Baptist ministered, some of the people asked him if he was the Prophet who was foretold, see John 1:21.

Peter, reviewing the history of God's plan of redemption with the crowd in Acts 3:17-23, told them that it was Jesus who is the prophet foretold in the book of Deuteronomy. God spoke through many prophets, but Jesus is the one prophet that stands out; the one who we must listen to and obey.

Questions for reflection:

- Review Acts 3:17-23 and compare it with Deuteronomy 18:15-19. How does Peter connect this Old Testament passage with Christ? (Peter tells them straight out that Jesus was the one who was "appointed for them.")
- How was Jesus a prophet? (Jesus spoke the words of God. Jesus was the word come in flesh. In Matthew 16:21, Jesus also prophesied His death and resurrection before it happened.)



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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?

THE EFFECTS OF A FAMINE

Supplies

two identical potted plants

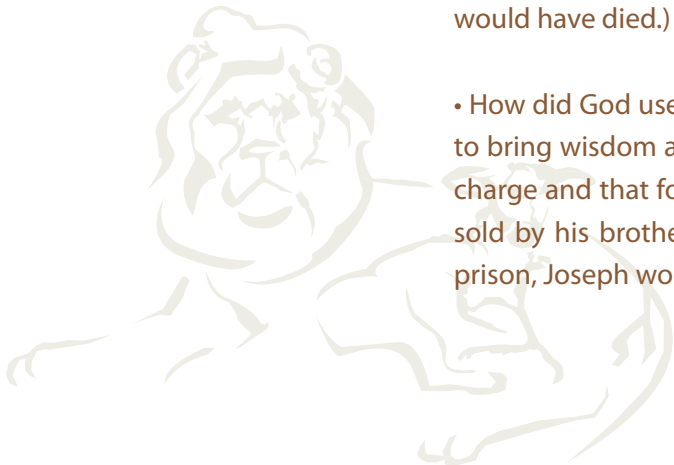
Weeks in advance, purchase two small flowering plants such as African violets.

Water one but leave the second to perish for lack of water. (To expedite the process you can put the plant in an oven at the lowest temperature setting for a few hours to dry out the soil. Just make sure it is in a clay or ceramic pot.)

Bring the two plants in for a poignant illustration of how a drought will produce famine. This will help the children to realize what must have happened to the food crops and even the livestock in the second seven years.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What would have happened to the people if they didn't have food to eat during the seven year drought? (Eventually, all the grain and flour would have been used up. Without new food being produced many of the animals and even the people would have died.)
- How did God use the trials of Joseph's life to save His people? (God used Joseph to bring wisdom and truth to Pharaoh so that Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be in charge and that food could be stored for God's people. If Joseph had never been sold by his brothers into slavery, or had never been falsely accused and sent to prison, Joseph would never have been brought before Pharaoh.)



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GUESS THE MEANING OF MY DREAM

Have the children guess what the following fictitious dreams mean. Explain to them that if it is hard for them to guess these made up dreams which coincide with real events in history, how much harder it would be for Joseph to interpret the dreams about future events which had not happened.

Orville Wright – I saw two birds sitting on the sand. One would fly while the other looked up, as soon as the bird would land, the other bird watching would jump up and down. (The flying of the first airplane.)

George Bush – I saw two mountains and they both came falling down. They made a loud crash that I heard for four years, and then I heard the echo of the crash for four more years. (The falling of the World Trade Center and George Bush's two terms of the presidency.)

Thomas Edison – I saw a terrible darkness followed by a great bright light that made the whole world full of light. (The invention of the light bulb.)

Tiger Woods – I saw in my dream a green monster eating hundreds of white eggs. Each time the monster ate a white egg, a man patted me on the back. (The green monster is the golf course and the eggs are golf balls falling into the cups, bringing praise for the skill of the golfer who could get them all to fall in the cup.)

Walt Disney – I saw in my dream a great castle invaded by animals – particularly black mice. (The creation of Disney World and Mickey Mouse.)

Benjamin Franklin – I saw in my dream paper all over the world with my picture on it. People were worshipping my picture. (Benjamin Franklin's picture on the \$100 bill and the idolatry people have for money.)

Make up a few of your own and use these as an introduction to talk to the children about how God is in control of all things and how He blessed Joseph with the interpretations of the dreams. Read the text and discuss it.



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A TRAVEL LOG OF EGYPT

Supplies

bring in picture books on Egypt and a Bible atlas that shows the ruins of ancient Bible cities

Review some of the architectural wonders of Egypt. Help the children realize that the Egypt of the Bible was a real place. Remind them that we get a glimpse of the day-to-day history in the Bible. Many of the wonders of Egypt were likely created after the life of Joseph, and perhaps by the Hebrew slaves later held in bondage.

Then ask the class the following questions:

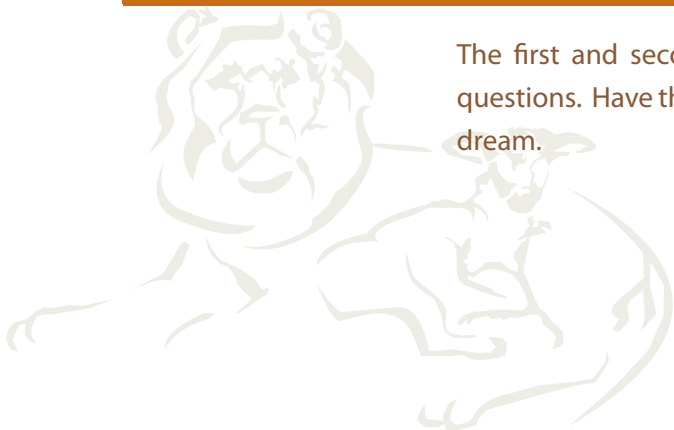
- When we read about places in the Bible, are they always real or are they made up? (When the Bible refers to a country or city, it is a city that actually existed. Some countries no longer exist, like Babylon (modern day Iraq), but we can often still locate places that the Bible talks about.)
- If we can't find any evidence or proof that a city existed, should we believe it existed just because the Bible tells us? (Yes, the Bible is an accurate record of the history of God's people. Archeologists doubted the existence of many biblical cities, claiming the Bible was wrong, but later discovered them and found out the Bible was exactly correct. In fact, the Bible has never been proven wrong!)

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 draw a picture of either the cup bearer or baker's dream.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

Supplies

- pencils
- paper

Have the children write their answer to the following question.

- Knowing God is in control of the seasons and weather, why did God choose to place Joseph in prison to save His people rather than prevent the famine in the first place? (God's plan to bring the seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine would provide an opportunity for God to use a man He had chosen to bring salvation to His people. This would be a picture of His son, Jesus, who would one day bring salvation to His people.)

The unfolding of the story would also show the greatness and goodness of God. It would show His greatness in demonstrating that He controls all things – even our dreams. It would demonstrate His goodness by showing us that God cares for our welfare and that we can trust Him in the midst of our trials. God works everything out in conformity to His own purpose and will)



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Blessing – The story of Joseph demonstrates God's blessing on a person. God blessed Joseph and those around him, like Potiphar.

The Blessing of the Lord can also be called kindness (Genesis 39:21) or that the Lord is "with him" (Genesis 39:23). Blessing on an individual is a reflection of the gracious character of God. Man is never deserving of God's favor, but God, who is rich in mercy, gives us gifts which are undeserved and places His favor on us. Though we are blessed in many ways, there is no blessing which is greater than the blessing we receive from being united with Christ, saved through His sacrificial death on the cross.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

