

JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: GENESIS 44-45



GRADESCHOOL

Behind the plans of men stand the plans of God.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Joseph revealed himself to his brothers– Not only were Joseph's brothers afraid of him as ruler over all of Egypt, they became speechless when they learned his true identity. Already fearing punishment and death, they must have thought Joseph would take revenge on them. Instead, Joseph called them to draw near. Though we deserve judgment, God calls us to draw near. Joseph comforted them, and his tears revealed his love.

Joseph revealed that God is the Lord of history – After revealing himself to his brothers, Joseph encouraged them. He attributed the events of history to the active purpose of God. In Genesis 45:5, he told them that it was God who sent him to Egypt even though it was his brothers who sold him into slavery. In verse 7 he repeated this understanding. In verse 8 he repeated it again and finally declared in verse 9 he said that it was God who made him lord of all Egypt even though it came to pass via Pharaoh's command.

The grace of God is revealed in Joseph's forgiveness – Instead of bringing judgment against his brothers, Joseph forgave them. As ruler of Egypt he could have had them thrown into prison for the rest of their lives for what they did to him. Instead, recognizing the plan of God to save Israel, Joseph embraced his brothers. He kissed them and wept over them. And then he talked with them. We don't know the content of that conversation but it is clear that Joseph became fully reconciled with his brothers.

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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.

Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, and left for dead by his brothers who subsequently lied to their father about his demise. In the end, when Joseph revealed his identity, he forgave his brothers. What a picture of Jesus who would be betrayed by his friend, deserted by his disciples and crucified by his own people. The grace on Joseph's life to forgive is a quick glance forward to Jesus.

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.

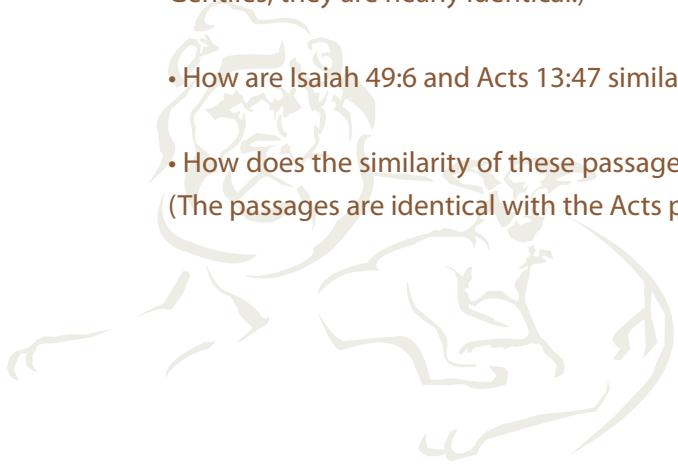
Bible Passage: Isaiah 49:6

Connecting the passage to Christ:

In Luke 2:32 Simeon prophesies over Jesus saying that He would be a light to the Gentiles. Isaiah says that He will be a light to the nations but all the nations outside of Israel are the Gentiles. So Luke connects the two passages. The two passages are more directly connected in Acts 13:47.

Questions for reflection:

- How are Isaiah 49:6 and Luke 2:32 similar? (They are very close, with the only difference being that Isaiah talked about nations but not Gentiles. But when one considers that the nations were called Gentiles, they are nearly identical.)
- How are Isaiah 49:6 and Acts 13:47 similar? (They are nearly identical.)
- How does the similarity of these passages help us be sure the prophecy in Isaiah is referring to Jesus? (The passages are identical with the Acts passage, directly making the claim of Christ as the subject.)



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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?

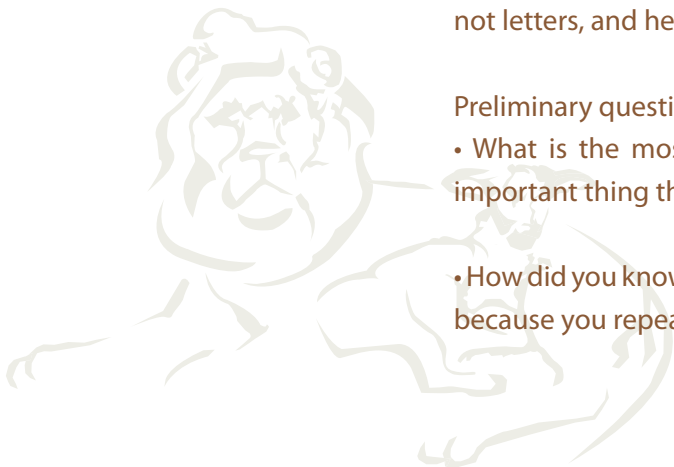
REPEAT FOR EMPHASIS

Play a game of charades with your class. The point, however, of the game is the way you present the instructions. You are going to repeat the critical components of the instructions four times. (Joseph repeats four times to his brothers that it is God who is responsible for the events which lead to his rulership in Egypt.)

1. Each participant in the competition will receive a word (a person, place, or thing) taken from the story of Joseph.
2. The clue giver is not allowed to talk at all in giving the clues to the class.
3. The clue giver should act out the clue in order that the class might guess, but can say nothing, not even a sound.
4. The clue giver may encourage the direction of the guessing by nodding their head, or signal that the answers are poor by shaking their head no, but at no time may the clue giver speak.
5. The clue giver may use their arms to gesture or their fingers to show numbers but not letters, and he may not say any word at all.

Preliminary questions:

- What is the most important thing that I said in the instructions? (The most important thing that you said was the clue giver cannot speak.)
- How did you know it was the most important? (We knew it was the most important because you repeated yourself.)



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Topics for pantomime: Joseph, Baker, Cupbearer, Famine, Pharaoh. Conduct the charades. Then ask the class the following discussions questions:

- Does anyone remember the most important instruction and how many times that I repeated it? (The most important instruction was that the clue giver could not speak and it was repeated four times.)
- When someone wants us to pay special attention to something they often repeat the important information. God does this in the Bible story of Joseph. What does Joseph repeat for emphasis to his brothers in Genesis 45:4-10? (Joseph repeats that it was God who was behind his being sent to Egypt.)
- Why do you think God wanted this to be repeated in the Bible? It is very important for us to understand that God is in control of all things. (God is actively involved with everything that takes place. Nothing happens apart from God's control. God's plan is the salvation of His people through the death of His Son Jesus. Even the strange events of Joseph's life all work together in God's plan to redeem for Himself a people.)



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FORGIVENESS

Supplies

- cross-cut paper shredder (this is the kind that cuts the paper two ways leaving only confetti)
- sheets of white paper
- plastic cups (enough to divide the class in groups of 4 with each group getting one sheet of paper and one cup)

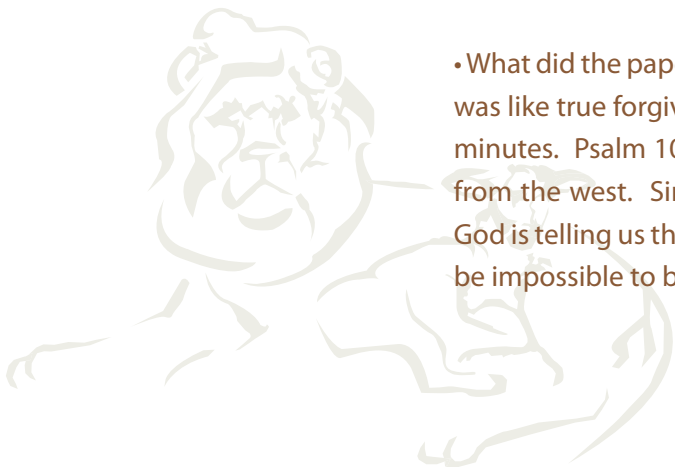
The activity is designed to show the children the power of forgiveness.

Divide the class into teams of 4. Give each team a sheet of paper. Tell them to tear the paper into four pieces, one for each person on their team. Have each person write a sin that God has forgiven us for (such as lying, rebellion, anger, etc.) Have each team collect the papers and bring them up to you together. When all of the teams have completed the assignment and are standing in line, shred each team's papers and give them the remains, one team at a time, in a plastic cup. Be careful to keep them separate.

When all the team's papers have been shredded, tell them they are going to race to see which team is the first to reconstruct the paper like putting a puzzle together. Tell them they have five minutes. The winner will be the team with the most matching pieces.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Did you think it was difficult to put the paper recording your sin back together? (Yes.)
- Who in our story demonstrated forgiveness? (Joseph demonstrated forgiveness toward his brothers.)
- How was Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers like Jesus' forgiveness of us? (Joseph did not hold his brother's sin against them. Beyond forgiving them, he poured out undeserving grace in giving them what they needed to survive and conquer death. He provided a place for them to go and live free of the fear of death. He never brought their sin up again, but saw it as all a part of God' plan to save His people.)
- What did the paper shredder exercise help you understand? (Shredding the paper was like true forgiveness. It was impossible to put the sheets back together in five minutes. Psalm 103:12 tells us that God has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. Since east and west are opposites that can never come together, God is telling us that once our sins are forgiven they are gone for good and it would be impossible to bring them back.)



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THE PROVISION OF BREAD

Supplies

- freshly baked bread with cinnamon
- pitcher of water
- cups

The object of the exercise is to help the children see how Joseph's provision of bread (grain) was really God providing for His people. Ultimately this points to God providing the bread of life – Jesus

Lay out the bread on a table where the arriving class can see. (If you have a bread machine and can have the bread timed to bake in the class to fill the room with the aroma, all the better.) Talk to the children about the bread and how good it tastes. Tell them about each ingredient and how the yeast causes the bread to rise and be fluffy, the sugar sweetens it, the cinnamon and butter give it a wonderful flavor. The object is to create a hunger for the bread in the children.

Make the parallel in class between the children and the Israelites. They both were hungry and needed bread. Like the Egyptians, you have plenty to share. Ask them what they are willing to do to get a slice of bread.

Finally, after teasing them a bit make a bargain. Ask them to look up John 6:5-13, John 6:35, and John 6:48-50 and tell you how Joseph was like Jesus in these verses. (These verses point to Jesus as the bread of life. In sending Joseph to Egypt, God uses Joseph to provide grain for His people in the midst of the famine in all the land. In sending Jesus to earth, God provides bread to satisfy our spiritual hunger.)

PRAYER

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



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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 Joseph's reunion with his brothers.

FOR OLDER GRADES

Read through Genesis 45:1-11. Have the children describe how God was working behind the scenes to accomplish His plan in Joseph's life. Have them make a list of all the different components of the story that seem to be by chance, but later it is clear that they were part of God's plan.

By chance/God's plan:

- There was an empty cistern to throw Joseph into instead of killing him.
- Joseph was bought by a prominent official.
- Joseph found favor with the man in charge of the prison.
- Joseph had the freedom to talk to the cup bearer.
- The cup bearer remembered Joseph.
- Joseph was still in the same prison as before so he could be found when the Pharaoh looked for him.
- etc.

Have the children individually write down as many as they can think of, then come together as a class and write a list on the white board. Talk about what this reveals about God working behind the scenes.

Ask the children if they know a Bible verse which talks about God's sovereignty and providence to work out His plan. (Proverbs 16:9, Proverbs 3:5-6, Romans 8:28)

Ask the children if any of them have a testimony where they saw God's hand working all things together for good in their lives.



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Remnant – In Genesis 45:7, Joseph reveals the Lord's purpose in preserving a remnant of Israel. The word remnant means that which remains or is left over. We use it today to describe the piece of carpet which remains unused

when the room is finished. In the Bible God uses this word to describe the portion of Israel that He is going to save. Israel often rebelled against God, but He always saved a portion of Israel so that His promise might be fulfilled.

Romans 9:27-29 tells us that even to the end, the number of the house of Israel will be great but only a remnant will be saved. A new remnant, one chosen by grace, is described in Romans 11:5. The remnant, then, is those whom God has chosen and will preserve, not by works but by His grace.

