



STORY

Joseph Goes to Egypt - Genesis 39-41

8/18/04

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord Jesus, please be with me and bless me as I prepare and present this Bible truth to the Lambs You have placed in my care. Help me to always remember that, like Joseph, You always watch over, protect, and guide me and all Your children. Grant to me an extra measure of Your Holy Spirit that I may present the precious treasure of Your love and concern for all to my students in this lesson. Help me to realize that even things I may see as sinful and cannot explain, You will work for good in my life. In Jesus name I ask this. Amen.

VOCABULARY

pharaoh: the king of Egypt. He was also worshiped by his people as a god

lie with me: Potiphar's wife wanted to commit adultery with Joseph (see 6th commandment)

gaunt: thin and bony; angular; emaciated, haggard

famine: a time during which crops failed to grow

magicians: priests in Egypt who were able to perform "magic" by the devil's power (see the section on the plagues)

wise men: scholars trained in the temples and schools of Egypt

OUTER AIM

God watched over and blessed Joseph's life

INNER AIM

As God guided and blessed Joseph's life, so our Lord does for us. Our God watches over and blesses the lives of His children. God guides our lives for our good.

BACKGROUND

Joseph in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:1-18)

We cannot help but be amazed at the grace of our God. How merciful is our Lord to consent to make use of us completely sinful human beings to carry out His gracious promises. This truth is certainly evident in connection with Jacob and his family. Most families have problems, but the self-inflicted moral problems of Jacob's family were almost beyond compare. One cannot help but wonder if Jacob's moral deficiencies were taught by example to his older children, who were then made to bear the consequences of their sins. Consider just a partial listing of their family crises, which ought to serve as a warning to all of us: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, commits incest with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine, the mother of Reuben's half-brothers Dan and Naphtali. A local prince sexually assaults Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah. In retaliation Simeon and Levi murder all the male inhabitants of the city of Shechem, and the entire family is forced to flee from their homes. God puts at least two of Jacob's grandchildren to death when Judah's two oldest sons prove too evil to live. Judah then fathers a child by his daughter-in-law Tamar, thinking she was a prostitute.

Yet through all of this we dare not sit in judgment over this family, but rather give praise and glory to God for his great mercy. In His eyes, "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" This Bible story gives evidence of how God turned another great sin on the part of Jacob's sons into a life-saving blessing for all mankind. We rejoin Joseph, who has been sold into slavery by his own brothers.

Joseph was sold to Potiphar, an Egyptian military officer, and was quickly given control of Potiphar's entire household. It was clear even to the Egyptians that the Lord was with Joseph, greatly blessing him.

Though Joseph was a handsome, attractive man, he resisted the temptations that had caused his brothers such misery and shame. When Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, he gave us a fine example by fleeing from the temptation. Joseph, a faithful servant of both the Lord and Potiphar, gave three reasons for not committing the sin of adultery with Potiphar's wife. 1) He did not want to betray the trust Potiphar had in him. 2) He had no right to take what did not belong to him (Potiphar's wife). 3) Most importantly he would not commit this sin because it was ultimately a sin against his Lord. ***"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*** Each one of us would do well to contemplate these words of Joseph when tempted to sin.

Though Joseph did the right thing and remained true to both His God and Potiphar, still he was made to suffer. God had plans for Joseph, and Joseph here gives us another fine Christian example by remaining humbly obedient even in the face of such hardship and unjust treatment.

Joseph in Prison (Genesis 39:19-23)

The grace of God demonstrated in the fruits of Joseph's faith cannot be overemphasized here. Though one bad thing after another is visited upon Joseph, still he seeks to serve faithfully whatever his circumstances. Even in prison the Lord was with Joseph. He was shown favor by the jailer and was put in charge of the prisoners and the work they did. God gives us the strength to endure whatever He allows to come into our lives. He makes all things work for our good. Although Potiphar and the jailer are both called "captain of the guard" (literally: "chief executioner") Potiphar was very likely the head of the palace guards (Pharaoh's body guards), while the jailer was the man who both confined the prisoners and carried out the sentences upon the condemned. Those sentences could be terrible indeed, including hanging, impaling, beheading, and flaying alive.

Joseph the Interpreter of Dreams (Genesis 40:1 - 41:36)

Though the Egyptian magicians claimed credit and glory for themselves, Joseph consistently gave all glory to his God for all of the many blessings he had received. This included his ability to interpret dreams.

Again Joseph is wronged when Pharaoh's chief butler is restored to his position, but forgets all about him. He languishes another two full years in prison, and yet we are given no indication that he is anything but faithful to his God. It is often a relatively easy thing to remain faithful during times of brief hardship. Joseph here gives example of patient, humble service in the face of prolonged, terrible, and unjust affliction.

Joseph had to shave his beard prior to appearing before Pharaoh. To come before Pharaoh with a beard would have been an offense. The Egyptians allowed their beards to grow only when in mourning, while the Hebrews shaved their beards only when in mourning.

It took courage for Joseph to tell Pharaoh that God will give him an answer to his dreams since Pharaohs typically regarded themselves as gods.

Joseph as Second in Command in Egypt (Genesis 41:37-57)

Because of his demonstration of wisdom in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph was given a position second only to Pharaoh himself. (We might compare his office to Britain's Prime Minister, who is subject only to the King or Queen.)

God gave Joseph not only the ability to interpret dreams, but also the wisdom to rule Egypt. Thus Joseph was finally allowed to see why God had allowed such hardship to come into his life. Countless lives were saved through his actions, most notably the life of his family, through whom the Savior would be born.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I know You are always with me, guiding me, protecting me, and making all things work out for my good. Please give me strength to overcome temptation, for without You I am helpless against the attacks of the devil. Please help me to give all glory to You for the gifts and abilities with which You have blessed me. Please forgive me all my sins and keep me forever as Your child and heir. In Jesus saving name. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The Bible account presented today is too long to read in class. Assign the reading of this lesson to the students the week before it is presented, and then tell the complete story to your students in your own words. Emphasize how Joseph was a faithful servant (a Christian). Emphasize that it was God who gave Joseph the faith to resist Potiphar's wife, that God gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams, that God blessed Joseph even while he was in prison; that it was God's plan to make Joseph a ruler in Egypt, and that God guided and blessed Joseph's life according to His plan for the salvation of mankind. ***"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."*** (Philippians 2:13)

APPLICATIONS

1. God's grace is at the forefront of this Bible truth. We see again how our great and mighty God always provides for all our needs just as He cared for Joseph. We see His love not only in the forgiveness and salvation He has won for us, but also in His gracious mercy upon us each day of our lives. Our God always provides for all our needs. Our God always guides our lives for good. In this section of Holy Scripture, emphasize to the students especially God's power and grace in their lives. The key phrase in this section which should be emphasized repeatedly is: ***"The LORD was with Joseph."*** That same Lord is also watching over and providing for us!
2. Note that Joseph's entire experience is a picture of the experience of all of Israel in Egypt. As Joseph arrived in Egypt alone and in need, so also did the small family of Israel. As Joseph was first made to thrive and prosper in the house of Potiphar and then unjustly imprisoned, so the nation of Israel first prospered (growing from 70 to over 2,000,000) and was then placed under unjust bondage. As Joseph enjoyed the favor of the people during the good times, so Israel at first enjoyed the favor of the Egyptians and the abundance of Goshen. As the Egyptians were made to recognize the wisdom and power of Joseph's God through God's gift of dream interpretation, so the Egyptians were made to see the power of God through Moses and the plagues.
3. Impress upon the students the constant danger we all face from temptation. Remind them of the terrible consequences of sin and the blessed forgiveness and strength we have in our Lord. Remind them that the best way to overcome temptation (especially sexual temptation) is to flee from it, as did Joseph. (1 Corinthians 6:18)
4. Doing the right thing may cost us dearly. Joseph left behind his coat rather than give in to temptation. More than that, he was sent to prison as a direct result of doing the right thing. Here we should recognize an opportunity to show our students that believers may be made to suffer wrongfully for following what our Lord tells us to do. They should expect to be ridiculed when they do not give in to peer pressure. In dealing with the section on the temptation of Potiphar's wife there is a practical problem how to explain this to the younger children. This topic should be handled in a delicate manner. Sex education should be left to the parents. Neither assume nor instruct sexual awareness. One commentator offers the phrase, "come, be like a husband to me" as a way to explain the temptation. Most follow-up questions should be directed to the student's parents.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Philippians 4:13 - *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Hebrews 13:5b - *I will never leave you nor forsake you.*

Acts 17:28a - *For in Him we live and move and have our being.*

Genesis 39:9b - *How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

Middle any of the above and...

1 Corinthians 10:31 - *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

Philippians 2:13 - *For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Hebrews 12:10b - *But God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. (NIV)*

Upper any of the above and...

1 Corinthians 10:13 - *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Acts 17:28a) - *For in Him we live and move and have our being.*

Isaiah 43:1b-3a - *Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

HYMN CHOICES

“In God, My Faithful God” TLH #526:1

“Jesus, Jesus, Only Jesus” TLH #348:4,5

“Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus” TLH #409:1