

Lesson #3-3

Joseph and His Brothers

Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-21



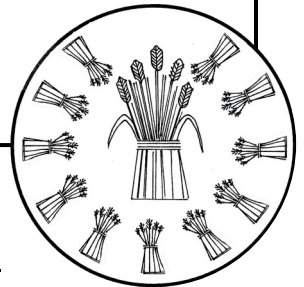
Key Verse:

“Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as [God] is doing today.”

Genesis 50:20

The Point:

Even when we hurt each other, God can turn our work towards good.



Introduction

Joseph was the youngest of Israel's children, and was the most beloved, because he was “born of his old age.” He was also born of the favorite of Jacob's two wives. The other sons were very jealous of Joseph, made worse by the fact that Joseph had powerfully prophetic dreams and visions that came from God and placed him above his brothers. Joseph's brothers crafted a scheme to sell him into slavery and told their father that he was dead. In the end, despite the horrible treatment he received from them, Joseph forgave his brothers, and they were reconciled to one another.

The Point

Even when we hurt each other, God can turn our work towards good. Joseph's brothers let jealousy get the best of them, and they violated the trust that should have been inherent in family relationships. Their sinful thoughts and actions could have meant the end of Joseph, but God used Joseph's time in Egypt to benefit not only Joseph, but also his family, and all of Israel. In our lives, God can take the damage that humans do and use it for good. God never creates harm or destruction for a good purpose, but God can always redeem it.

Activities a la Carte

Activities

Supplies

Introduction

Dreams and Visions

Create a many-colored dream wheel.

10 min.

- † Wax paper
- † Glue
- † Paint brushes
- † Tissue paper
- † Scissors
- † Black permanent markers
- † Hole punch
- † Thread or string

Learning the Story

Joseph and His Brothers

Read the Bible text.

15 min.

- † Bibles

Activities

Promise Poetry

Review promises made and broken.

10 min.

- † Paper
- † Pens or pencils

Sold into Slavery

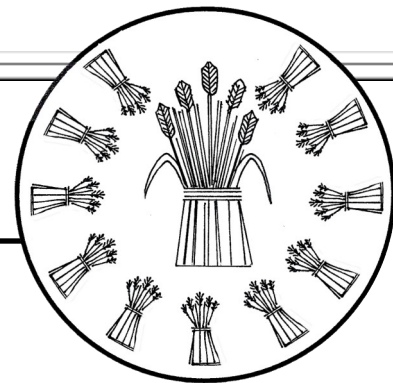
Look into modern-day slavery.

10 min.

- † Internet-connected video player

Prayer

God's Story @ Home



Introduction (15 minutes)

Dreams and Visions

Create a many-colored dream wheel.

Supplies:

- † Wax paper
- † Glue
- † Paint brushes
- † Tissue paper
- † Scissors
- † Black permanent markers
- † Hole punch
- † Thread or string

Preparation:

1. Cut wax paper circles, about 4" in diameter, one for each person.
2. Cut 4" lengths of string or thread, one for each person.

Instructions:

1. Let's begin by creating a "dream wheels." Our dream wheel will remind us that sometimes God speaks to people in colorful dreams, and that God's story is colorful and exciting.
2. In order to make the dream wheel, each person should take a circle of wax paper. Tear the tissue paper into small pieces, and create a design with it on the wax paper. If you would like, you can use the black markers to separate the tissue paper in the design into a specific shape, like stained glass.
3. Once your design has been decided, brush glue across the whole circle, then affix the tissue paper in the pattern you created. When you are finished, punch a hole in the top and tie a piece of string or thread through.

4. While you work, discuss the following questions. Remember to listen to everyone and give everyone a chance to tell their story. A good way to do this is for each person to invite the next person to speak when they are finished. Everyone has the opportunity accept the invitation to speak or to pass.
 - Have you ever had a very memorable dream while you were sleeping or vision while you were awake?
 - Do you think this dream or vision was meant to tell you something?
 - Do you think God still speaks to people through dreams?
7. Today's story is about a person some called a "dreamer." Joseph heard God's word through his dreams, but people in his own family did not always like what his dreams told him. We will soon learn what this meant for God's promise to Joseph and his family.

Learning the Story (15 minutes)

Joseph: The Promise Threatened

Read the Bible text.

Supplies:

† Bibles

Preparation:

1. Read the lesson Scripture text, and skim the material from chapters 37–50, in order to understand the context of the story.

Instructions:

1. Read Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-21. Decide together how to read it: by taking turns, or one person reading to the group. Do not read silently, though, as that would leave out pre-readers.
2. Talk about:
 - **Who are the main characters?**
 - **What is the focus of the action?**
 - **Are there any details that are not clear to you?**
3. Clarify any plot details that are confusing.
4. As you are able, give family members roles to read the parts of Joseph, his brothers (especially Judah and Reuben), Jacob, and the narrator.
5. After the second reading, discuss as a group:
 - **Why did Joseph's brothers want to kill him? Have you ever been very jealous of someone you loved?**
 - **How could Joseph have forgiven his brothers for what they had done?**
 - **How does God act in this text?** [*God is not an active character, but God works through Joseph's faithfulness.*]
 - **What does this say to you about God's promises?**
6. This reading shows us a new way that God works through relationship with humanity. Even though God is not a main actor in this story, God can work through relationships between humans. Even though Joseph's brothers intended harm, God redeemed their work and made something good of it.

Activity (10 minutes)

Promise Poetry

Review promises made and broken.

Supplies:

- † Paper
- † Pens or pencils

Instructions:

1. **We have discovered that God's relationship with humanity is built on promises that God and humans make. Sometimes humans break those promises, like when Adam and Eve trusted in lies rather than love. But God loves and forgives, and God promised Abraham that he would father an entire nation.**
2. **We are going to write a haiku about God's promises. Who knows the rules for writing a haiku?** *[The first line must contain five syllables. The second line has seven syllables. The third line has five syllables. It does not need to rhyme.]*
3. Have everyone share afterward.

Activity

Sold into Slavery (10 minutes)

Look into modern-day slavery.

Supplies:

- † Internet-connected video player

Preparation:

1. While slavery is still a very real problem, and worthy of discussion and action, this is not a topic for deep exploration with small children. If you choose this activity, preview all materials for age-appropriate content. Use the linked videos in the lesson or search online for “Modern Slavery” and “Facts about Human Trafficking” videos.

Instructions:

1. **One would think that a story like Joseph’s early life is ancient history. But people today are still sold into slavery, often by their own family members. These activities can happen in our own cities, often right within our view. It is important for us to be aware and to take action to end the slavery that exists today.**
2. Show the short videos found at: The Open University—[Modern Slavery](#) and List25— [25 Painfully Disturbing Facts About Human Trafficking](#). These website hyperlinks are provided for your convenience and are correct and relevant at the time of publication but may not be at the time of use.
3. Discuss:
 - What is one thing you learned about slavery from this video that you did not know before?
 - Have you ever seen evidence of slavery in your community?
 - Why do you think a modern society still tolerates this type of treatment of people?
 - What is one thing that you (personally) can do to help end human trafficking?
4. **As we have learned, slavery is not an ancient institution that was eliminated long ago. We all need to be aware of its presence, and think of ways that we can help bring attention to it and eliminate it.**

Prayer

Encourage everyone to hold hands.

This week, I encourage you to do two things. First, if there is anyone in your family with whom you are having a disagreement, make amends like Joseph and his brothers did. And second, if you find yourself in a situation that was meant to harm you but you have gotten out of, stop and imagine how God can use this experience for good.

Now, let's pray together. We will take turns offering petitions about situations that are designed to harm. The rest of us will respond, "Lord, use it for good." I will offer a few petitions to start us off, and then will leave some silence for participation from others.

Leader: When we mistrust you, as Adam did...

All: Lord, use it for good.

Leader: Joseph and others were sold as slaves...

All: Lord, use it for good.

Leader: Unrest in the world...

All: Lord, use it for good.

Leader: Natural disasters...

All: Lord, use it for good.

Silence for participation...

All: Lord, use it for good.

All: Amen.

If you have the "Living the Word: Sharing God's Story @ Home" sheet, remember to use it throughout the week as a part of your family devotions!