

Bible Stories for Adults

God Prepares Joseph

Genesis 37 - 41

Opening

- Gathering: Tell of how God has used your life experiences to prepare you to do His work.
- Today's Focus: To recognize that God uses experiences in our lives to prepare us for His work.
- Key Verses: *How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?* Genesis 39:9
Who knows but that you have come to position for such a time as this? Esther 4:14
I cannot do it, but God will give the answer. Genesis 41:16

Opening Prayer

Lesson

The Favorite Son (*Genesis 37:3*)

- How many sons did Jacob have? = Leah - 6, Rachel - 2, Bilhah - 2, Zilpah - 2
Genesis 35:22b-26 = 12 (became tribes of Israel)
- Why did Jacob have so many sons? = Leah and Rachel got their maids into the competition
Genesis 29:31; 30:1-3, 9, 22-24 = Leah & Rachel had jealous competition
- Who was Jacob's favorite son and why? = special tunic reached to palms & soles
Genesis 37:3 = Joseph, *because he had been born to him in his old age*
- What was likely another reason?
Genesis 29:30a = *Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah*

Brotherly Love? (*Genesis 37:2-5*)

- How did Joseph's brothers feel about Joseph and why?
Genesis 37:4 = They hated him because Jacob loved him more
- How was the brothers' feelings about Joseph reinforced?
Genesis 37:2 = Joseph brought a bad report about them to Jacob, tattle-tale
- What even further deepened the brothers' attitudes toward Joseph?
Genesis 37:5 = A dream that Joseph had

Canaan Dreamin' (*Genesis 37:6-11*)

- What was Joseph's dream?
Genesis 37:6-7 = Brothers' sheaves of grain bowed to Joseph's sheaf
- Why did the brothers hate him for dreaming of bowing grain? = no special interpretation needed
Genesis 37:8 = They understood its meaning that they would be ruled by Joseph
- Did Joseph keep his dreams to himself after this? = double dreams meant certainty of fulfillment
Genesis 37:9 = No, had another of stars, etc. bowing to him
- Did Jacob stand up for Joseph in front of his brothers?
Genesis 37:10-11 = No, Jacob scolded him as well

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Joseph's Travels (*Genesis 37:12-22*)

- Did Jacob try to keep Joseph away from his jealous brothers?
Genesis 37:12-14b = No, he sent Joseph to check on them at Shechem
- Where did Joseph go to find his brothers? = Show on map
Genesis 37:14c-17 = Hebron to Shechem (60m) to Dothan (15m)
- What did Joseph's brothers think when they saw Joseph coming?
Genesis 37:18-20 = Plotted to kill him; *Then we'll see what comes of his dreams*
- Who came to Joseph's rescue? Why? = Reuben was oldest brother, responsible to Jacob
Genesis 37:21-22 = Reuben; *To rescue him ... and take him back to his father*
- Had Reuben always been so discerning and protective of his father's interests?
Genesis 35:22 = No, he slept with Bilhah - Rachel's maid and his step-mother
- How did Jacob later deal with this?
Genesis 49:3-4 = He removed Reuben's first-born status and privileges

Family Business (*Genesis 37:23-35*)

- What did the brothers decide to do?
Genesis 37:23-24 = Took Joseph's robe (removed position of privilege) & threw him in pit
- How was this plan changed? Why? = Sold him for 8 ounces of silver (<\$30)
Genesis 37:25-28 = Judah convinced his brothers to sell Joseph instead of killing him
- Why was the price set at 20 shekels of silver? = Jesus was sold for silver (Matthew 26:15)
Leviticus 27:5 (Exodus 21:32) = Standard rate to redeem a male under 20 devoted to God
- Did Reuben agree with this sale?
Genesis 37:29-30 = He didn't know what they were doing, had planned to rescue Joseph
- How was this explained to Jacob?
Genesis 37:31-32 = They said he had been eaten by a ferocious animal
- How did Jacob respond to his loss?
Genesis 37:33-35 = *In mourning will I go down to the grave to my son*

Potiphar's Wife (*Genesis 39*)

- Where was Joseph taken?
Genesis 39:1 (*Genesis 37:36*) = To Egypt, sold to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard
- How did God remember Joseph in Egypt? = States 5 times that the Lord caused Joseph's success
Genesis 39:2-6a = Blessed Joseph & household with success, Joseph put in charge
- Why did Potiphar have to *concern himself with the food he ate*?
Genesis 43:32 = Detestable to Egyptians to eat with Hebrews
- What threatened Joseph's position and how did he respond?
Genesis 39:6b-9 = Potiphar's wife wanted Joseph, he refused to *sin against God*
- How did Potiphar's wife respond to Joseph's rejection?
Genesis 39:10-12 = She continued to pressure him & tried to force him - he remained faithful
- How did she deal with his continued rejection?
Genesis 39:13-18 = She accused Joseph of trying to rape her
- How did Potiphar respond to the accusation against his chief servant? = Angry, may have suspected
Genesis 39:19-20a = Threw Joseph in the king's prison (light punishment)
- How did God remember Joseph in prison?
Genesis 39:20b-23 = Blessed Joseph with success, Joseph put in charge

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The Cupbearer and the Baker (Genesis 40:1-8)

Who did God bring to Joseph while he was in prison?

Genesis 40:1-3 = Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker, highly ranked & trusted

How did God intervene so that Joseph would interact with these high profile men?

Genesis 40:4-5 = Gave each of them dreams with hidden meanings

What did these men's confusing dreams have to do with Joseph?

Genesis 40:6-8 = *Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.*

Does God use dreams elsewhere? = Used dreams to reveal Himself to Nebuchadnezzar thru Daniel

Daniel 2:27-28, 47 = God alone knows the future & reveals meanings of dreams

The Servants' Dreams (Genesis 40:9-23)

What was the cupbearer's dream and what was its meaning?

Genesis 40:9-13 = After 3 days, the cupbearer would return to his job

What was the purpose of the cupbearer's dream? = *dungeon* - same word as *cistern* in Gen 37:24

Genesis 40:14-15 = Return to work for Pharaoh & prepare path for Joseph's release

What was the baker's dream and what was its meaning? = *lift off your head vs lift up* (release)

Genesis 40:16-19 = After 3 days, the baker would be hanged

Were Joseph's interpretations correct?

Genesis 40:20-22 = Yes, *just as Joseph had said*

Did the cupbearer fulfill the purpose of his dream and work for Joseph's release?

Genesis 40:23 = No, *he forgot him*

Pharaoh's Dreams (Genesis 41:1-7)

How much longer did Joseph remain in prison before the story continues?

Genesis 41:1a (Psalm 105:16-22) = Two full years, Until God's time was right

How can Joseph's patience be an example for us?

James 5:7-8, 10-11 = Remain patient to receive what God has promised

What was Pharaoh's dream?

Genesis 41:1b-4 = 7 fat cows eaten by 7 scrawny cows

What happened when Pharaoh tried to go back to sleep? = east wind - from across hot, dry desert

Genesis 41:5-7 = Dreamt again, 7 full grain heads eaten by 7 thin grain heads

God Alone Has the Wisdom and Power (Genesis 41:8-16)

Who was able to interpret the dreams for Pharaoh?

Genesis 41:8 = No one, none of Egypt's magicians or wise men

Who was finally cured of amnesia?

Genesis 41:9-13 = The chief cupbearer told Pharaoh of Joseph

Would Joseph be able to interpret Pharaoh's dreams? = Egyptians were clean shaven

Genesis 41:14-16 = *I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer*

How was this later paralleled before another Pharaoh?

Exodus 7:10-12 = Aaron's rod ate rods of Egypt's magicians

What is the message behind these two stories?

Exodus 8:17-19 = God's power is greater than that of man's & Satan's

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The Meaning of Pharaoh's Dreams (Genesis 41:17-39)

Did Pharaoh remember his dreams well enough to tell them to Joseph?

Genesis 41:17-24 = Yes

Would it have been a problem if Pharaoh had forgotten his dreams?

Daniel 2:1, 9, 11, 27-28 = No, God had Daniel tell and interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream

What did the dreams mean? = God not only explains the dreams, but gave them to reveal His plan

Genesis 41:25-32 = God will bring 7 years of plenty, then 7 years of famine

What did Joseph recommend to Pharaoh?

Genesis 41:33-36 = Appoint someone to store 20% during plenty for use during famine

Who did Pharaoh find for this task? Why?

Genesis 41:37-39 = Joseph, *Since God has made you ... so discerning and wise*

Zaphenath-Paneah in Charge - Again (Genesis 41:40-46)

How much power did Pharaoh give Joseph?

Genesis 41:40-41 = Second only to Pharaoh

How did Pharaoh make sure everyone knew the responsibility and power he had given to Joseph?

Genesis 41:42-43 = Dressed him royally and paraded him before the people

How old was Joseph at this time? = Given official Egyptian name Zaphenath-Paneah and priestly wife

Genesis 41:44-46 = Only 30 years old

What did Joseph name his children? Why? = fruitful also recalls Joseph's job as food administrator

Genesis 41:50-52 = Manasseh (God made me *forget*), Ephraim (God made me *twice fruitful*)

Joseph at Work (Genesis 41:47-57)

What did Joseph do during the 7 years of abundance?

Genesis 41:47-49 = Collected so much grain he couldn't count it

What did Joseph do during the 7 years of famine?

Genesis 41:53-56 = Sold grain to the Egyptians from the storehouses

How did God use Joseph to *bless the nations of the world*?

Genesis 41:57 = All the countries came to Egypt to buy grain

Closing Prayer

Response

1. When have I recently been jealous of someone? How did I deal with it?
(Genesis 37:3-11; Acts 13:45; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 13:4; Galatians 5:19-21, 26; James 3:13-18)
2. When have I helped cause harm to someone? How have I repented and tried to make amends?
(Genesis 37:19-35; 42:21-24; 50:15-21; 2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 21; Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-31)
3. How faithful am I to God when Satan tempts me?
(Genesis 39:6-12; Matthew 4:1-11; 26:41; 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:13-15; 2 Peter 2:9)
4. Do I remember and appreciate the good others have done for me? (Genesis 40:12-15, 23; Ecclesiastes 9:13-16; 2 Chronicles 24:22; Luke 17:11-19; 1 Thessalonians 3:9)
5. How well do I carry out the responsibilities that God has entrusted to me? (Genesis 39:2-6, 21-23; 41:46-49, 56-57; Luke 16:1-15; 19:11-27; Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:11-16; 6:5-8)

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Charles Spurgeon on *God's Providence*

I believe that it is in the little things that we can see God. I want you to notice how little circumstances of daily life, when we put them all together, evidently betray their origin.

When Joseph was sent into Egypt by his brothers, in order to provide for them against a day of famine, we all agree with Joseph's declaration, "It was God that sent me hither." But now, if we notice each of the little ways through which this great result was brought to pass, we shall see God in each of them.

One day, Joseph's brothers are out with the sheep; Jacob wants to send to them. Why does he send Joseph? He was his darling son; he loved him better than all his brothers. Why does he send him away?

Joseph goes; his brothers are in want of pasture, and therefore leave Shechem, where Joseph expected to find them, and journey on to Dothan. Why go to Dothan? Was not the whole land before them? However, Joseph goes there; he arrives at Dothan just when they are thinking of him and his dreams, and they put him in a pit.

As they are about to eat bread, some Ishmaelites came by. Why did they come there at all? Why did they come at that particular time? Why were they going to Egypt? Why might they not have been going any other way? Why was it that the Ishmaelites wanted to buy slaves? Why might they not have been trading in some other commodity?

However, Joseph is sold; but he is not disposed on the road to Egypt, he is taken to the land. Why is it that Potiphar is to buy him? Why is it that Potiphar has a wife at all? Why is it that Potiphar's wife should be so full of lust?

Why should Joseph get into prison? How is it that the baker and the butler should offend their master? All chance, as the world has it, but every link necessary to make the chain.

They do both offend their master; they are both put into prison. How is it that they both dream? How is it that Joseph interprets the dreams? How is it that the butler forgets him? Why, just because if he had recollected him, it would have spoiled it all?

Why is it Pharaoh dreams? How can dreams be under the arrangement of God's providence? However, Pharaoh does dream; the butler then thinks of Joseph; Joseph is brought out of prison and taken before Pharaoh.

But take away any of these simple circumstances, break any one of the links of the chain, and the whole of the design is scattered to the winds. You can not get the machine to work; if any of the minute cogs of the wheels are taken away, everything is disarranged.

We will now notice, in the minutiae of providence, how punctual providence always is. You will never wonder more at providence, than when you consider how well God keeps time with himself.

To return to our history - how is it that the Ishmaelites should come by just at that time? How many thousand chances there were that their journey might have been taken just before!

There certainly was no special train to call at that station at that particular time so that Joseph's brothers might arrange to go and call him. No such thing. And yet if there had been all this arrangement, it could not have happened better.

You know Reuben intended to fetch Joseph out of the pit half an hour later, and "the child was not". God had these Ishmaelites ready: you do not know how He may have sped them on their journey, or delayed them, so as to bring them on the spot punctually at the identical moment.

It could not be mere coincidence, as men sometimes say; there must be God here, for it is harder to think that there is not God than that there is. And while a belief in God may be said by some to involve a great stretch of faith, the putting Him out of such things as this would involve an infinitely greater amount of credulity. No, there was God there.

Depend upon it, then, that the will of man, the thought of man, the desire of man, that every purpose of man, is immediately under the hand of God.

Take an instance - Jesus Christ is to be born at Bethlehem; his mother is living at Nazareth: he will be born there to a dead certainty. No, not so. Caesar takes a whim into his head. All the world shall be taxed, and he will have all of them go to their own city. What necessity for that? Stupid idea of Caesar's! If he had had a parliament, they would have voted against him. They would have said, "Why make all the people go to their own peculiar city to the census? Take the census where they live; that will be abundantly sufficient." "No," says he, "it is my will, and Caesar can not be opposed." Some think Caesar is mad. God knows what He means to do with Caesar.

Mary, great with child, must take a laborious journey to Bethlehem; and there her child is born in a manger. We should not have had the prophesy fulfilled, that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, and our very faith in the Messiah might have been shaken, if it had not been for the whim of Caesar's. So that even the will of man is in the hand of God.