



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

#44 – Joseph and his Brothers Genesis 45

PICTURES NEEDED

44-1 Joseph reveals himself to his brothers

REVIEW (Before Teaching Lesson)

- **Journal Review:** Ask students to share an important truth that they learned from their journal readings at home that week. Share some of your own insights.
- **Previous Lesson Review:** (Use the visual from the last lesson to aid in review) What were Pharaoh's dreams? What did Joseph say would happen? Why did Pharaoh make Joseph ruler over Egypt?
- **The Big Question Review:** How does a person demonstrate wisdom? Let the students give their answers to the question.
- **Bible Verse Review:** James 3:13 Good deeds show God's wisdom.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

LESSON CONTENT

How many sons did Jacob (Israel) have? Abraham's grandson Jacob had twelve sons by four wives.

Who was Jacob's favorite son? Jacob's favorite son was Joseph who became a ruler over Egypt.

How did Joseph end up becoming ruler over Egypt? Joseph's brothers were jealous of him and had sold him as a slave to a caravan that took him to Egypt. Joseph was thrown in jail in Egypt. While he was in jail, he interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officials, the baker and the cupbearer. Those dreams came true just like Joseph said they would. When Pharaoh had two dreams that really bothered him and wanted someone to interpret them his chief cupbearer remembered about Joseph in jail and Pharaoh sent for him.

What did Joseph tell Pharaoh about his dreams? Joseph told Pharaoh the meaning of the dreams, that there was going to be seven years of abundance in Egypt, which would be followed by seven years of severe famine.

Why did Joseph become the ruler over Egypt? Joseph told Pharaoh that he needed a wise ruler to save up grain during the good years so that there would be food in Egypt during the famine. Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be that ruler.

Just as Joseph said would happen, after seven good years of harvest a famine hit all the lands. Only in Egypt was there food. During that time, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt. Why would they do that? Joseph's brothers went to Egypt because during the famine there was no food in Canaan. Joseph recognized them and sold them grain but didn't let on that he was their brother.

When the grain Joseph had sold to his brothers ran out they had to return to Egypt to buy more. Joseph had told them not to come back unless they brought their younger brother Benjamin back with them.

Why did Joseph want to see Benjamin so much? Benjamin had the same mother as Joseph. They were both sons of Rachel who had been Jacob's favorite wife. Joseph hadn't seen his brother since Benjamin was a little boy.

When the brothers came back to buy grain again Joseph finally revealed himself to them, telling them that he was their brother. Genesis 45:1-15 tells what happened.

Genesis 45:1-15 (picture 45-1)

¹ Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!" ⁵ And now, do not be

distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸ "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ⁹ Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. ¹⁰ You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

¹² "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. ¹³ Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

¹⁴ Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

Why were the brothers terrified when they found out it was Joseph that they were talking to? They had done real evil to Joseph and he was in a position of power that he could have them killed.

Why did Joseph tell his brothers not to be distressed about what they had done to him? Joseph being in Egypt was ordained by God so that the family would be preserved during the seven years of famine.

What had Joseph focused on through all his suffering and how did that benefit him? Joseph focused on God and his plan and purposes. He could find peace in bad circumstances, maintain hope for the future and work for God's glory and honor.

What do you think had happened to his brothers in the intervening years? Guilt continually hung over them. Unconfessed sin eats away at a person's soul.

Genesis 45:16-28

¹⁶ When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. ¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸ and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.'

¹⁹ "You are also directed to tell them, 'Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. ²⁰ Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.'"

²¹ So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. ²² To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes. ²³ And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. ²⁴ Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Don't quarrel on the way!"

²⁵ So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. ²⁶ They told him, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. ²⁷ But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸ And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

What did Pharaoh tell Joseph to do with his family? When Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family he told Joseph to get carts so that all of them and their possessions could be brought back to Egypt. Joseph's father Jacob and all Jacob's children and grandchildren along with all their flocks and herds came to settle in Egypt. Jacob was content because he was able to see Joseph and Joseph's children before he died.

Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years before he died. When their father Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were afraid that Joseph would pay them back for all the wrongs they had done to him, so they lied and sent a message to Joseph.

Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" ¹⁶So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

¹⁸His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

How did Joseph respond to his brothers' concerns? He said that God had been in control and they shouldn't be afraid. He was reassuring and kind.

What can we see from Joseph's response to his brothers? We can see from his response that Joseph believed that God is sovereign and can be trusted. He put himself under God's authority and care. He wasn't motivated by self-interest.

What does it mean that God is sovereign? Sovereign refers to a ruler who has supreme or complete authority. God is the ruler over all the earth and all things. He has a plan for mankind and he will bring it to pass in his time and his way.

How will we live if we believe God is sovereign? If we believe that God is in control and works for our good in all things, then we will be patient in times of trouble. We will be like Joseph and forgive others when they hurt us and we will remain rightly related to God. We will trust that even things that don't seem good will be used by God for our good as he makes us into the image of his Son. We will rest in and trust God's plan for us.

Psalm 33:10-11 says, *The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.*

Because Joseph was a wise man who had dedicated his life to God, he was able to respond rightly to his brothers even though they had mistreated him.

LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** Why did Joseph's brothers go to Egypt? What did Joseph say to them when they were afraid of him because of what they had done? What convinced Jacob to go to Egypt?
- **Thought Questions:** What was the good God accomplished in Joseph's life? What would Joseph have been like if he hadn't suffered? Why does God allow bad things to happen to us? What was the difference between Joseph and his brothers?
- **Prayer:** Pray that you would remember the lessons learned from the life of Joseph and that you would trust God in all circumstances as Joseph did. Thank God that his plans will come to pass and that he is developing good character in you through the things you suffer.
- **The Big Question: How can we wait patiently on the Lord?**
Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.
- **Memory Verse: Psalm 33:10-11**
We know God's plans will come to pass.

The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Questions: What does it mean to foil? What does it mean to thwart? What are man's purposes? What are God's purposes? Why don't God's purposes ever change?

ACTIVITIES (Completed after the lesson)

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

- ★ **Lesson Notes:** Ask the students to summarize in one sentence what the lesson was about. Then have them give three main points covered in the lesson. An example is below.

Theme: Theme: God had sent Joseph to Egypt so that there would be food for his family during the famine and they would be kept alive.

1. The famine was very severe in the land so Joseph's brothers had to go to Egypt to buy food. They didn't know it was Joseph who ruled in Egypt.
2. Joseph finally told his brothers who he was. Joseph's brothers were afraid that Joseph would pay them back because they had sold him as a slave.

3. Joseph forgave his brothers for what they did and told them it was God's plan for him to be in Egypt.

★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the class notes and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse.

★ **Activity Page:** Acrostic Poem

Instructions: Write an acrostic poem for Joseph's name, explaining what happened to him. An example is included below.

J – jailed for no reason, just continued to do right, journey with God

O – overcame all his suffering, open heart towards God

S – sold as a slave by his brothers, submitted to God's plan and purposes

E – Egyptian prince and ruler, eternal focus

P – Pharaoh's right hand man, preserver of his family

H – Helped his family out, hoped continually in God

★ **Further Understanding:** Bible Study Skills

Instructions:

1. Read the whole passage below to the students as they read along in their Bibles or on the discussion notes.
2. Read the passage verse by verse and have the students explain each verse.
3. Have the students extract one important truth from the passage. This can be done as an entire class or you can break into pairs or small groups.
4. Have the students answer the additional two questions: How can you apply this truth in your life? What will be the result of applying that truth?

Psalm 33:10-22 – God is our hope and deliverer.

¹⁰The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. ¹¹But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

¹²Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.

¹³From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; ¹⁴from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth-- ¹⁵he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

¹⁶No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. ¹⁷A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.

¹⁸But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, ¹⁹to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

²⁰We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. ²¹In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. ²²May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

Discussion Questions: What does it mean to foil? What does it mean to thwart? What are man's purposes? What are God's purposes? Why don't God's purposes ever change? What does God know about every person? How does he know that? Do you live like God knows everything about you? In what way? Who does God deliver and keep alive? What does it mean to hope in the Lord? Why is it important to hope in the Lord?

The journal is passed out at the end of class for the students to complete at home. It has six readings that answer a digging deeper question. It would be beneficial for the teacher to work through the journal readings also.

Digging Deeper: Journal Focus – Genesis, chapters 46-48

Reading 1: Genesis 46:1-27 Jacob takes his family to Egypt.
What was God's promise to Jacob in going to Egypt?

Reading 2: Genesis 46:28-34 The Israelites settle in the best of the land.
Goshen, in the eastern part of the Nile Delta, was very fertile and the best land of Egypt. It also formed a buffer zone between Egypt and hostile countries. Why would the Israelites be allowed to settle in such a good land?

Reading 3: Genesis 47:1-12 Jacob's family goes before Pharaoh.
Why would Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh be noteworthy?

Reading 4: Genesis 47:13-31 The famine is severe.
How did the people of Egypt become in bondage to Pharaoh? In contrast what did God do for the Israelites? What did Joseph promise to do for his father?

Reading 5: Genesis 48 Joseph's sons are blessed.
What did Jacob say to Joseph before he blessed his sons? What did Jacob do in blessing his sons that displeased Joseph?

Reading 6: Jeremiah 29:11-14 God has plans for his people.
What is the promise of this passage? This promise was given to the Israelites who were in captivity in Babylon. How can it relate to us now?