

LESSON 6

JOSEPH INTERPRETS DREAMS

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Prisons

In Joseph's time, prisons were grim places with vile conditions. They were used to house forced laborers or, like Joseph, the accused who were awaiting trial. Prisoners were guilty until proven innocent, and there was no right to a speedy trial. Many prisoners never made it to court because trials were held at the whim of the ruler. Joseph was in prison two years until he appeared before Pharaoh, and even then, he had been called to interpret dreams, not to stand trial.

The Cupbearer and Baker

The cupbearer and baker were two of the most trusted men in Pharaoh's kingdom. The baker was in charge of making Pharaoh's food, and the cupbearer tasted all of his food and drink before giving it to him, in case any of it was contaminated or poisoned. These trusted men must have been suspected of serious wrong to be thrown into jail. Later the cupbearer was released and the baker executed.

Magicians and Wise Men

Magicians and wise men were common in the palaces of ancient rulers. Their job description included studying sacred arts and sciences, reading the stars, interpreting dreams, predicting the future, and performing magic. These men had power, but their power was evil. They were unable to interpret Pharaoh's dream, but God revealed its meaning to Joseph in prison.

Joseph's Reaction to a Difficult Situation

When Pharaoh's chief cupbearer was freed from prison, he forgot about Joseph even though he had Joseph to thank for his freedom. It was two full years before Joseph had another opportunity to be freed (Gen 41:1). Yet, Joseph's faith was deep, and he would be ready when the next chance came.

Joseph did not hold a grudge against the cupbearer for forgetting about him in prison. Sometimes, when people forget the nice things we do for them, we feel they don't appreciate it. But Joseph knew that the Person who would save him from prison was not the cupbearer nor anyone else, but God. So he never held grudges against people and he never worried about what other people did. He simply put his faith in God and believed that He would not forget him in prison. Joseph thought, "If not through the cupbearer, then God will find another way to help me."

When we feel overlooked or forgotten, we shouldn't be surprised that people are often ungrateful. In similar situations, trust God as Joseph did. More opportunities may be waiting.

Oftentimes, our most important opportunities come when we least

BIBLE TEXT

Genesis 40-41

BIBLE TRUTH

God is always with us even when we encounter difficulties.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To have faith in God because God cares for us.
2. To learn that God is the one who gives wisdom.
3. To rely on God even under difficult situations.

MEMORY VERSE

"God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble."

(Psalm 46:1)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Lord, we thank You for bringing us together again to worship Your holy name. Help us to rely on You when bad things happen and let us learn from them. You are the one who gives us wisdom and understanding. We want to praise You and thank You. May Your Spirit guide today's class. Hallelujah! Amen.

expect them. Joseph was brought hastily from the dungeon before Pharaoh. Did he have time to prepare? Yes and no. He had no warning that he would suddenly be pulled from prison and questioned by the king. Yet, Joseph was ready for almost anything at any time because of his relationship with God. When our relationship with God is good, our heart is always calm and steady, ready to face

any and every situation.

It was not Joseph's knowledge of dreams that helped him interpret their meaning. It was his knowledge of God. We should encourage ourselves and our students to know more about God so that we will be ready when the right opportunities come our way.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

When things get hard, it's easy to want to give up. Help the students understand that God likes it when we do things with perseverance. Ask the students what things are hard for them to do regularly, such as keeping their room clean, brushing their teeth every night, being nice to brothers and sisters, etc. Explain to them that sometimes it takes a lot of patience to keep on doing something or to finish it.

Joseph had to stay in prison for two whole years before he got out. While he was in prison, though, he worked hard, and later, he was put in charge of the whole prison. Noah was another man who had a lot of patience and

perseverance. It took him over one hundred years to finish building the ark, but in the end, that ark saved him and his whole family!

Ask the students if they had ever continued to do something even though it was difficult. Let them express how they felt after they had finished their job. It could be cleaning up their room, doing a project at school, being on time, etc. Almost always, they would have felt some level of satisfaction from their accomplishment. Help them understand that God has given us little things to persevere in so that we can successfully handle bigger things later.

VOCABULARY

perseverance: continued action or belief, usually over a long period of time

interpret: to explain the meaning of something

cupbearer: someone who serves wine (in this story, someone who served wine to the king)

Nile: the longest river in the world; it flows through Egypt

plenty: more than enough

famine: a serious shortage of food resulting in widespread hunger

refuge: a protected place where people cannot be hurt

REVIEW

Last week, we learned about Joseph and his brothers. Do you remember why his brothers hated him so much? [Wait for students to respond.] That's right, they were jealous because their father loved Joseph the most. Why is jealousy such a bad thing? [Allow students to respond.]

Does anyone remember what his brothers did to him? [Ask students to turn to their neighbor and talk about what happened.] They threw him into a pit and sold him to some merchants who took Joseph to Egypt. He was sold again to a wealthy man. Do you remember his name? [Ask students to turn to their neighbor and agree on a name.] The wealthy man was named Potiphar, and eventually Joseph became his servant in his house.

Joseph was very hard working and Potiphar trusted Joseph so much that he put him in charge of the whole house. However, something bad happened to Joseph that he had to be put in jail. What happened? Potiphar's wife was not a good person. She kept asking Joseph to sin with her, but Joseph refused to sin against God with her. So, she lied and said that Joseph attacked her, then Potiphar threw him in prison.

BIBLE STORY

Joseph in Prison

Even though Joseph was thrown into prison, he still obeyed God. Because the Lord was with Joseph, everything he did turned out well. When the keeper of the prison saw that God was with him, he placed him in

charge of the whole prison. The keeper, like Potiphar before him, trusted Joseph and never worried about him. So Joseph stayed in the prison for many days.

Now, in the prison were two people who once worked for Pharaoh. One used to be the chief cupbearer and the

other, the chief baker. Who knows what a cupbearer and a baker do? [Allow students to respond.]

Now it happened at this time that Pharaoh's cupbearer and his baker made Pharaoh very angry! They must have been having a bad day. So he had the cupbearer and the baker thrown in jail.

It just so happened that they were thrown into the same prison where Joseph was. Of course, this didn't just happen. God was working according to His plan. A very big and wonderful plan.

So one night, the cupbearer and the baker each had a dream. They were very strange dreams, and the next morning, they were both very upset. When Joseph came to see them, they both looked really sad. So Joseph asked them, "Why are both of you looking so sad?"

They answered, "We've both had dreams, but there is no one to tell us what they mean."

Then Joseph said, "Can't God interpret all dreams? Why don't you tell me what they are and maybe God will give me the meaning." Joseph knew that everything he had and everything he could do came from God.

The Cupbearer's Dream

So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. [Pretend to be the cupbearer and use a cup as a prop as you tell this part of the story.] "I saw a grapevine with three branches. All of a sudden, leaves began to grow on the branches, and then blossom, and then grow grapes. When the grapes were ripe, I picked some and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and brought it to him."

Joseph interpreted the dream, saying, "This is what your dream means. The three branches are three days. Within three days, Pharaoh will give you your job back, and you will serve him as you did before."

Joseph also said, "When you are back serving in Pharaoh's house, please remember me. Put in a good word for me with Pharaoh, and help me get out of prison because I did nothing wrong."

The Baker's Dream

When the chief baker saw that the cupbearer's dream had been interpreted, he also quickly told Joseph his own dream. [Pretend to be the baker and use a basket or bread as a prop as you tell this part of the story.]

He said to Joseph, "I also had a dream. On my head were three baskets. The top one had all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds kept on eating them."

Joseph said, "This is what it means. The three baskets are three days. Within three days, you will be hanged, and birds will come and eat away your flesh."

God had helped Joseph interpret the two prisoners' dreams. Three days later, Pharaoh held a party for his birthday, and everything happened just as Joseph had said. What happened to the two men? The ... [hold up cup and let students guess] (chief cupbearer) was given back his job and the ... [hold up basket] (chief baker) was hanged.

When the cupbearer returned to the palace, he was supposed to do something. Can you remember what it was? [Allow students to respond.] He was supposed to tell Pharaoh about Joseph! But he forgot what Joseph had asked him to do; he forgot to tell Pharaoh about him.

Pharaoh's Dreams

Two years went by, and Joseph was still in prison. That's a long time to be sitting in jail! Joseph must have prayed every day for God to help him.

Day in and day out he saw the sunshine come in through the barred windows. All that time, Joseph heard nothing from the cupbearer, who had forgotten about Joseph. The cupbearer might have forgotten about Joseph, but God hadn't! One night in the palace, Pharaoh had a dream. In his dream he was standing by the Nile River, when all of a sudden he saw seven cows come up from the river. These were seven big, fat cows, and they began to munch on the grass by the riverbank.

But then, he saw seven different cows come up from the river. These cows were all thin and ugly. They looked hungry enough to eat another cow.

And that's just what they did. The seven thin and ugly cows ate the seven fat cows! Then Pharaoh woke up.

After a while, he fell asleep again and had a second dream.

There were seven good, healthy heads of grain growing on a stalk. After them, there were seven other heads of grain, but they were thin and burnt. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy heads.

In the morning, Pharaoh woke up troubled. He didn't understand his dreams. He was really bothered because he couldn't figure out what they meant. He called all his servants in the palace to find someone who could tell him what his dreams meant.

All the magicians, wizards, and wise men came to listen to Pharaoh as he told them about his dreams. They looked at charts, drew pictures on their scrolls, and then shook their heads. Did they understand the dreams? No, they did not know what the dreams meant. But there was someone in Pharaoh's palace that knew someone who could interpret dreams! Yes, the cupbearer!

The royal cupbearer would often stand next to Pharaoh. He made sure Pharaoh's cup stayed full of wine. So when the cupbearer saw what was happening, he remembered a promise he had made. He must have felt terrible that he had forgotten Joseph for so long.

"Pharaoh," the cupbearer said. "A long time ago when I was in prison with the baker, I met a Hebrew slave. We both had dreams and he told us what our dreams meant. Everything that he said would happen, happened!"

Joseph Is Sent to Interpret the Dreams

So Pharaoh commanded that Joseph be sent to him. They quickly brought Joseph out of the dungeon. To meet Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, you couldn't just wear your

filthy, smelly clothes from prison and stand in front of him! So Joseph was allowed to shave and change his clothing, and he was brought to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard that you can understand and interpret dreams."

Joseph said, "It is not me, but God who will give Pharaoh an answer."

So Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams, and Joseph explained what they meant. "The two dreams actually mean the same thing. God has shown you through a dream what He is about to do. The seven fat cows and the seven healthy heads of grain mean seven years of plenty throughout the land of Egypt. We will have more food in Egypt than we have ever seen before. But after the seven years of plenty, there will be seven years of famine, and many people will suffer and die from it. God has given you these two dreams to let you know that He will do these things shortly."

Joseph continued, "What you should do is store up all of the extra food during the seven good years, and you will have enough for the seven years of famine that follow, then the people will not suffer. Choose someone to be put in charge of all of this, and Egypt will not be ruined by the famine."

Joseph Is Put In Charge of All Egypt

When Pharaoh and all his servants heard Joseph's advice, they all thought it was good. The plan seemed great to

Pharaoh, and he said, "What better man to be put in charge than you, Joseph? You are a man in whom is the Spirit of God. God has made all of this known to you; there is no one as wise as you. You will be in charge of my palace, and you will rule all of the people. Only I will be greater than you."

So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all of Egypt. He took the ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's hand. The ring represented authority and power. He dressed Joseph in fine clothes and gave him a gold necklace. God had raised Joseph to the position of a ruler from a slave.

Boys and girls, after being sold to Egypt, Joseph worked as a slave and was thrown into prison for so many years. However, Joseph didn't lose heart and continued to trust and believe in God. He knew that God was with him everywhere he went. There were many tough times when he suffered. However, he waited and waited for God's timing. He was patient, calm, and faithful to God.

He listened to God and only did what was pleasing in the sight of God. Because of this, God blessed him greatly! And to think, just the day before, Joseph was still in prison, wearing dirty clothes, sitting in the dust and dirt of a dark prison floor. How quickly things can change when God is at work!

When things are bad and it seems like there is nothing but trouble, we never know what surprises God has waiting for us. Let's try to be more like Joseph and always remember that God is our refuge and strength. He will never leave us and He will help us in times of trouble.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- 1. How did God bless Joseph when he was in prison?** He made everything Joseph do turn out well, so the keeper of the prison put him in charge of everything.
- 2. What did the dreams of the cupbearer and baker mean?** The cupbearer would be given back his job, but the baker would be hanged.
- 3. What did Joseph ask the cupbearer to do when he returned?** To remember him and tell Pharaoh about him.
- 4. Why did Pharaoh send for Joseph?** He needed Joseph to interpret his dreams.
- 5. What were Pharaoh's dreams about?** The seven fat cows and the seven healthy heads of grain meant seven years of plenty. Then, there would be seven years of famine and many people would suffer and die from it.
- 6. What was Joseph's solution to this great famine?** He suggested that Pharaoh save up food during the seven years of plenty so that the spare food could be used during the seven years of famine that followed.
- 7. After Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, what did Pharaoh do?** He put Joseph in charge of all of Egypt.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. A patient and hopeful one; we should trust and have faith in God.
2. Rely on God through prayers and ask Him to help.
3. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)
4. False; the seven skinny cows ate the seven fat cows.
5. True
6. False; Joseph said it was God who had the power to interpret dreams.
7. B
8. A
9. a. dungeon b. forgot c. God, throne
10. Answers may vary. Pray for and with them; offer help; care for them.

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

1. Pray daily to God and ask Him for wisdom.

What Is Wisdom?

What is wisdom? True wisdom is found in the Bible. True biblical wisdom is the ability to pursue godliness, which is profitable in this age and in the age to come (1 Tim 4:8). True wisdom is an attribute of God. It is the ability to be successful when facing temptation by saying "no" to sin and "yes" to the will of God. It is the ability to discern right from wrong. It is the ability to give proper judgment. In today's story, Pharaoh summoned Joseph from the prison to interpret his dreams. It was obvious that Pharaoh was amazed and astonished by Joseph's wise solution to the problem. Joseph indeed had the wisdom to interpret dreams, which none of Pharaoh's wise men could do.

Where did Joseph's wisdom come from? It had to come from God. "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (Ex 31:3). Isn't it wonderful that God can fill us with His wisdom and understanding in many areas of our lives?

Ask for Wisdom

We need a lot of wisdom. We cannot live without wisdom. When troubles come, we murmur and complain. We become unhappy with one another. All of these indicate a lack of wisdom in our lives. Without wisdom, we fail to understand what is happening to us and around us. Without wisdom, we cannot choose the right way to glorify God in our daily lives. So how do we obtain this wisdom? First, James 1:5 records that we must ask God for wisdom. James uses the present tense of the verb, meaning that we must keep on asking. As a child asks his father, we must continually ask God for wisdom. James encourages us to ask God for wisdom, telling us that God will give it generously. Then he informs us that God gives wisdom to all who ask Him. God will not find fault with you when you come to Him for wisdom. Every child of God is encouraged to pray, and James promises that God will give generously to everyone who asks.

God is not going to say, "I am really tired of you making the same mistake over and over again. You will never improve. In fact, you have never amounted to anything. You are just nothing." Does God do this when we ask for wisdom? No. When we confess our sins to God in prayer, God hears our prayer and He cleanses us from all sins. God delights in our coming to Him and asking for wisdom.

2. Pray daily to God and trust in Him and His word

Trust in God and Find Wisdom in His Word

James says that when you come to God, be sure that you come trusting in Him. Hebrews 11:6 says, "For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." We must have confidence that our God will truly respond to our need for wisdom. We must tell Him, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and those who fear God are the ones who come in true submission to pray to God, confessing, "O God, You are wisdom. I have nothing; give me wisdom." God will respond to that kind of prayer. Having the fear of the Lord means that we pray to God and listen to Him reveal wisdom for us in His word, which is the Bible! Let's read Deuteronomy 4:5-6, "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; **for this is your wisdom** and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" Please underline the word "wisdom." When we pray and read the Bible, we are receiving from Him the word of God, which is life, direction, light, and **wisdom**.

ACTIVITIES

1 Acting Out

Objective: To review the contents of this lesson's Bible story.

Instructions

1. Have the class act out the story of Pharaoh's dream to the others.
2. Assign parts to students. Characters needed:

- Pharaoh
- Cupbearer
- Joseph
- One or two students for **seven fat cows**
- One or two students for **seven ugly cows**
- One or two students for **seven good heads of grain**
- One or two students for **seven thin heads of grain**

3. Use children's Bibles so that students know what to say and when to say their lines.
4. The teacher can act as the narrator to direct and control the flow of the play.

Optional: If time allows, have fun making a few props for the play, such as masks for the fat cows, thin cows, good heads of grain, and thin heads of grain.

2 Your Own Picture of Pharaoh's Dreams

Objective: To review the contents of this lesson's Bible story through a drawing.

Materials

- Construction paper
- Crayons and/or markers
- Glue
- Yarn; other scraps
- Scissors

Instructions

1. Provide art supplies and ask the students to draw a picture that in some way illustrates Pharaoh's dreams.
2. This can be a class art project where they all work on the same drawing, or the students can split into two groups and each group take one of the dreams. It can also be an individual piece of art.

3 Joseph Interprets Dreams

Objective: To review the dreams that Joseph interpreted.

Instructions

1. Set up three "bases" in the classroom (or outside) that the students can run to safely. Name the three different bases, "Cupbearer," "Baker," and "Pharaoh."
2. Prepare words that are associated with the three different dreams that the three different people had.
3. When you say the word, students should run to the base they think is associated with that person.
For example: The word "cow"—students should run to the Pharaoh base. The word "bread"—students should run to the Baker base.

Note: If room does not permit, replace the running with actions. For example, if it's the baker, they can put their left hand up; if it is the cupbearer, they can put their right hand up; if it is Pharaoh, they can stand up; etc.

E1 Year 1 Book 2 Lesson 6—Joseph Interprets Dreams

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truth: God is always with us even when we encounter difficulties.

- Lesson Objectives:**
1. To have faith in God because God cares for us.
 2. To learn that God is the one who gives wisdom.
 3. To rely on God even under difficult situations.

Bible Reading: Please put a checkmark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a checkmark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Psalm 46:1)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

Short Answer

1. If you are praying for something and haven't received it yet, what kind of attitude do you think you should have while waiting?

2. When you know times of trouble are coming, how should you prepare yourself?

3. Write down the memory verse without looking.

True or False

4. The seven fat cows ate the seven skinny cows. _____

5. The baker was hanged and the cupbearer was returned to the palace. _____

6. Joseph told people he had a great gift for being able to interpret the dreams. _____

Multiple Choice

7. _____ : How many baskets did the baker have in his dream?

- a. Two
- b. Three
- c. Four

8. _____ : The three branches in the cupbearer's dream represented:

- a. Three days
- b. Three weeks
- c. Three months

9. Circle the correct answer (use the Bible references to help you):

- a. Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the (DUNGEON, PALACE); and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. (Gen 41:14)
- b. Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but (FORGOT, FORGAVE) him. (Gen 40:23)
- c. After Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as (GOD, MAN) has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you." (Gen 41:38-39)

10. Have you ever wondered how you can help someone who is in trouble? Talk to your family members this week and ask about a time when they were in trouble and how God helped them. List three things you think you could have done to help them when they were in trouble.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____