

## Lesson 030

### Joseph In Prison

Genesis 40:1 → 41:57

#### **MEMORY VERSE**

MATTHEW 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

#### **WHAT YOU WILL NEED:**

- As many interview sheets as the number of children in your class, pencils and chairs.
- A basket, fake or real groceries, some grocery lists, and a timer.
- A tape of jungle or Caribbean music.

#### **ATTENTION GRABBER!**

Interview a Friend

- Keep the interview a secret until partners are chosen. You can choose partners by placing chairs in the room back-to-back and playing "musical chairs." But in this case, there will be the exact number of chairs necessary for everyone to sit on.
- When the music stops have everyone sit down, then have them turn the chairs around to interview the person sitting opposite them. This way you will not have only friends pairing up.
- Give each child a pencil and a copy of the provided interview sheet. Have them ask the questions on the sheet and write down the answers.
- When the whole class is done, collect all of the sheets, allow some of the students to introduce their interviewee to the class. See how many of the questions they remember the answers to. Can anyone remember the answers to ALL of the questions about their partner?
- When a few introductions have been made, point out that even though we cannot remember all of the answers to questions we have just asked, God will always remember everything. He knows us perfectly and God never forgets us. It may have seemed that Joseph, now in prison, was forgotten by all. But God did not forget. He knew just where Joseph was and had a good plan for Joseph's future.

## **LESSON TIME!**

In our last lesson, the false accusations of Potiphar's wife had put Joseph in prison. God was faithful to Joseph, even in this difficult time, and the prison keeper put Joseph in charge of the other prisoners.

We do not know how long Joseph remained in prison. He was seventeen years old when he was sent down into the land of Egypt and thirty years old when he was summoned before Pharaoh. He must have spent thirteen years total in Potiphar's house and in prison. In our own understanding, it may have seemed like a sad waste for a bright young man to spend such a long time in servitude and in prison. In God's planning, however, Joseph's time in prison was not a waste at all; rather, it was necessary preparation for the great work God had in store for him. When God judged Joseph seasoned and ready and the timing was right, God would begin to change circumstances for Joseph and His marvelous plan would begin to unfold.

As God was always with Joseph, God is always with us; He will never leave us or forsake us. We cannot get away from God even if we try; He is always with us. He is there when it feels like we are all alone or feels like we are locked up in prison. Not only is God with us, but all the circumstances of our life are working together for good (Romans 8:28). God never forgets us.

### *GENESIS 40*

*It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. 3 So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined. 4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.*

*5 Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation. 6 And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them and saw that they were sad. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?" 8 And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it." So, Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please."*

*9 Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, 10 and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. 11 Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."*

*12 And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. 13 Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler. 14 But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. 15 For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also, I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.*

*16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, "I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head. 17 In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head."*

*18 So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. 19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you."*

*20 Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. 21 Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. 22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph but forgot him.*

Although Joseph probably spent several years in prison, only one event is recorded--probably, because it led to Joseph eventually being freed from prison.

The Pharaoh's butler and baker were thrown into the prison where Joseph was. The butler was the overseer of Pharaoh's vineyards and wine cellar as well as his cupbearer. He was responsible to see that all drinks served to the King were both safe and of the best quality. Likewise, the baker was responsible for the food served to the King. The butler and the baker had somehow offended Pharaoh and were thrown into the same prison as Joseph.

It does not say what their crimes were, but it is very possible that it was a capital offense, because the baker lost his head over the matter. One night, they each had dreams that really troubled them. The Egyptians always believed that dreams were symbolic of something that would happen. Both men had dreams concerning the positions they held for Pharaoh. Neither knew whether the dreams had a good or bad meaning. When Joseph came to check on them in the morning, they were obviously upset. When Joseph questioned their sad appearance, they told him of their dreams and confusion. Joseph informed them that the interpretations of dreams belong to God. He asked them to tell him their dreams.

The chief butler reported his dream and received Joseph's interpretation. In his dream, there was a vine with three branches. As he dreamed, he observed the branches budding, blossoming, and finally bearing luscious bunches of grapes. The grapes were immediately ready for plucking, so the butler dreamed that he picked them and then pressed the grape juice from them into Pharaoh's cup, which had mysteriously appeared into his hand.

Joseph's divine revelation told him that the three branches represented three days, and this meant that in three days he would be released from prison and restored to his former office. The butler was happy at the revelation. Joseph asked him to remember him before Pharaoh, for he was kidnapped and was innocent of any wrongdoing.

The baker hearing the favorable report given to the butler told Joseph about his dream. In his dream he was carrying baskets of baked goods on his head to Pharaoh. Birds came and ate the baked goods out of the baskets. However, the interpretation Joseph received was entirely different than that of the butler's. The three baskets again represented three days, but instead of being reinstated at that time, his very head would be removed from his body and his body hung on a tree. Instead of the birds eating at Pharaoh's bread, they would be eating his flesh.

The interpretations had come to pass exactly as Joseph had said. Joseph's hope of being released went with the butler, but the Bible says the butler forgot him. We know that God did not forget him. God never forgets us.

#### *GENESIS 41: 1- 13*

*Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river. 2 Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. 3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the river. 4 And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke. 5 He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good. 6 Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. 7 And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, it was a dream. 8 Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.*

*9 Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker, 11 we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to*

*the interpretation of his own dream. 12 Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his own dream. 13 And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him."*

So, Joseph continued in the prison for two more years. We are not told if Joseph became discouraged in all this time, but we know that he kept his faith in God. Let us remember to trust God in those times we could easily become discouraged. God has not forgotten us; He has a plan in store for our lives. God never forgets us.

Pharaoh had two dreams that troubled him greatly, especially since none of Pharaoh's wise men or magicians could interpret the dream. He dreamed that seven plump healthy cows were standing half submerged in the water and then came out of the water for pasture. Seven ugly thin cows came up and devoured the seven fat cows.

The second dream had a similar meaning. Seven plump ears of corn on a single stalk were swallowed up by seven thin and scorched ears of corn that sprouted after them.

It was then that the chief butler finally remembered Joseph. Knowing Joseph's ability to interpret dreams, he told Pharaoh the two-year old story about his time in prison when Pharaoh had been angry with him and the baker; he told him of the troubling dreams both he and the butler had. He explained that "Joseph" interpreted the dreams precisely; everything he said came to pass.

God's master plan is now seen unfolding. If Joseph had been released from prison when the butler was released, Pharaoh would not have yet had this dream. Who knows where Joseph would be, perhaps back with his family?

*GENESIS 41: 14- 44*

*14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."*

*17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. 18 Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. 19 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. 21 When*

*they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. 23 Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. 24 And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So, I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”*

*25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29 Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; 30 but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. 31 So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. 32 And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.*

*33 “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”*

*37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”*

*39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.” 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, “Bow the knee!” So, he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”*

Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Joseph was taken out of jail and made presentable before Pharaoh. As Joseph stood before the King, he maintained that same attitude of dependence on God, declaring that it was not him, but God who would give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

Pharaoh then told his dreams to Joseph; and without hesitation, he interpreted the dreams for Pharaoh, adding to his interpretation the advice that he should appoint officers and conserve the plenty of the first seven years in order to supply the need for the next seven.

After Joseph interpreted the dreams and advised the Pharaoh, the Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was a man who had the Spirit of God (a man who spoke under God's direction). He appointed Joseph to a great position of authority. He would be first in the kingdom. Only Pharaoh was more powerful.

The appointment of power was then followed by Pharaoh placing on the hand of Joseph his own signet ring, giving him fine linen clothing, placing a gold chain around his neck, and permitting him to ride in the second chariot.

God can certainly change everything for us in an instant. God does not forget about us and will work all things together for good in our lives (Romans 8:28).

### **Grocery Goof-ups!**

You will need a basket, fake or real groceries, some grocery lists, and a timer. Set the items in rows around the room to represent the shelves in a grocery store.

Ask your class, "As much as your mothers love you, have they ever forgotten something you wanted or needed from the store?" The answer will most probably be affirmative. Have your students pick a grocery list from several options you provide. They must read the list and give it back to you. Then have them "shop" for the items they must remember. You can make this as difficult as is age appropriate. Set the timer for 30 seconds and let them shop. Compare the items they have collected with the lists they turned in.

When your students are done shopping, explain that it's easy to forget an occasional item or two when there are so many items to remember, but God never forgets. He is always thinking of us and working circumstances together for good in our lives. *God never forgets us.*

God had not forgotten His faithful servant, Joseph. He had an incredible plan for his life.

*GENESIS 41: 45- 57 [No need to read this part in class, just give the summary]*

*45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So, Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.*

*46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47 Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. 48 So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. 49 Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable.*

*50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

*53 Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do." 56 The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. 57 So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.*

Pharaoh then gave Joseph the name "Zaphenath-paneah." He gave Joseph a wife, "Asenath," who was the daughter of an Egyptian priest in the land of On (the "city of the sun" and the great educational center of Egypt).

Joseph was thirty years old at this time and his position gave him the opportunity to travel all over Egypt. Pharaoh's dreams were coming to pass; the land was producing abundant crops for seven years, and Joseph put them into storage in the Egyptian cities.

Joseph gave two sons which he gave Hebrew names, the first he named Manasseh, which means "forget," because God had made him forget the misery of his separation from his family. The second he named Ephraim, which means "fruitful," because God had made him fruitful in the land of Egypt.

Joseph's wisdom was from the Lord; the seven good years were indeed followed by the seven years of famine. Not only did the Egyptians come and buy grain, but people from all over the land came to buy grain.

Look once more at Joseph's life. His brothers' hatred led them to sell him to a caravan going to Egypt. In Egypt, he was made a slave and took care of Potiphar's house; he was faithful in doing his best and God blessed him. He was also faithful in doing his best while in prison, so he was blessed and made head over the prisoners. Just think of how Joseph learned organization and



management at Potiphar's house. He learned to deal with people in prison. Certainly, in a leadership position, second in command over the whole land of Egypt, he could use any skills he acquired in management and in dealing with people. Remember, God used Joseph to warn the people of Egypt of the approaching famine—many lives were saved.

And, as Joseph assumes the position God prepared for him, we will see still more of God's wonderful plan for him unfold; in our next lesson, we will see Joseph reunited with the family he had not seen since he was carried away into Egypt. God never forgot Joseph, even when circumstances looked the bleakest. God had a plan for Joseph's life. God's ways are truly awesome! **God never forgets us.**

As God had a special plan for Joseph, so He has a special plan for our lives. Sometimes our problems seem huge, and we can lose sight of God's promise to work circumstances in our lives for good. We need to remember that God is still in control and that **God never forgets us.**

### **Jungle Bungle**

Seat your students in a circle. Tell them you will be testing their memories to see if they can remember as well as God can. If it is available, play a tape of jungle music (African, Indian, or Australian stuff will do). Have them tell you their favorite jungle animals to spark some enthusiasm. Then begin the game.

Going around the circle have the first child make a jungle animal sound, then have the second child make the first sound and add his own sound. The third child repeats the first and the second sound and then adds his own. Repeat this around the circle. If anyone forgets the sounds, he must point his index finger and touch his hand to his forehead to represent an elephant's trunk. They must keep their trunk up while the whole class repeats the sounds to help him. Go around the class, maybe even a couple of times depending on class size and time.

Explain to the class that it's difficult to remember when there are so many things to remember, but God never forgets any of us ever. As many people as there are in the whole world, He knows the number of hairs on each head...and that's always changing! **God never forgets us.**

### **PRAYER**

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's continual remembrance of His children.

