

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

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Year 1: Session 2 – Getting to know Joseph / How Israel settles in Egypt

Class 5: Genesis 42:1-26, 29a, 36-37- *Joseph's own dreams come true*

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Give background on Joseph's journey up to this point in his story
- Demonstrate how putting things back together is not easy, especially relationships, then look at and discuss the likely reasons why Joseph treats his brothers the ways that he does
- Encourage the class to think about and discuss the following question: "Do you think Joseph is acting more like the son of Jacob or the son of Israel at this point?"

Materials needed

- Movie clip (from *Hoodwinked* – clip is available on rfour.org for streaming)
- Electronics that show the movie
- One banana per two students
- A paper plate for every banana
- Plastic or dinner knives (to cut the bananas with)
- Scotch tape and toothpicks to use to put the bananas back together again

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today's class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here's this week's question:* What kind of gift, if money wasn't a concern, would you like to give to a family member (not yourself)? Feel free to share why you want to give that gift as well.

REVIEW

- Last week we started our second session of the school year. And it's about Joseph, one of Jacob's sons.
- When we first met him, he was young, stuck up, and quite annoying. He was Jacob's (aka Israel) favorite son. Overall, he had an easy life.
- But, his brothers REALLY did not like him.
- And, because his brothers lacked basic problem solving skills, they decided that the best plan of action was to KILL Joseph! Yikes! But then they decided it was better to sell Joseph into slavery (in Egypt) when he was 17.
- For 13 years, then Joseph lived as a slave and then in prison.
- When he was 30, Pharaoh had two dreams and due to some previous experiences, Joseph was called upon to interpret these dreams.
- Turns out Pharaoh's dreams foretold of 7 good years of crops followed by 7 bad years of crops (aka famine).
- Joseph proposed a plan and Pharaoh not only agreed with the plan, but put Joseph in charge. In a matter of 30 minutes or so, Joseph went from prisoner to second most powerful person in the most powerful country in the world (at that time)

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- It turns out that Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams turned out to be right.
- And Joseph's plan was working out well, too.
- Today's story picks up/starts sometime during those famine years.
- And guess who comes to visit? That's right. Joseph's brothers.
- How do you think that's going to go?
- Remember how Jacob dealt with reuniting with Esau? – It wasn't easy for him.
- To help us think about what kind of situation Joseph and his brothers are dealing with, here, let's watch this brief clip from the movie "Hoodwinked."

WATCH VIDEO CLIP

ASK

- What did the "candles" turn out to be? (dynamite or ... *deen-ah-meet-a, must be Italian or something*)
- So a seemingly innocent trip suddenly turned out to be a dangerous and explosive situation, wouldn't you say?
- How did the characters deal with/defuse the situation? (they eventually threw the dynamite out of the car)
- How well did that work? (Well, they didn't die, but they ruined the track and the folks in the cart(s) behind them didn't seem very happy)

TRANSITION to SCRIPTURE STORY

- As we're going to see, Joseph and his brothers are also about to find themselves in an explosive situation.
- And just like the squirrel didn't really realize what was happening, we'll see that the brothers don't really know/understand what's going on.
- Let's see if anything blows up...

READ Genesis 42:1-26, 29a, 36-37 (recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)

1 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you keep looking at one another? **2** I have heard," he said, "that there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." **3** So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. **4** But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he feared that harm might come to him. **5** Thus the sons of Israel were among the other people who came to buy grain, for the famine had reached the land of Canaan. **6** Now Joseph was governor over the land; it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. **7** When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." **8** Although Joseph had recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. **9** Joseph also remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them. He said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land!" **10** They said to him, "No, my lord; your servants have come to buy food. **11** We are all sons of one man; we are honest men; your servants have never been spies." **12** But he said to them, "No, you have come to see the nakedness of the land!" **13** They said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of a certain man in the land of Canaan; the youngest, however, is now with our father, and one is no more." **14** But Joseph said to them, "It is just as I have said to you; you are spies! **15** Here is how you shall be tested: as Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here! **16** Let one of you go and bring your brother, while the rest of you remain in prison, in order that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you; or else, as Pharaoh lives, surely you are spies." **17** And he put them all together in prison for three days. **18** On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: **19** if you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here where you are imprisoned. The rest of you shall go and carry grain for the famine of your households, **20** and bring your youngest brother to me. Thus your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they agreed to do so. **21** They said to one another, "Alas, we are paying the penalty for what we did to our brother; we saw his anguish when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish has come upon us." **22** Then Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood." **23** They did not know that Joseph understood them, since he spoke with them through an interpreter. **24** He turned away from them and wept; then he returned and spoke to them. And he picked out Simeon and had him bound before their eyes. **25** Joseph then gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to return every man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. This was done for them. **26** They loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed.

29a When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them

36 And their father Jacob said to them, "I am the one you have bereaved of children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has happened to me!" **37** Then Reuben said to his father, "You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him [Benjamin] back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."

ASK

- Verse 1 – why do the brothers go to Egypt (because Jacob/Israel sends them to get food)
- Verse 1 -- Does it seem that maybe the brothers are reluctant to go to Egypt? (Hard to tell, but the “what are you looking at each other for” line suggests that the brothers don’t want to go to the place where they sold their brother – they might run into him!)

- Verse 3 and 4: Who does and does not go? (the 10 brothers, the ones who sold Joseph, go – and Benjamin (who was not part of the 10) stays)
- Verse 6 – what do the brothers do? (bow down to Joseph)
- Does this remind you of anything? (Joseph’s dreams that he told his brothers about from two lessons ago)
- Verse 7 – does Joseph recognize his brothers? (Yes)
- Verse 8 – do the 10 brothers recognize Joseph? (No)
- Verse 9 – what does Joseph accuse the 10 brothers of? (being spies)
- Verse 17 – what does Joseph do to his brothers? (he puts them in jail)
- Why do you think he does this? (all sorts of possible reasons: Revenge, catharsis, help them see what they put Joseph through/empathy, to scare them into bringing Benjamin)
- Verse 19 and 20 – what is Joseph’s demand of the brothers (to prove that they are not spies and were telling the truth, one of the brothers has to stay behind. Then when they return for the one that stayed behind, they are to bring the other brother, the youngest – Benjamin)
- Verse 20 – how do the brothers interpret the time in prison and one of the brothers having to remain behind? (that they are being punished for selling Joseph)
- Verse 22 – what does Reuben tell the brothers? (that they should have listened to him)
- Verse 23 – do the brothers think Joseph can understand them (no – they don’t know he can speak their language)
- Verse 24 – how does Joseph respond to hearing his brothers talk about him? (it’s hard on him. He cries.)
- Verse 25 – what gift does Joseph give to his brothers (he doesn’t let them pay for the food; he puts their money back into their bags)
- Verse 37 – what is Reuben’s promise to his father about Benjamin?
- So what do you think: Is Joseph dealing with this explosive situation any better or worse than the wolf was in the movie clip? Why do you think that?

TELL

ABOUT JOSEPH

- It’s hard to tell why Joseph is doing what he’s doing because we’re not being told Joseph’s thoughts
- Does he throw them in jail just because he wants to? Because he’s still so angry at them?
- Yes, that’s possible.
- But think of all the things he COULD have done to them: Torture them. Kill them. But he doesn’t do those things.
- So, most likely, Joseph is doing two things by throwing his brothers in prison.
 1. He’s scaring them so that they know he means business about bringing Benjamin back
 2. And, if they ever DO realize that he’s Joseph, then they will also realize how much power he had, and how easy he went on them – that will help them to trust him, to know that he’s not super SUPER angry at them.
- The thing Joseph is doing with Benjamin is that he wants to see if his brothers have learned anything since he last saw them 20 years ago, since they sold him.
- So he’s setting up a situation that is similar to last time: Will the 10 grab at and hold to their own self-interests or have they learned to function differently and will choose to defend/hold on to their brother?

ABOUT JOSEPH AND JACOB

- Let’s note the similarities between Joseph and Jacob.

- Joseph and his brothers learned from Jacob how to be selfish, how to grab for things to make those things their own. But in the selfish grabbing, they then destroy relationships and their own family because of it.
- Jacob did it and then his sons did it.
- But now, it's been 13 years of slavery/prison for Joseph plus 7 years of good crops and maybe 6 months to 12 months bad crops. So, the math is not perfect, but it is roughly 20 years since Joseph has seen his brothers...which is how long Jacob was away from Esau before they reconciled.
- So maybe Joseph, in his paying attention to God, is also clear about how to reconcile with his brothers. Maybe Joseph is acting like a son of Israel, instead of a son of Jacob.
- We also see Reuben becoming more forceful in his talking to his brothers and to his father. At least one brother has learned something – and Joseph gets to see at least part of that aspect in his brother.

THIS TREND CONTINUES

- Relationships are fragile. They can be easily broken. And they are difficult to put back together.
- We see this trend throughout the story of Jacob's family, aka Israel. We see this tendency to break relationships due to issues borne of grabbing selfishly at wants and in fear
- We saw it with Jacob and Esau.
- We saw it between Joseph and his brothers.
- Here are some other Israel stories where it happens, too:
 - Between Moses and the Israelites
 - When King Solomon dies and two different kings grab at the Kingdom of Israel and it splits into the two kingdoms
 - When the Pharisees turn on Jesus
 - When the Pharisees turn on Paul and the Apostles/disciples eventually causing the Church to split away from Israel.
- Unfortunately, it doesn't stop there. Today, we see it in Christianity...there are over 20,000 Christian denominations today. Each denomination is a divide, a section that has broken apart from something larger.
- What we see in these very early stories is that God desires for those relationships to be healed, not broken.
- But that's no easy thing.
- To help us think about how breaking things is much much easier than putting things back together... we're going to do an activity now.

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- We're going to get into teams of twos and threes.
- Each team gets a banana.
- First thing to do is to peel it and then cut the banana into 7 equal pieces
- *[wait for the teams to do this]*
- Next, here is some tape and toothpicks.
- You now have 7 minutes to get the banana put back together again.
- Team with the best-looking banana (aka a banana that looks like it wasn't cut up) wins
- Note to teachers: Consider giving out some of the unused bananas as prizes

DO Banana ACTIVITY

ASK / TELL

- Was it easier to cut the banana up or put it back together?
- This activity is meant to help us think about relationships.
- Relationships are pretty fragile things that are much easier to destroy than they are to put back together again.
- We saw Jacob wrestle with God before he could reunite with his brother, Esau
- And now we're seeing Joseph struggle with how to reunite with his brothers
- Which is a reminder that though we might be able put things back together on our own, why not invite and receive God's help to put broken relationships back together?
- Next lesson, we will see if Joseph is able to reconcile with his brothers like Jacob reconciled with Esau ... or will the family stay broken apart?

CLOSING PRAYER