

## Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

**rfour.org**

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

**Class 6:** Genesis 44:1-4, 12-18, 33-34; 45:1-16 - *Joseph tests his brothers*

### CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Give background on Joseph’s journey up to this point in his story
- Concept and purpose of testing as seen in this lesson’s scripture story
- Demonstration to help students think about how God helps with healing relationships”

### Materials needed

- Movie clip (from *October Sky* – can be viewed on rfour.org)
- Electronics that show the movie
- Magic trick teaching video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIICLWNkGeQ>)
- An arm’s length of rope and a pair of scissors for each student, plus a few extra because of mistakes (time to go to the hardware store and get a 100 ft of “rope” – it can’t be string or that plastic clothesline, but it doesn’t need to be very thick rope, either. I find the cotton clothesline to work well. Cost as of 2015 was between \$10 to \$20 – here’s a an [example from amazon.com](#))
- An arm’s length of rope and a pair of scissors for teacher
- Note: The youtube video shows and then teaches how to do a magic trick. I *strongly* recommend that you watch the video and learn how to do the trick yourself so that you can
  1. Do the demonstration yourself instead of doing a voiceover of the video (though that will work) and
  2. Can help the students learn how to do the trick when they get stuck (the ends of the rope part of the trick is tricky for younger minds)

## 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: Have you ever done something where you get angry at yourself for doing something (or not doing something)? What is it and why do you get angry at yourself for it? (Note: this could be a tough one for the kids to answer – might need to encourage them to think about certain things they are trying to accomplish, but then fall short – maybe getting something right in a video game or a sports practice or a music piece. Also, chores at home or trying to not forget something -- like money for picture day -- or leaving a book at school when you were supposed to study it at home, etc. )*

## **TRANSITION TO VIDEO CLIP**

- In today's story, we're going to see Joseph set up a situation for his brothers that will be similar to when they sold him into slavery – they will have to choose between their own self-interests or for caring for their younger brother.
- Joseph is doing this to see if they've learned anything since they sold him 20 years (or so) ago.
- To help us think about how we use repetitive events to analyze/determine if someone is learning / has learned something, let's watch the following movie clip.
- The clip is from the movie, "October Sky," where 4 high school students are attempting to successfully launch a model rocket.
- The clip starts with them taking railroad tracks into the local dump, where they get money for the iron. They then use this money to buy the materials for their model rockets. Just to be clear, this is NOT a recommended way to make money.
- Let's see how their rocket launch tests go.

## **WATCH MOVIE CLIP**

### **ASK/TELL**

- Did the boys successfully launch the rocket? (nope)
- Do you think they are learning things from their failed attempts? (yes)
- Why do you think they are learning things? (their rocket launches were actually going into the air rather than just exploding right away)
- If they keep at it, do you think that they will eventually be successful? (probably – and yes, by the end of the movie, they are successful with their launch)
- So, to summarize what we've just done by talking about this movie clip: By comparing the results of students' similar, but repeated attempts, we were able to see the improvement made by the students – to the point that we were willing to project/give an educated guess that they would someday be successful at what they were attempting to do.
- As we'll see, Joseph does a similar thing with his brothers in today's scripture story.

## **REVIEW/Transition to story**

- A quick review about Joseph up to this point...
- When we first met him, he was young, stuck up, and quite annoying. He was Jacob's (aka Israel's) favorite son. Overall, he had an easy life.
- But, then, his brothers sold him into slavery.
- For the next 13 years, Joseph lived as a slave and then in prison.

- When Joseph was 30 yrs old, Pharaoh had two dreams and, due to some previous experiences, Joseph was called upon to interpret these dreams.
- Joseph interpreted the dreams to mean there would be really good crops and then really bad crops. He then proposed a plan. 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)
- About 7 yrs after Joseph's promotion, and 20 years after being sold into slavery, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for food and met Joseph. Although they did not recognize him, he *did* recognize them.
- He held one brother (Simeon) prisoner and told them they had to bring Benjamin (their youngest brother) to Egypt to get Simeon released.
- In today's story, the brothers have returned to Egypt with Benjamin. Joseph throws them a celebrative dinner and releases Simeon.
- Today's story takes place right after this feast ends. It is important to remember that the brothers still don't know that Joseph is Joseph.
- And, like the movie clip we just watched that showed the repetition of a similar event, the brothers are going to experience a similar situation with Benjamin that they experienced with Joseph. It's like a test.
- Let's see if Joseph thinks they've learned anything or not.

**READ Genesis 44:1-4, 12-18, 33-34; 45:1-16** (recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)

Then [Joseph] commanded the steward of his house, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the top of his sack. **2** Put my cup, the silver cup, in the top of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph told him. **3** As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys. **4** When they had gone only a short distance from the city, Joseph said to his steward, "Go, follow after the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, "Why have you returned evil for good? Why have you stolen my silver cup?

**12** He searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. **13** At this they tore their clothes. Then each one loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city. **14** Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house while he was still there; and they fell to the ground before him. **15** Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that one such as I can practice divination?" **16** And Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? How can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; here we are then, my lord's slaves, both we and also the one in whose possession the cup has been found." **17** But [Joseph] said, "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the one in whose possession the cup was found shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father." **18** Then Judah stepped up to him and said, "O my lord, let your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are like Pharaoh himself.

[*Judah is still speaking*] **33** Now therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord in place of the boy; and let the boy go back with his brothers. **34** For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the suffering that would come upon my father."

**45:1** Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. **2** And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. **3** Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. **4** Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. **5** And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. **6** For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. **7** God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. **8** So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a

father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. **9** Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, "Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. **10** You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. **11** I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' **12** And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. **13** You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." **14** Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. **15** And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him. **16** When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," Pharaoh and his servants were pleased.

## ASK

- In verse 2, what does Joseph tell his servant to do? (to put a silver cup in Benjamin's bag)
- In verse 4, what does Joseph then tell his servant to do? (chase after the brothers and accuse them of stealing the silver cup)
- In verse 17, Joseph states the punishment. What is the punishment and who is it for? (The punishment is only for the one who stole the cup – that is, Benjamin. The punishment is that he'll be Joseph's slave)
- Do you see the similar situation between this story and when Joseph was sold into slavery? All the brothers can be free if only they allow their youngest brother, Benjamin to be enslaved (Note: Benjamin is the *other* son of Jacob's favored wife, Rachel, who was also the mother of Joseph)
- Verse 18 - Who responds to Joseph's pronouncement of punishment? (Judah does)
- Verse 33 - And what does Judah say? (enslave me instead)
- From the story where Joseph is sold into slavery, do you remember the brother who suggested they sell Joseph into slavery? (It was Judah)
- So in the same situation, Judah makes a different decision. He puts his own life on the line for his brother's (and father's) well-being. Verse 45:1 -- What is Joseph's response to Judah's different response? (he reveals his identity to his brothers)
- Verse 3 – how do the brothers initially respond? (they are dismayed. Which seems like the understatement of that century. Can you imagine everything they had to figure out / process in that moment? Joseph is alive! Wait -- this Egyptian dude who has been tormenting us is JOSEPH!? HOW IS JOSEPH THE 2<sup>nd</sup> MOST POWERFUL MAN IN EGYPT!? Wait a minute – is Joseph going to kill us now? No...probably not – he could've so many times before...but he's gotta be angry with us. How are we going to tell our dad about this?)
- Verse 5-8: What does Joseph tell his brothers? (To not be angry with themselves for their choice 20 years ago. Remember how we shared things at the beginning of class about things that we get angry at ourselves about? Well, selling your sibling into slavery might be something that'd you'd be mad at yourself about. Joseph tells them that God has helped make their mistake into an advantage for all sorts of people, including their own family.)
- Verses 9-11: What plan does Joseph tell his brothers that they should enact? (that the entire family should move to Egypt where there is food and Joseph has great provisions)
- Verse 14 and 15 – does it seem like the reconciliation is working? (yes. Hugs, tears and kisses. A much better outcome than Joseph killing them – another happy ending!)
- Verse 16: How does Pharaoh respond to the news? (favorably)

## TELL

- Things to note in the story:
  - Joseph tells them to not be angry at themselves
  - He offers forgiveness by explanation of the good that has followed their bad decision.
  - However, the brothers were also given a chance/a test with Benjamin that helped them see that they were different – that they had learned something. The test wasn't just for Joseph's benefit.
  - Also, Joseph DID punish them (a little bit) by putting them in prison for 3 days. So they might feel like they've paid a little bit for what they did as well.
- In the last lesson, we talked about how it is easier to break a relationship rather than fix it (as noted in our banana surgery activity).
- As we see in today's story, there was a lot of work that went this healing of relationship between Joseph and his brothers.
- And just like we saw repetition of the test in the movie clip and the Joseph story, we see this same type of story repeated over and over again in the Israel story. And, it continues even into today.

## TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY/ "Magic" Trick

- The stories tell us we *will* break relationships. But to God, those relationships are not permanently broken. And, most likely, do not appear as badly broken as we think they might be.
- So, if we invite God into our broken relationships, God can help us see how to offer/experience healing in those relationships, like we saw with Jacob and Esau and like we saw with Joseph and his brothers.
- Note that there is no guarantee that the relationships will be healed – but that there is a greater possibility when we invite God into the healing of the relationship.
- In the following demonstration, we're going to see then learn to do a magic trick.
- But as you'll see, it's not magic at all. It's about perception – it's about how we see things.
- So first, I'll do ( or show the video of ) the trick and narrate how it connects with the story.
- And then we'll learn to do the trick together.

## DO/Show "Magic" Trick while saying these words:

- [*When you show the rope*]: think of this rope as a relationship. It's strong and whole [show the rope, then pull it to show that it's one piece]
- [*bring the two ends of the rope together*]: In a relationship there are usually least two parties.
- [*Just before you cut the rope*]: As we've seen in the Jacob and Joseph stories, humans often do things that tear apart/break relationships – in ways that seem unfixable/unhealable/irrevocable
- [*as you tie the knot*]: But what we've also seen is that God understands and sees things that we don't. So, if we seek God and pay attention to the direction/understandings that God offers us, then God can show us what we can do to help put these relationships back together
- [*as you slide the knot off the rope*]: And when we do these things, we might be surprised to discover...
- [*as you show the rope, then pull it to show that it's one piece ("again")*]: ...that with God's help, the relationship you thought was broken has been healed / mended / put back to one piece again

## TELL

- In the last two sessions, we've seen a tendency to break relationships due to selfish grabbing and fear.
- We saw it with Jacob and Esau.
- We just saw it with Joseph and his brothers.
- In other words, this tendency to cause hurt and harm to those we care about the most because of our selfish, fearful, grabbing ways is not just a Jacob/Israel problem. It is a human problem.
- What we see in these very early faith stories is that God desires for our relationships to be healed, not broken.
- But for God's desire to be made real/known, we have to pay attention to God, seek God, invite God into our relationships.
- Seeking God, paying attention to God and inviting God into our lives/relationships is not magic.
- It is something that is learned. And it takes work to learn how to do it.
- But, as we practice at it, and when we do it, the various broken pieces of our lives and relationships can be made whole, like we saw with Jacob and Esau and with Joseph and his brothers.
- And in the same way paying attention to God can be learned, so too can the "magic" trick that I just showed you can be learned. So let's learn it now.

## TEACH TRICK (probably best to use the video at this point)

- Pass out rope to everyone and do a step-by-step teaching of the trick. (see video)
- While teaching the trick, point out when making the actual cut that this is where God's perspective and our own perspective differ.
- From our own perspective, we think the relationship is cut in half. From God's perspective, only a little bit of the relationship has been removed
- Note: This is also important to pay attention to: Although the relationship is "restored" to one piece, it IS altered/different than it was.

## HAVE STUDENTS ATTEMPT TRICK

*(Then send them how with rope so that they can practice and show off to Mom, Dad, siblings and friends. Bonus points if they can give the same type of presentation where they connect the trick with the story.)*

## CLOSING PRAYER