

Joseph Interprets Dreams

(Genesis 40-41)

Introduction

Have you ever had a dream that came true just as you dreamed it? [Let the children respond.] Sometimes God speaks to us through our dreams. Today we're going to learn some interesting prophesies that came to Joseph through some other people's dreams.

Opening Prayer

Father, You are so faithful to communicate with us. Thank You that You speak to us as we read the Bible, through advice from other people, and through our dreams. It's comforting to know that You're never far away; that You are always talking to us to lead and guide our every step of life. Help us this morning to listen for Your voice through the study of Joseph's life. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8:28)

Lesson

We've been learning about Joseph who was Israel's 11th and favorite son. Who can tell me what we've learned about him so far?

- His brothers were so jealous and hateful they first planned to kill Joseph; then they decided to sell him into slavery.
- Potiphar was so impressed with Joseph, he put him in charge over his house and estate.
- All went well for Joseph until Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of a terrible sin and Potiphar sent him to prison.

Poor Joseph. He had done nothing wrong! He was falsely accused of wrong doing, just like Jesus was!

Last week we learned that even in prison, Joseph was so well respected that the jailer put him in charge over the other prisoners.

Let's pick up the story in Genesis 40.

One day, two new prisoners arrived.

Genesis 40:1-4

*Sometime later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. ²Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, ³and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. ⁴They remained in prison for quite some time, and **the captain of the guard** assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.*

[Note: This favorable treatment of Joseph by the captain of the guard shows that Potiphar did not really believe the accusations his wife made against Joseph. We know this because Potiphar himself was the captain of the guard (Genesis 39:1).]

Then one night both prisoners had dreams....

Genesis 40:5

While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning.

In the morning when Joseph saw them, he asked, "*What's the matter? Why do you both look so miserable?*"

Genesis 40:8

And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean." "Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

They both explained their dreams to Joseph.

Genesis 40:9-11

So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. ¹⁰The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. ¹¹I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

God told Joseph the meaning of the cup-bearer's dream:

Genesis 40:12-13

"This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. ¹³Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer.

Knowing the cup-bearer was getting out left prison, Joseph asked for his help.

Genesis 40:14-15

And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. ¹⁵For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."

Then the baker told Joseph his dream:

Genesis 40:16-17

When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. ¹⁷The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head."

God told Joseph the meaning of the baker's dream:

Genesis 40:18-19

"This is what the dream means," Joseph told him. "The three baskets also represent three days. ¹⁹Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh."

[Note: The birds in scripture often represent Satan or evil.]

Joseph told the baker that in three days, Pharaoh would take him out of prison and put him to death.

Everything happened as Joseph had said: Three days later Pharaoh sent for his chief cup-bearer and the chief baker to be brought to him from prison. Pharaoh restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, but he sentenced the chief baker to be hanged.

But the cup-bearer forgot all about Joseph until two years later.

One night, Pharaoh had a dream. It was very real to him.

Genesis 41:1-4

Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. ²In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. ³Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. ⁴Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

Pharaoh awoke feeling very troubled. But he soon fell asleep again and he had a second dream.

Genesis 41:5-7

But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. ⁶Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. ⁷And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

Pharaoh was bewildered. He called all his advisors together and told them about his dreams. But no one knew what they meant.

It was then that Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer remembered Joseph still in prison.

Genesis 41:14

Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh.

So, Pharaoh told his dreams to Joseph. And, here's the meaning that God gave to Joseph...

Genesis 41:25

Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what He is about to do.

Skip down to verse 29...

Genesis 41:29-30

The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. ³⁰But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land.

Joseph went on to give Pharaoh some good advice...

Genesis 41:33

"Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt.

Skip down to verse 35...

Genesis 41:35-36

Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. ³⁶That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land."

Pharaoh thought Joseph had given him wise advice.

Genesis 41:37

Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials.

Pharaoh decided to put Joseph in charge over this great plan to store up the food.

Genesis 41:39-40

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. ⁴⁰You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

Joseph's brothers had sold him as a slave thinking to hurt and humble him. But now he was one of the most powerful men in the world, riding through Egypt's cities in the royal chariot!

Joseph never stopped trusting God through all the years of being a slave and a prisoner. God was with Joseph and gave him success in

everything he put his hand to. God defeated the plots of Joseph's enemies and made everything turn in Joseph's favor. Remember our memory verse for this week: "...*We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8:28).*"

Ask: Do you think you could trust God, even if you were wrongly blamed like Joseph?

Joseph was patient even in prison. He kept trusting God even though he was mistreated. If you keep trusting in Him, God will help you to be brave and do the right things, too.

God does not forget those who love and trust Him. We may suffer hardships, but God will make everything turn out right if we just trust Him and His will for our lives.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we want to learn how to trust You like Joseph. He never lost faith that You had his life in the palm of Your hand. Even when his brothers tried to kill him and he was sold into slavery, even when he was wrongly blamed for a terrible sin and thrown into prison, he kept on trusting You and loving You. Fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit so we can be strong in our faith in You, like Joseph. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CRAFT CORNER

Let the children work on the *God's Man and Egypt's Dreamers* word search, or send it home as a "take home" paper.

GAME CENTER**Big Question Mark —**

On a big poster board, make a huge question mark with little slits. In the slits place small coin-shaped pieces that have point values on them. For every correct answer, the team gets to choose a piece for points. Zonk! Means none.



Use the following review questions in another game of your choice:

1. Whose son was Joseph? (He was Jacob's 11th son.)
2. What were the three terrible things that happened to Joseph? (His brothers were so jealous and hateful they first planned to kill Joseph; then they sold him into slavery. Third, Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of a terrible sin and Potiphar sent him to prison.)
3. Who were the two other men that Pharaoh sent to prison while Joseph was there? (The chief cup-bearer and the chief baker.)
4. What was the chief cup-bearer's dream? (He saw a grapevine in front of him. It had three branches. It was full of lovely clusters of ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in his hand and he took the grapes and squeezed the juice into Pharaoh's cup and gave it to him.)
5. What was the meaning of the chief cup-bearer's dream? (In three days Pharaoh would release him from prison to serve the king again.)
6. What was the chief baker's dream? (He saw three baskets resting on his head. The top basket was full of bread and cakes that he had baked for Pharaoh. But the birds were flying down and eating from the basket.)
7. What was the meaning of the chief baker's dream? (In three days Pharaoh would take him out of prison and put him to death.)
8. What was the last thing Joseph said to the chief cup-bearer when he was released from prison? (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.)
9. Tell me about the dreams Pharaoh had? (First, he dreamed about 7 fat cows and 7 skinny cows. The skinny cows ate up the fat cows. Secondly, he dreamed about 7 plump heads of grain on one stock and 7 thin heads of grain. The thin grains ate the plump grains.)
10. What was the meaning of Pharaoh's dream? (7 years of great plenty will come throughout Egypt; but after them 7 years of famine will arise and all the plenty will be forgotten.)
11. What other good advice did Joseph give to Pharaoh? (To select a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt.)
12. Who did Pharaoh appoint to govern the food storage plan? (Joseph became the highest authority in all of Egypt just under the king himself. No one was greater. He was one of the most powerful men in the world!)
13. Do you think you could continue to trust God like Joseph did if you were wrongly blamed and thrown into prison? [Let the child respond.]
14. What is today's memory verse? We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28)

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