

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

(Genesis 41-43)

Introduction

Have you ever found it hard to forgive someone of something? How about when someone has really sinned against you. Has anyone ever played a mean dirty trick on you? Or, has anyone made you a special promise they couldn't keep? Well, we've been learning about Joseph and all the mean things his brothers did to him. They threw him into a deep well and tried to kill him. Then they sold him into slavery. Do you think Joseph had a good reason to bear a grudge against his brothers?

Today we're going to see what Joseph did when he meets back up with his brothers after 20 years.

Opening Prayer

Father, You command us to forgive those who sin against us. Sometimes that's really hard. We can't possibly do that without remembering how much You have forgiven each of us. Help us never to forget how much You have done for us in forgiving our sins and making it possible to come to heaven to live with You. Also, Lord, help us to remember that You have a great plan for our lives and sometimes You have strange ways of accomplishing it! In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15)

Lesson Review

We've been studying the life of Joseph.

1. Whose son was Joseph? (He was Israel's 11th and favorite son.)

2. What did Joseph's brothers do to him? (They were so jealous and hateful they first planned to kill Joseph; then they decided to sell him into slavery.)
3. Who was Potiphar? (The Egyptian official that bought Joseph and put him in charge over his house and estate.)
4. What happened to Joseph when he was working in Potiphar's house? (All went well for Joseph until Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of a terrible sin and Potiphar sent him to prison.)
5. How did Joseph do in prison? (Even in prison, Joseph was so well respected that the jailer put him in charge over the other prisoners.)
6. How did Joseph get out of prison? (He wisely interpreted Pharaoh's dream.)
7. What was Pharaoh's dream? (That there were going to be 7 years of plenty and then 7 years of famine.)
8. What promotion did Joseph get from Pharaoh? (To be in charge of the food storage and distribution plan.)

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!

Lesson

We will pick up the story at the end of Genesis 41. Pharaoh had just made Joseph in charge of the food storage program in Egypt.

Genesis 41:47-49

As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. ⁴⁸During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. ⁴⁹He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure.

Joseph was a wise man. He stored up the excess food during the years of plenty.

There's a lesson here for us, too. When we have extra money or supplies, we should save for the times we won't have as much.

Joseph was able to fill all the barns and storehouses in the country during the 7 years of plenty.

Genesis 41:53-55

At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. ⁵⁴Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. ⁵⁵Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, "Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you."

The brooks dried up and there was less and less water in the wells. The food was almost used up everywhere but in Egypt.

Genesis 41:56-57

So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

This famine even effected Joseph's father and brothers up in the land of Israel.

Genesis 42:1-4

When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you standing around looking at one another? ²I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we'll die." ³So Joseph's ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. ⁴But Jacob wouldn't let Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him.

Jacob decided to send his sons down to Egypt to get some grain. But he didn't want to send Benjamin along with the older boys. Ben was Jacob's youngest boy and he didn't want anything to happen to him like had happened to Joseph.

Remember, Joseph's father thought that his favorite son had been killed by wild animals and the brothers didn't try to correct their dad's wrong thinking.

Genesis 42:6

Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground.

It had been 20 years since they had sold their little brother as a slave. Now Joseph was a man.

Genesis 42:7-8

Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where are you from?" he demanded. "From the land of Canaan," they replied. "We have come to buy food." ⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn't recognize him.

The brothers had no idea this man sitting on a throne dressed like an Egyptian prince was their brother. But Joseph knew his brothers at once!

As they bowed before him, Joseph remembered how he had dreamed many years before that his brothers would one day bow down to him.

[Teacher, review Joseph's two dreams in Genesis 37:7 and 37:9.]

Before he let on to his brothers who he was, he wanted to know if his brothers had changed. So, he accused them of being spies sent down from the land of Canaan, just to see what they would do if they were falsely accused.

The brothers said, "No! We have simply come here to buy grain." And, they tried to explain to Joseph who they were.

Genesis 42:13

"Sir," they said, "there are actually twelve of us. We, your servants, are all brothers, sons of a man living in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is back there with our father right now, and one of our brothers is no longer with us."

At least they were being honest, but Joseph continued to test his brothers to see if they were changed men.

Genesis 42:16-17

One of you must go and get your brother. I'll keep the rest of you here in prison. Then we'll find out whether or not your story is true. By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don't have a younger brother, then I'll know you are spies." ¹⁷So Joseph put them all in prison for three days.

After 3 days, Joseph changed the plan...

Genesis 42:18-20

On the third day Joseph said to them, "I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. ¹⁹If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. ²⁰But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die." To this they agreed.

So, the brothers loaded their donkeys with the grain and headed for home. But, on the way home they were shocked to find something in their sacks besides grain.

Genesis 42:27

But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, he found his money in the top of his sack.

Joseph had given his servants secret instructions to return his brother's payments at the top of each of their sacks.

Genesis 42:35

As they emptied out their sacks, there in each man's sack was the bag of money he had paid for the grain! The brothers and their father were terrified when they saw the bags of money.

The famine continued; no crops were growing, food was scarce, and the food they brought from Egypt was almost gone. Jacob finally decided they must go back to Egypt to get more supplies.

Genesis 43:12-13

Also take double the money that was put back in your sacks, as it was probably someone's mistake. ¹³Then take your brother, and go back to the man.

So the brothers went back to Egypt a second time. This time they took their youngest brother, Benjamin, and they went before Joseph.

When Joseph saw his brother, he was very happy.

Genesis 43:16

When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the manager of his household, "These men will eat with me this noon. Take them inside the palace. Then go slaughter an animal, and prepare a big feast."

So, Joseph arranged for a feast to be served to his brothers.

Genesis 43:27-28

After greeting them, he asked, "How is your father, the old man you spoke about? Is he still alive?" ²⁸"Yes," they replied. "Our father, your servant, is alive and well." And they bowed low again.

After talking with his brothers, Joseph became so overcome with emotion that he dashed away from the dining room to shed tears of joy! Then he washed his face and came back to the feast.

Genesis 43:34

And Joseph filled their plates with food from his own table, giving Benjamin five times as much as he gave the others. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

He gave Benjamin five times as much food to see if they would still be jealous like they used to be. But the brothers seemed happy that Benjamin had the most food to eat.

Joseph's brothers still did not recognize him. And, Joseph still had one more test he wanted them to pass before he was sure they had really changed. If they passed the last test, then he would reveal to them who he was.

So next week we will pick up the story there. Do you think they passed the test?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, help us to be people who are quick to forgive others when they sin against us. We don't ever want to hold a grudge and let bitterness take hold in our hearts. We always want to keep in mind just how much You have forgiven us and loved us even when we are naughty or have a bad attitude so that we can be loving and forgiving with all our friends and family members. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CRAFT CORNER

Let the children work on *The Famine* word search, or send it home as a "take home" paper.

GAME CENTER

Dodge the Question —

Divide the children into two groups. Have one group form a large circle and instruct the other group to stand inside the circle. Give the outside circle a nerf ball. Then tell the children inside the circle to dodge the ball. If a child is hit, he must answer one of the review questions and then join the other circle. Play continues in this manner. Groups exchange places when the last child has been hit; winners are those last to be hit.

Use the following review questions in game of your choice.

1. What is a famine? (It's when it stops raining and the crops can't grow. So, food becomes scarce and people begin to go hungry.)
2. If the famine was all over the world, why did Egypt have grain to sell. (Because Joseph was wise enough to store the excess during the years of plenty.)

3. What did Jacob do when he saw that there was grain in Egypt? (He sent his sons down there to buy grain for their households.)
4. Why didn't Jacob want Benjamin to go along with his other sons to Egypt? (Jacob had already lost one son, Joseph. He didn't want to anything bad to happen to Benjamin as well.)
5. When Joseph's brothers came to him in Egypt to buy grain, they didn't know that it was their long-lost brother, Joseph. After all it had been 20 years and they weren't expecting to see him in Egypt with the fancy royal clothes on. When they bowed down to Joseph, what do you think Joseph was remembering? (That he'd had two dreams that indicated that his older brothers would bow down to him.)
6. Why did Joseph act as a stranger to them? (He wanted to test them to see if they had changed from 20 years ago when they were so jealous and hateful to him.)
7. On the way home from Egypt to the land of Canaan, what were the brothers shocked to find in their grain sacks? (Their money.)
8. When the brothers arrived in Egypt for the second time with their little brother, Benjamin, what did Joseph do? (He invited them to his house for a big feast.)
9. Why did Joseph give Benjamin 5 times as much food as the others? (To see if they would still be jealous like they used to be.)
10. What is today's Memory verse?

For more expositional lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com>