

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121- 14 Joseph the Slave (Genesis 37, 39)

Have you ever decided to do what God wanted you to do, and as soon as you did, everything in life seemed to go wrong? Today's story is about a young man with that exact problem. He told the truth about his evil brothers and what God was going to do with him, but it only created problems at home. This is the first of four lessons about Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob. It's exciting to see how God can use one person, in difficult circumstances, to rescue an entire family.

Joseph's only full brother, Benjamin, was the last child born to Jacob. He was born while Joseph was in Egypt. Their mother Rachel died while giving birth to him and was buried near Bethlehem. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and to show his love, Jacob gave him a special richly decorated robe.

This favoritism made the other brothers jealous. Their jealousy grew when Joseph reported their misdeeds to their father. At age 17 Joseph made things even worse by telling his family about his unusual dreams. "In one dream," he said, "We were all binding sheaves of grain. My sheaf suddenly stood upright, and your sheaves bowed down to it!" Infuriated, his brothers could not imagine Joseph ruling over them. "In my second dream," he continued, "The sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to me!"

Even his father asked him, "Will your mother and I also bow down to you?" But Jacob remembered all these things.

Sometime later, the ten older brothers took the flocks to graze far from home. Jacob decided to send Joseph to see how they were doing. When the brothers saw him coming, they jested, "Here comes 'the dreamer.' We can end his dreams right now. Let us kill him and throw him into a deep pit and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we will see what happens to his great dreams!"

Reuben the oldest brother, cried out, "Do not kill him; we must not shed blood! Just throw him into this dry well." His plan was to rescue the boy later and take him back home. The brothers agree, stripping off Joseph's robe, and throwing him into the well. Reuben then went on an errand while the others sat down to eat.

While the brothers were eating, a caravan of merchants came by on their way to Egypt. Judah suggested to his brothers, "Why should we kill Joseph? He is our own flesh and blood; let us sell him instead!" So they sold him to the merchants for 20 shekels of silver. When Reuben came back, he was shocked to see that the boy was gone and he tore his clothes in despair.

So the brothers told him what they had done. Together they created a story to tell their father. They killed a goat and dipped Joseph's robe in the blood. Then they took it home to their father. Jacob grabbed it and cried out, "Joseph has been killed by some wild animal!" He tore

his clothes and cried uncontrollably for his son. Jacob mourned for Joseph from the depths of his heart. He said, "I will mourn his death for the rest of my life."

Once Joseph arrived in Egypt, he was sold to a man named Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Joseph adjusted to his life as a slave and God blessed everything he did. He grows in his abilities and gains the respect of his master. Soon, Potiphar puts Joseph in charge of his entire household and everything he owned.

Now Joseph had grown into well-built and handsome man. One day Potiphar's wife asked Joseph to come to bed with her. He refused, telling her that it would be a great sin against his master—and against God. Even so she pursued him every chance she got, but he always refused her. One day while her husband and all the other servants were out of the house, she grabbed Joseph by the cloak. He tried to pull away, but she held onto his outer garment and would not let go. Finally he escaped, leaving the garment in her hands as he ran from the room.

This made her furious, so she decided to get revenge. She screams and the household servants came running to her. She then told them a terrible lie. She told them that Joseph had come into her room and had tried to pull her into bed. "He ran away when I screamed." She said as she showed them his garment as proof of what she was saying. When her husband came home, she told him the same story. Potiphar burned with anger against Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners and officials were confined. Now this is not the place for an ordinary foreign slave like Joseph. God's hand is on him though, even in this test as we will see in the next story.

This story is important because it shows that even though we may go through difficult times as Joseph did, God has a plan for the lives of His children. He gives them promises that He will never forget or fail to fulfill.

The main truth of this story is that God's plan sometimes involves difficult tests which He gives to increase our faith and trust in Him. He will never forsake or forget His children.

To review this lesson, answer these questions.

1. What was the response to Joseph's first dream by his brothers?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, "This angered his brothers for they could not imagine Joseph ruling over them," you are correct.
2. What was the first plan of Joseph's brothers to get rid of 'the dreamer'??
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, "Let us kill him and throw him into a deep pit," you are correct.
3. Why did Joseph refuse to take go to bed with Potiphar's wife?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, "He refused, telling her that this would be a sin against his master—and against God," you are correct.

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes

in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Tell this story of Joseph to someone who has never heard it before. After telling the story, ask the person this question, “When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife, what was his response?” He could have said no one will ever know, but he refused because he realized it would be a sin against his master and against God. Do you think we can hide our sins from God, or does He really see all we do, both good and evil?