

Genesis 41:1-52

Aim of lesson

To show how God worked in Joseph's life to bring about his purpose.

Background study

The historical background to life in Egypt – in particular the lives of the Pharaohs.

Suggested outline of lesson

Ask the children if they remember where Joseph was at the end of the previous lesson. Describe how he would have been feeling, and that Joseph would have no way of knowing what had become of the butler after all this time. Take the children then to Pharaoh's palace to show that the butler was, in fact, still in Pharaoh's service and had, in his own happy state, forgotten his promise to Joseph.

Pharaoh's dream

The telling of this story can be made very exciting by developing the pictorial nature of Pharaoh's dream, his anxiety, the butler's immediate shame at the recollection of Joseph's plight and his own broken promise, and the sudden change in Joseph's circumstances, from the depths of a dungeon to the elevated position of advisor to Pharaoh. The change was such that hasty provision had to be made for Joseph to wash, shave and change his clothes before he could appear before Pharaoh.

Point out that Joseph was quick to disclaim any wisdom of his own and to take the opportunity of proclaiming the power of the true God. (By this time Joseph was able to speak Egyptian fluently, for he had been in Egypt for 13 years, and he was now 30 years old).. He had undergone many changes in his life, yet remained consistently confident in God's providence. He was able to recognize that Pharaoh's dreams were all part of God's plan.

Over all the land of Egypt

It would be interesting to hear the children's thoughts regarding the feelings of Joseph and Pharaoh at this time - note verses 37-39. Joseph's faith obviously had such an immediate impact on Pharaoh that he felt impelled to believe his interpretation and entrust the future welfare of his whole kingdom to this godly man. It is worth pointing out that, just as Potiphar had had the authority to condemn Joseph without trial, Pharaoh, with his absolute authority, was able to appoint Joseph to the highest office in the land without consulting anyone.

Zaphenath-paneah

The children will be interested in the meaning of Joseph's new name - 'the man to whom secrets are revealed'. It would seem that Joseph had been endowed by God with the talent for organizing people, first as steward in Potiphar's house, then as privileged supervisor in prison and now as prime minister; at every stage he had won the respect of everyone with whom he came into contact. The task with which he was now entrusted was an enormous one, to which he applied himself with drive, dedication and skill, sure in the knowledge that God was working through him.

The harvests were not merely good ones, but were so exceptional that it became impossible to record the amount of grain that was gathered.

Joseph was additionally blessed with a wife and two sons, whose names convey Joseph's acknowledgement of God's goodness.

Recap the story so far along the following lines: having suffered so many trials, Joseph now found himself very blessed, enjoying family life, wealth, honour and success. Was he now completely happy, or could there be something he still missed?

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, help us not to feel miserable or cross when we have to wait. Teach us how to be patient. Amen.

Memory verse

"Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7).

Relevance to the children's lives

Have you noticed, throughout the story of Joseph, how he was able to wait for a long time, without getting miserable or cross? What do we call this quality? (Patience). Is it easy to be like this? Can we think of times when we must try hard to be patient? Does it help if we remember to trust those who tell us to wait?