

Joseph Grows Up

Genesis 39:1-20

Kathleen Orthwein

Thoughts for Parents

This lesson is a review of the early life of Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob. Through the ups and downs of Joseph's life, children can see Divine Providence in action. It is vital for young children to feel safe and secure. But everyone experiences times of sadness, feeling hurt by others and feelings of being alone. Joseph's story shows how the Lord is continually with a person, bringing good out of bad events, protecting and guiding in the happy as well as the sad times of life.

Joseph Grows Up

Have you ever heard the story of Joseph and his brothers? His older brothers were jealous of him because Joseph was their father Israel's favorite son. Joseph was good and kind as well as being the son of Rachel. When Joseph was about seventeen years old, his father gave him a beautiful coat made of many colors.

Then Joseph had two dreams that he told his family. In the first dream the brothers' eleven sheaves of grain stood in a circle and bowed down to Joseph's sheaf as if he were their master. In the second dream the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to Joseph, as if his father, mother and brothers were serving him. These dreams seemed to say that Joseph would some day rule over or be in charge of his family. His older brothers were very angry with him because he was younger than they were and yet his dreams put Joseph as master of the family. You remember that the oldest son of the family would usually become the head and inherit all of his father's possessions when the father died. So you can see why the older brothers were so angry with Joseph.

Joseph Is Sold into Slavery

Joseph's brothers were so angry with him that some of them wanted to kill him. They had the chance one day when he came to see them out in the field. However, one of his brothers convinced the others to sell him as a slave to a group of Ishmaelites who were traveling to Egypt.

The brothers told Israel that Joseph was dead. They dipped his coat of many colors in animal's blood and tore it in pieces as if a wild animal had killed the boy and showed it to Israel. Israel was so deeply sad when he thought that his favorite son had been killed that he could not be consoled. No one could make him feel better. He did not know that

Joseph was on his way to Egypt where he would be sold as a slave to someone. Do you know what a slave is? (Someone who has to work for another without any choice or any pay.) Read now and find out whose slave Joseph was.

Read Genesis 39:1-6.

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the name of the man who bought Joseph for his slave? (Potiphar.)
2. What was Potiphar's job? (Captain of the guard for Pharaoh.)

In Potiphar's House

Pharaoh was the name for the king of Egypt, a great man who ruled over a great country. Potiphar's job was a very important one. As captain of the guard, he was responsible for Pharaoh's life. Potiphar probably had a large house and land with many servants and possessions.

Joseph grew up serving in Potiphar's house. It seemed as if everyone had forgotten him. But the Lord remembered him, just as He remembers and watches over everyone. The Lord helped Joseph succeed with everything. When Potiphar noticed that the Lord was with Joseph and all that Joseph did was done well, Potiphar naturally put Joseph in charge of all his house. In our story it says that Potiphar made Joseph the overseer of his house and put all that he had in Joseph's care. Do you think Potiphar trusted Joseph to give him so much responsibility? Yes, and with good reason, because Joseph was a wise manager. But once again, someone became jealous of Joseph and plotted against him. Read on to find out what Potiphar's wife did.

Read Genesis 39:7-20.

Potiphar's wife wanted Joseph to do something that would hurt her marriage, but Joseph refused. Potiphar trusted Joseph and Joseph was loyal to him. But Potiphar's wife was so jealous that she told lies about Joseph to get him into trouble.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Potiphar feel when he heard the lies about Joseph? (He believed his wife and was angry so he put Joseph in prison.)
2. Do you know what a prison is? (It is strong building where people who do bad things are locked up so that they can no longer hurt others. However, sometimes mistakes are made and good people get locked away in prison. This is what happened with Joseph.)

3. Do you think the Lord will forget Joseph in prison? (No, the Lord always has a plan for us even when we cannot see it at the time. Even when bad things happen, the Lord can bring good out of it, as we will find out in the next story.)

Jealousy and Lies

Telling lies about someone means saying something that is not true about a person, usually in order to hurt them or get them in trouble. We know this is wrong because one of the Ten Commandments reminds us not to “bear false witness” against our neighbor. Much harm and unhappiness can come from a lie.

Jealousy means wanting something that someone else has. Everyone feels jealous or envious of others at times. Sometimes you might feel that another child looks nicer than you do or has more friends than you do. You might feel that a brother or sister seems to get more attention in the family. Sometimes people are jealous of another’s house or clothes or car. Some people spend so much time feeling jealous of others that they aren’t happy with the good things that they have!

It is natural to want the good things that we see around us. However, it is important to remember that the Lord is always taking care of us, giving us the things that we truly need. He knows what we need better than we do. We can avoid suffering the unhappiness of being jealous of others if we concentrate on enjoying the good things we have.

Discussion Questions

1. What is a lie and why is lying wrong? (A lie is telling something that is not true about someone, usually in order to hurt them or get them in trouble. Lying is against the Lord’s commandment not to bear false witness.)
2. Who was the other person in our story that told lies about Joseph? (Potiphar’s wife.)
3. Can you think of a time when you were jealous of someone? Describe what you felt.
4. Tell about some of the blessings or good things in your life.

This lesson is adapted from Level Two (2nd grade equivalent) of the Jacob’s Ladder Religion Lessons. For more information about this program or to order the lessons, please call 215-914-4949, email oed@newchurch.edu or write to The General Church Office of Education, 1100 Cathedral Road – Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009.