

Lesson 26: Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers

Genesis 45:1 - 46:4 (pg. 52-53, Gospel Story Bible)

Teaching Points:

Joseph reveals who he is to his brothers — When Joseph tells his brothers who he really is, they are speechless! They already fear being punished or killed. Now they must wonder if Joseph wants to take revenge on them. Instead, Joseph is kind and calls them to draw near. He tries to comfort them, and his tears show that he loves them.

Four times in this passage, Joseph says that God is the One who has directed his life and not the sin of his brothers.

Joseph reveals that God is the Lord of history — Instead of bringing judgment against his brothers, Joseph forgives them. As ruler of Egypt, he could have put them in prison for the rest of their lives. Instead, Joseph embraces his brothers and comforts them. Joseph recognizes that God has been working out a plan to save Israel. It was not hard for Joseph to forgive his brothers because his main concern was the plan and purpose of God.

Joseph completely forgives his brothers — Pharaoh invites all of Joseph's family to return to Egypt, so Joseph sends his brothers back to their father and tells them exactly what to say to him.

Joseph does not have them mention anything about how his brothers betrayed him. From a human point of view, this is the single most important fact in the history of Jacob's family. Yet, Joseph has so completely forgiven his brothers that it is not even worth mentioning. As a result, all the news that comes to Jacob is good news.

Where is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Matthew 26:47–56; Luke 23:33–43.

Joseph was betrayed, thrown into a pit, and sold into slavery by his own brothers. But Joseph was ready to forgive them completely for what they had done to him.

Joseph had grace from God to forgive his brothers, and this gives us a glance forward to Jesus. Jesus was betrayed by his friend, Judas, deserted by all his disciples, and crucified by his own people. He too extends forgiveness to the very ones who hurt him and to anyone else who repents of their sin.

Bible Truth:

Behind the plans of men stands the plan of God.

A Little Bit More (grades 3-5) - Remnant

In Genesis 45:7 Joseph reveals the Lord's purpose in preserving a remnant of Israel. The word remnant means that which remains or is left over. We use it today to describe the piece of carpet that remains unused when a room is recarpeted. In the Bible, God uses this word to describe the portion of Israel that he is going to save. Israel often rebelled against God, but he always saved a portion of Israel so that his promise might be fulfilled.

Romans 9:27–29 tells us that even to the end, the number of the house of Israel will be immense, but only a remnant will be saved. A new remnant, one chosen by grace, is described in Romans 11:5. The remnant, then, consists of those whom God has chosen and will preserve, not by works but by his grace.

Object Lessons:

1. Repeat for Emphasis (Grades K-2)

Supplies:

- 5 small pieces of paper, with the words: Joseph, baker, cupbearer, famine, Pharaoh
- The 5 instructions to give to the participants

Play a game of charades with your class. However, the point of the game is the way you present the instructions. You are going to repeat the critical components of the instructions four times. (Joseph repeats four times to his brothers that it is God who is responsible for the events that lead to his position in Egypt.)

Instructions:

1. Each participant in the competition will receive a word (a person, place, or thing) taken from the story of Joseph.
2. The clue giver is not allowed to talk at all in giving the clues to the class.
3. The clue giver should act out the clue in order that the class might guess, but can say nothing, not even a sound.
4. The clue giver may encourage the direction of the guessing by nodding their head or signal that the answers are poor by shaking their head no, but at no time may the clue giver speak.
5. The clue giver may use their arms to gesture or their fingers to show numbers, but not letters, and he may not say any word at all.

Preliminary questions:

▪ What is the most important thing that I said in the instructions? (The most important thing that you said was the clue giver cannot speak.)

▪ How did you know it was the most important?

(We knew it was the most important because you repeated yourself.)

Conduct the charades. Then ask the class the following discussion questions:

▪ Does anyone remember the most important instruction and how many times I repeated it?

(The most important instruction was that the clue giver could not speak; it was repeated four times.)

▪ When someone wants us to pay special attention to something, they often repeat the important information. God does this in the story of Joseph. What does Joseph repeat for emphasis to his brothers in Genesis 45:4–10?

(Joseph repeats that it was God who was behind his being sent to Egypt.)

▪ Why do you think God wanted this to be repeated in the Bible? It is very important for us to understand that God is in control of all things. (God is actively involved with everything that takes place. Nothing happens apart from God's control. God's plan is the salvation of his people through the death of his Son, Jesus. Even the strange events of Joseph's life all work together in God's plan to redeem for himself a people.)

2. Forgiveness (Grades 3-5)

Supplies:

- Scissors or paper cutter
- Sheets of paper (one for every four students), pencils
- Plastic cups (one for every four students)

The activity is designed to show the children the power of forgiveness.

Divide the class into teams of four. Give each team a sheet of paper. Tell them to tear the paper into four pieces, one for each person on their team. Have each person write a sin that God has forgiven us for; e.g., lying, rebellion, anger. Have each team collect the papers and bring them up to you together. When all of the teams have completed the assignment and are standing in line, shred each team's papers and give them the remains, one team at a time, in a plastic cup. Be careful to keep them separate.

When all the team's papers have been shredded, tell them they are going to race to see which team can be the first to reconstruct their original sheet of paper like a puzzle. Tell them they have five minutes. The winner will be the team with the most matching pieces.

Then ask the class the following questions:

▪ Did you think it was difficult to reassemble the paper recording your sin? (yes)

▪ Who in our story demonstrated forgiveness? (Joseph demonstrated forgiveness toward his brothers.)

▪ How was Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers like Jesus' forgiveness of us? (Joseph did not hold his brother's sin against them.

Beyond forgiving them, he poured out undeserving grace in giving them what they needed to survive and conquer death. He provided a place for them to go and live free of the fear of death. He never brought their sin up again, but saw it all as a part of God's plan to save his people.)

▪ What did the paper shredding exercise help you understand?

(Shredding the paper was like true forgiveness. It was impossible to put the sheets back together in five minutes. Psalm 103:12 tells us that God has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. Since east and west are opposites that can never come together, God is telling us that once our sins are forgiven they are gone for good and it would be impossible to bring them back.)