

# Joseph In Prison

Genesis 40:1-41:57

## **MEMORY VERSE**

MATTHEW 5:8

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED:**

As many interview sheets as the number of children in your class, pencils and chairs.

A basket, fake or real groceries, some grocery lists, and a timer.

A tape of jungle or Caribbean music.

## **ATTENTION GRABBER!**

### **Interview a Friend**

Keep the interview a secret until partners are chosen. You can choose partners by placing chairs in the room back to back and playing "musical chairs." But in this case, there will be the exact amount of chairs necessary for everyone to sit on.

When the music stops have everyone sit down, then have them turn the chairs around to interview the person sitting opposite them. This way you won't have only friends pairing up.

Give each child a pencil and a copy of the provided interview sheet. Have them ask the questions on the sheet and write down the answers.

When the whole class is done collect all of the sheets, allow some of the students to introduce their interviewee to the class. See how many of the questions they remember the answers to. Can anyone remember the answers to ALL of the questions about their partner?

When a few introductions have been made, point out that even though we can't even remember all of the answers to questions we've just asked, God will always remember everything. He knows us perfectly and **God never forgets us.**

## **LESSON TIME!**

Today we are going to learn about Joseph's time in prison and about how God worked it all out for good. Joseph was seventeen years old when he was sent down into the land of Egypt and thirty years old when he was summoned before Pharaoh. He must have spent thirteen years total in Potiphar's house and prison. This was a long time of waiting for Joseph. And it may have even seemed like a waste for a bright young man to spend such a long time in servitude and in prison.

In God's planning, however, it was not a waste at all, but was necessary preparation for the great position of leadership He would call Joseph to. In all those years God never forgot Joseph, but took Joseph through a very rigorous training program. Then when God judged him properly seasoned and ready for the great work he would accomplish for His people and for the world He then began to change things for Joseph.

The times when it seems God has forgotten us are the times He watches closest. And when we get to the place where we can look back at the work that God has done in our lives, it is those times we will never forget. Sometimes we can lose sight of what God is doing and just look at our problems. We need to remember that God is still in control and that **God never forgets us.**

## **GENESIS 40**

**It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.**

And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker.

So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined.

And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.

Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, dreamed a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation.

And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad.

So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?"

And they said to him, "We each have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to me, please."

Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold, in my dream a vine was before me,

“and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes.

“Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.”

And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days.

“Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler.

“But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house.

“For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.”

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, "I also was in my dream, and there I had three white baskets on my head.

“In the uppermost basket there were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.”

So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days.

“Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.”

Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Joseph probably spent several years in prison, but only one event is recorded in all this time, because it led to Joseph eventually being let out of prison.

The Pharaoh's butler and baker were thrown into the prison where Joseph was. The butler was the overseer of Pharaoh's vineyards and wine cellar as well as his cupbearer. He was responsible to see that all drinks served to the King were both safe and of the best quality. Likewise, the baker was responsible for the food in the same way. The butler and the baker had somehow offended Pharaoh and were thrown into the same prison as Joseph.

It does not say what their crimes were, but it is very possible that it was a capital offence, because the baker lost his head over the matter. Some believe that maybe the guards found poison and threw the baker and the butler in prison because they are the ones who could get the poison to Pharaoh. It's believed that they were thrown in jail while an investigation tried to uncover the guilty party. We can't be certain because the Bible does not specifically say. We know that they were put under Joseph's care.

One night, they each had dreams that really bothered them. The Egyptians always believed that dreams were symbolic of something

that would happen. These two men, with their dreams about positions they held for Pharaoh, didn't know for sure if the dreams had a bad or good meaning. So, when Joseph came to check on them in the morning, they were obviously upset. Joseph asked them what was the matter and they told him that they had dreams that night and they did not know the meaning. Then Joseph pointed out that the interpretations of dreams belong to God. He asked them to tell him their dreams.

Here Joseph is in this prison, in this trial, being punished after doing what was right, but he is still trusting God. He hasn't given into his circumstances, but still has faith in God. Sometimes when we are in difficult times we are tempted to blame the Lord or think He doesn't care any more. That wasn't the case with Joseph. He still put his trust in the Lord even when times were very hard.

Joseph was young when God gave him the dreams about ruling over his family. God was going to use Joseph's life in a tremendous way and Joseph was ready for God to use him. But God's timing is not always our timing. In fact, it almost never is. We must seek God for His perfect will in our lives and trust Him to work everything in us in His perfect time, whether it is going to school, doing jobs around the house or whatever God calls us to do, be faithful in that.

Just look at Joseph. He was made a slave and was taking care of someone else's house, but he was faithful in doing his best and God blessed him for that. He was also faithful in doing his best while in prison, so he was blessed and made head over the prisoners. God would use his experiences at Potiphar's house, and later in prison, to make him a leader. One day Joseph would take care of the whole land. Just think of how he learned to organize and how he learned management at Potiphar's house. He learned to deal with people in prison. **God never forgets us.** He has a special plan for our lives.

The chief butler reports his dream and receives Joseph's interpretation. In his dream, there was a vine with three branches. As he dreamed, he observed the branches budding, blossoming and finally bearing luscious bunches of grapes. The grapes were immediately ready for plucking, so the butler dreamed that he picked them and then pressed the grape juice from them into Pharaoh's cup, which had mysteriously appeared into his hand.

Joseph's divine revelation, told him that the three branches represented three days, and this meant that in three days he would be released from prison and restored to his former office. The butler was happy at the revelation and Joseph asked him to remember him before Pharaoh and told the butler that he was kidnapped and innocent of any wrongdoing.

The baker hearing the favorable report told Joseph about his dream. In his dream he was carrying baskets of baked goods on his head to Pharaoh. Birds came and ate the baked goods out of the baskets. Joseph informed him that the interpretation was entirely different than that of the butler's. The three baskets again represented three days, but instead of being reinstated at that time, his very head would be removed from his body and his body hanged on a tree. Instead of the birds eating Pharaoh's bread, they would be eating his flesh.

The interpretations had come to pass exactly as Joseph had said. Joseph's hope of being released went with the butler, but the Bible says the butler forgot him. But we know that God did not forget him. **God never forgets us.** I wonder what Joseph was thinking in that prison. When would God release him? He still put his trust in the Lord.

### GENESIS 41:1-13

Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river.



Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.

Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the river.

And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke.

He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good.

Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.

And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, it was a dream.

Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.

Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day.

“When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker,

“we each dreamed a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream.

“Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his own dream.

“And it came to pass just as he interpreted for us; so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him.”

So Joseph had continued in the prison for two more years. We are not told if Joseph became discouraged in all this time, but we know that he kept his faith in God and trusted Him. We should remember to trust God in those times of discouragement and know that God has not forgotten us, but has a plan in store for our lives. **God never forgets us.**

Pharaoh had two dreams that troubled him greatly, especially since none of Pharaoh’s wise men or magicians could interpret the dream. He dreamed that seven plump healthy cows were standing half submerged in the water and then they came out of the water for pasture.

The troubling part about the first dream was that seven ugly thin cows came up and devoured the seven fat cows.

The second dream had a similar meaning. Seven plump ears of corn on a single stalk were swallowed up by seven thin and scorched ears of corn that sprouted after them.

It was then that the chief butler finally remembered Joseph. Knowing Joseph's ability to interpret dreams, he told Pharaoh the two year old story about how the Pharaoh had been angry with him

and the baker and how they had dreams and were troubled, but this man Joseph interpreted them precisely and everything he said came to pass.

We are starting to see how God's master plan is coming to pass. If Joseph had gotten out of prison when the butler was released, Pharaoh would not have had his dream yet. Who knows where Joseph would be, maybe back with his family, but perhaps in a place that when Pharaoh did have the dream he could not be there to interpret it.

So we will see that the land would have fallen into severe famine without the revelation of the dreams had not Joseph been there to interpret for Pharaoh. **God never forgets us**, but knows what is best for us.

#### GENESIS 41:14-44

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it."

So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river.

"Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.

“Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt.

“And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows.

“When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke.

“Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good.

Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do:

“The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one.

“And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine.

“This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do.

“Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt;

“but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land.

So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe.

And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

“Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.

“Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years.

“And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

“Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”

So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.

And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.

"You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you."

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

Now Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Joseph was taken out of jail and shaved and made presentable before Pharaoh. And as he stood before the King, he maintained that same attitude of dependence on God, declaring that it wasn't him, but it was God who would give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

Pharaoh then told his dreams to Joseph, and without hesitation he interpreted the dreams for Pharaoh, adding to his interpretation advice that he should appoint officers and conserve the plenty of the first seven years in order to supply the need for the next seven.

The dreams then being interpreted, Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was a man who had the Spirit of God. Pharaoh then appointed Joseph to a great position of authority. He would be first in the kingdom. Only Pharaoh was more powerful. Pharaoh realized that Joseph had spoken under the direction of God.

The appointment of power was then followed by Pharaoh placing on the hand of Joseph his own signet ring, dressing him in fine linen, placing a gold chain around his neck, and made to ride in the second chariot. As he rode, men accompanied him crying out to the people along the way to bow a knee to him.

God can certainly change everything for us in an instant. We need to remember that He doesn't forget about us and will work all things together for good in our lives (Romans 8:28).

## **Grocery Goof-ups!**

You will need a basket, fake or real groceries, some grocery lists, and a timer. Set the items in rows around the room to represent the shelves in a grocery store.

Ask your class, "As much as your mothers love you, have they ever forgotten something you wanted or needed from the store?" The answer will most probably be affirmative. Have your students pick a grocery list from several. They must read the list and give it back to you. Then have them "shop" for the items they must remember. You can make this as difficult as is age appropriate. Set the timer for 30 seconds and let them shop. Compare the items they have collected with the lists they've turned in.

When your students are done shopping, explain that it's easy to forget an occasional item or two when there are so many items to remember, but God never forgets. He is always thinking of us, and working circumstances together to teach us and express His love for us. **God never forgets us.**

We now see God blessing His faithful servant Joseph, and showing him that He had not forgotten him. God had this incredible plan for his life and that all the hardships were necessary to make him the man of God that God wanted him to be. **God never forgets us.**

#### GENESIS 41:45-57

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly.

So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them.

Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was without number.

And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.

Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."



And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended,

and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do."

The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.

So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.

Pharaoh then gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah, and gave him a wife, and her name was Asenath, who was a daughter of an Egyptian priest in the land of On, which was the city of the sun, the great educational center of Egypt.

Joseph was thirty years old at this time and his position gave him the opportunity to travel all over Egypt. Pharaoh's dreams were coming to pass; the land was producing abundant crops for seven years, and Joseph put them into storage in the Egyptian cities.

He always followed God and gave God the glory for all the success. He then had two sons with which he gave Hebrew names, the first

he named Manaseh, which means "forget," because God had made him forget the misery of his separation from his family. The second he named Ephraim, which means "fruitful," because God had made him fruitful in the land of Egypt.

Joseph's wisdom bore fruit; the seven good years were indeed followed by the seven years of famine. Not only did the Egyptians come and buy grain, but people from all over the land came to buy grain. God would use this famine to bring Joseph's family back together. Isn't God awesome?

We see in this story that God never forgot Joseph, not for a second. God had this plan in Joseph's life, and Joseph trusted God, and God was with him. God is always with us; He will never leave us or forsake us. We can't get away from God no matter how hard we try; He is always with us. He is there when it feels like we are all alone, or feels like we are locked up in prison. God is with us and not only with us, but working in our lives constantly. Circumstances are really just the fingers of God molding us more and more in the image of His Son. **God never forgets us.**

## **Jungle Bungle**

Seat your students in a circle. Tell them you will be testing their memories to see if they can remember as well as God can. If it is available, play a tape of jungle music (African, Indian, Australian stuff will do). Have them tell you their favorite jungle animals to spark some enthusiasm. Then begin the game.

Going around the circle have the first child make a jungle animal sound, then have the second child make the first sound and add his own sound. The third child repeats the first and the second sound and then adds his own. Repeat this around the circle. If anyone forgets the sounds he must point his index finger and touch his hand to his forehead to represent an elephant's trunk. They must keep their trunk up while the whole class repeats the

sounds to help him. Go around the class, maybe even a couple of times depending on class size and time.

Explain to the class that it's difficult to remember when there are so many things to remember, but God never forgets any of us ever. As many people as there are in the whole world, He knows the number of hairs on each head...and that's always changing! **God never forgets us.**

## **PRAYER**

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's continual remembrance of His children. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

# Interview A Friend!

What is your name?

When is your birthday?

What is your favorite color?

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite thing to do?

What is your favorite school subject?

What do you want to do when you grow up?

If you could go on vacation anywhere in the world where would you go?

Do you have any pets?

What are their names?

What is your favorite verse in the Bible?

What are the names of your brothers or sisters?

