

JOSEPH

SCRIPTURE: GEN 37:1-50:26

LESSON SEVEN

Joseph was the son of Jacob and Rachel. Now because Jacob loved Rachel so much, he also loved her sons even more than his other sons. Read Gen 37:3. We'll see in the beginning of Joseph's life that this favoritism became a problem for Joseph and for his father.

Joseph was younger than his brothers, but he had dreams from God that showed him in charge of his whole family! Joseph wasn't careful in what he said, and he told his brothers and parents all about these dreams. Read Gen 37:5-11. Well, the brothers didn't like this and they made plans for him, bad plans! They first planned to kill their brother, but the eldest prevented them from doing so. Read Gen 37:13-24. Instead, they sold their brother to some traders from another land! Read Gen 37:25-28. Then they took his special coat, covered it in blood, and lied to their father that Joseph had been attacked and killed by a wild animal. Jacob was so sad to hear this! He thought his son had died!

But in all this God was working for their benefit - God was working to save the family. You'll see!

(cf. Gen 39) Joseph was taken away and ended up working for a man named Potiphar in Egypt. This man Potiphar was an official in Egypt, and he liked Joseph so much he put Joseph in charge of all his household. Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife really liked Joseph - actually she liked him too much! But Joseph was a good man and he didn't touch or kiss Potiphar's wife at all because she was married! Well she didn't like this, and so she lied and got Joseph in trouble. Joseph got in so much trouble that he actually ended up in jail.

In jail Joseph became known as a person who could interpret dreams. God had given Joseph insight. Eventually, Joseph was asked to interpret the

dreams of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh appreciated this so much that he brought Joseph out of prison to work for him directly. Read Gen 41:38-43.

(cf. Gen 42-45) One of the main stories of his life happened when Joseph's brothers came down to Egypt. There was a famine back in their land, and because of Joseph's ability to interpret dreams, he had been able to prepare Egypt for the famine. There was plenty of food in Egypt. So the brothers made the journey there to get food and to bring it back. Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him. So Joseph tested them to see if they were sorry for what they did to him. He tested them to see if they had changed at all, and to see if they were better men. The brothers passed the test Joseph set out for them. Because Joseph could see that they had changed, he revealed to them that he was their brother! The brothers were afraid Joseph would punish them, but he embraced them and invited them all and their father to come live in Egypt where there was plenty of food. Read Gen 45:25-46:4.

Even long after this, when Jacob died, the brothers were again afraid that Joseph would hurt them for what they had done to him. They sent him a message, but Joseph assured them that he meant them no harm. Joseph saw in all these events the hand of God working behind the scenes. Read Gen 50:15-21.

TRUTHS AND APPLICATION

We can learn from this story that even when bad things happen, God is still with us. From being sold, to being in prison, to being second in command of a nation, God was with Joseph. Even in the worst places, God had not abandoned him. In the end, everything Joseph went through was for the sake of him and his family. God worked to save them and all of Egypt (and probably surrounding nations too!) from the famine that came. Because Joseph was in the right place and because God let him interpret dreams, he was able to help Egypt prepare for the famine. God worked all this out, even if it probably didn't seem so when Joseph was in prison. Even

when we're having bad days, or if things go wrong in our lives, remember that God is still with us. We need to trust God and still do what is right, even if we think God has left or abandoned us, because in reality, he hasn't!

So the next time something bad happens, try praying to God. God hears our prayers and wants us to talk to him. This is a way we remind ourselves also that we trust God when bad things happen. Our lesson today is about trusting God's plan even in bad times, and one way we can live this out is to pray when bad things happen.

MEMORY VERSE

Gen 50:19-20 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."