



4

Joseph in Egypt

Key Themes

- God is sovereign over all things.
- God rewards faith and obedience.

Key Passages

- Genesis 39:2–3, 39:21, 39:23, 41:16, 41:25, 41:28, 41:32, 45:4–5, 46:29, 50:19–20

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize God's sovereignty through all the circumstances in Joseph's life.
- Identify examples of how God rewarded Joseph for his obedience.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will continue to learn the Twelve Sons of Jacob song by singing the song to the tune of "Skip, Skip, Skip to My Lou."



Activity 1: Missing Words Memory Verse Review

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Students will fill in the Missing Words Memory Verse worksheet.



Studying God's Word

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God was with Joseph throughout the trials of enslavement and imprisonment in Egypt. God used those circumstances to save many lives, as well as to reward Joseph's faith and obedience.



Activity 2: Trust and Obey Word Sort

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Teams of students will sort the words "trust" and "obey" from other opposite meaning word cards within a one-minute period. The team with the most words wins.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print one Twelve Sons of Jacob song sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- Optional: have candy or some other small prize available to recognize students who have learned the names of the sons of Jacob.

- Twelve Sons of Jacob song sheet for each student
- Optional: reward candy for Sons of Jacob memory work



MISSING WORDS MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

- Remove or cover the Memory Verse Poster before class.
- Print one Missing Words Memory Verse worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Missing Words Memory Verse worksheet for each student
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Find and set out pictures of camels and Bedouin lifestyle.
- Print Trade Route map from the Resource DVD-ROM or bring an appropriate map from another source.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Trade Route Map



TRUST AND OBEY WORD SORT

- Print the Trust and Obey word sort cards from the Resource DVD-ROM—one set for every 3 to 4 students (this is a team activity).
- Cut the cards apart and place a set of cards into an envelope for each team.

- Set of Trust and Obey word cards in envelope for each team



Memory Verse

Genesis 50:19–20 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

In order to prepare your heart and mind for the lesson this week, read Genesis 39–50.

Throughout the life story of Joseph as recorded in Genesis, we see that in spite of amazingly adverse circumstances, Joseph remained obedient and God remained faithful. Although Joseph's arrival in Egypt was extremely traumatic (sold as a slave by his own brothers), we know that God was with him (Genesis 39:2).

After purchasing Joseph, Potiphar quickly realized the Lord was with Joseph and that the Lord made all he did prosperous. Because of this, Potiphar made Joseph the overseer of the house (Genesis 39:3–5). While Joseph served there, God orchestrated another difficult situation for him when Potiphar's wife accused him falsely of immoral behavior. This false accusation landed Joseph in prison (Genesis 39:20). But once again, God showed His faithfulness to Joseph by looking favorably at the situation and arranging for Joseph to become the administrator of the prison (Genesis 39:21–22).

While in prison, Joseph explained the dreams of two fellow prisoners—the Pharaoh's former cupbearer (butler) and baker (Genesis 40). He correctly described what these servants' dreams meant, and nearly two years later he was summoned to use this unique gift again—this time for Pharaoh (Genesis 41:14–15). After giving God the credit and the glory (Genesis 41:16), Joseph was able to explain Pharaoh's dreams declaring that seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine in the land. Impressed by Joseph's interpretation and the advice he offered, Pharaoh appointed him over all the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:41).

When the famine hit, it affected not only Egypt but Canaan as well. Joseph's family came from Canaan to purchase grain, and Joseph recognized them. After several tests and several trips to Canaan and back, the family was reunited in Egypt. It was this devastating famine that God used to reconcile Joseph with his brothers and his father, Jacob.

God's sovereignty in all situations is confirmed throughout this account and is summarized by Joseph when he tells the very brothers who sold him into slavery, "And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and

lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Genesis 45:7–8).

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Over the past several years there has been a revolution in Egyptology (the study of ancient Egypt), particularly as it relates to the chronology of Egyptian dynasties. More and more a new, shorter chronology is being accepted, which confirms many of the dates and details regarding the Israelite's time in Egypt.

Some conservative biblical scholars identify Pharaoh Sesostris I as the Pharaoh who appointed Joseph over Egypt, with Joseph himself possibly being identified as Mentuhotep, Sesostris's vizier or prime minister. This was during the Egyptian period known as the Middle Kingdom.

Details of Joseph's time in Egypt as recorded in Scripture compare well to details known of this time and place through other sources. Some of these include:

- Potiphar's purchase of Joseph (Genesis 39:1)—There was private ownership of slaves in ancient Egypt.
- Joseph purchased for 20 shekels (Genesis 37:28)—The price of a slave during the Middle Kingdom period was about 20 shekels.
- Joseph served as Potiphar's house steward (Genesis 39:4)—House stewards oversaw the finances and agricultural holdings of their masters.
- Joseph thrown in prison (Genesis 39:20)—Egypt was one of the few nations in the Ancient Near East that had prisons.
- Joseph cleaning and shaving before seeing Pharaoh (Genesis 41:14)—Egyptians of the Middle Kingdom were very concerned about personal cleanliness and the removal of all facial hair.
- A gold chain given to Joseph (Genesis 41:42)—This was a customary Egyptian reward for services rendered.

While we don't look to external evidence to try and "prove" the Bible, history and archaeological evidence such as this does provide confirmation, and can be useful for showing others that the Bible's history can be trusted, just as its gospel message can be trusted.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Through the remarkable events recorded in Genesis 39–50, the promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was kept alive as God placed Joseph in a position to preserve His people during the time of famine, allowing for the line of the Redeemer (through Joseph’s brother Judah) to be preserved.

Many have asked if there is any historical evidence for these seven years of famine. While there is no direct evidence for it, there are several events that may refer to it.

In the cliffs of Beni Hassan, about 230 miles south of Cairo, tombs have been found from the Egyptian 12th Dynasty—about the same time Joseph was in Egypt and Pharaoh had set him over the land (Genesis 41:44). One of the tombs belonged to Ameni, a provincial governor in the time of Sesostri I. On the wall of his tomb he wrote,

No child of the poor did I afflict; no widow did I oppress; no landowner did I displace; no herdsmen did I drive away; from no small farmer did I take away his men for my works. No one was unhappy in my days, not even in the years of famine. For I had tilled all the fields of the nome of Mah, up to its southern and northern frontiers. Thus I prolonged the life of its inhabitants and preserved the food which it produced. No hungry man was in it. I distributed equally to the widow as to the married woman. I did not prefer the great to the humble in all that I gave away.

The famine mentioned here meets the criteria of Joseph’s famine in four major aspects:

1. The approximate date of the famine recorded in the tomb corresponds with the time of Joseph’s service in Egypt.
2. The famine lasted several years.

3. Preparations were made in advance to meet the needs of this disaster by gathering food.
4. The food was distributed during the years of famine.

Also, there is a canal that runs from the River Nile to bring water into the Faiyum Oasis. It is known as “Joseph’s Canal” and was dug during the 12th Dynasty, possibly at Joseph’s orders in preparation for the expected famine.

While we can’t expect archaeological confirmation for every detail of biblical history, God often provides confirmation for His Word through extra-biblical discoveries. However, we must always rely on His Word first as the basis of our worldview. It is the history book of the universe, written by the only eyewitness to all the events recorded—God Himself!

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Father, I rejoice that ordinary people like me can know you, the one true, sovereign God. Thank you for revealing your character and accurate world history through Genesis. Help me to recognize more clearly that you sovereignly manage every detail of my life—just as you did for Joseph. Lord, even the things that bring sorrow, distress, pain, and heartbreak are brought from you and used by you to draw me closer to you through faith. Please open the hearts of the children in my class to see that you are the only one on which they can depend. Transform and strengthen them to stand bravely and obediently for you within their culture as Joseph did.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will sing the Twelve Sons of Jacob song. Pass out the song sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Missing Words Memory Verse Review

MATERIALS

- Missing Words Memory Verse worksheet for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Remove the Memory Verse poster before class. Give each student a Missing Words Memory Verse worksheet to fill in.

Usually we practice our memory verses by speaking them, but today I'm going

to let you write the verses. This paper I'm passing out has missing words. You are to fill in the missing words from memory!

There are only two more weeks before we get a new memory verse, so if you haven't memorized Genesis 50:19–20 yet, try really hard today.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

When we ended last time Jacob was mourning the death of his son and Joseph was headed for Egypt. And as we will see today, that is just where God wanted him.

- ? Who remembers where this account of Joseph started? *The book of Genesis. Genesis 37.*

That's right. There are over 10 chapters in Genesis that tell us about Joseph. Today we are going to learn about his experiences in Egypt.

SOVEREIGN

(Refer to Attributes poster.)

We have so much to cover, and I'm going to ask you to help me in a couple of ways as we read more about Joseph's exciting life in the book of Genesis. I want everyone to turn to Genesis 39 in your Bibles. That is where we are going to start today.

Although Joseph lived many years ago, he did live. He was once a boy like some of you, who grew to be a man—a man who trusted and obeyed God. He believed in God and He believed that God was in control of all things—God was and still is sovereign. *Refer to sovereign on the Attributes of God poster.*

After Joseph was sold by his hateful brothers to some traveling salesmen, God brought Joseph right to the powerful country of Egypt, where he was bought as a slave by an official named Potiphar. *Show Trade Route Map, tracing trade route to Egypt.*

I would think that Joseph, only 17 years old, was very frightened. He was far from home and alone in a strange land. But things began to get a little better when he was welcomed into Potiphar's home to serve there. In fact, Potiphar liked Joseph very much and actually gave him a very high position in his home. Joseph worked for Potiphar and made Potiphar more successful than he had been.

Things seemed to be going well, until Potiphar's wife made up a terrible lie about Joseph. Of course, Potiphar believed his wife and had poor Joseph thrown into prison for something he did not do!

But the keeper of the prison (the officer in charge) liked Joseph. And because he liked Joseph he pretty much left him alone. Joseph was able to work and made things in the prison better!

So why did everyone like Joseph so much and why was he successful? Let's find out!

I need your help reading some verses. If you don't have your Bibles open to Genesis 39, do that now. I need four people to read four verses. And I want you to listen very carefully to these verses. Something is repeated in each verse, and I want to know who can tell me what it is when we are finished reading. *Assign four students to read Genesis 39:2–3, 39:21, 39:23. Write on the board, "Genesis 39:2–3, 39:21, 39:23."*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Very good. Did you all listen carefully? Look again at those verses and tell me what the phrase is that keeps repeating. *"The Lord was with Joseph (or him)."* Write on the board, *"The Lord was with Joseph."*

► Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for easier planning.

Genesis 39:2–3,
39:21, 39:23

Discover the Truth

- ? Who was with Joseph? *The Lord.*
- ? And why did Potiphar and the prison guard like Joseph so much? *The Lord was with Joseph.*
- ? And why did everything Joseph do prosper? *The Lord was with Joseph.*

Great! Now we are moving on in this exciting account!



READ THE WORD

So Joseph was in prison. But we know that the Lord was with him. I'm going to tell you a bit more. Turn to Genesis 40 in your Bibles.

Joseph's life had a lot to do with dreams. He started off dreaming when he was young—and those dreams got him into big trouble with his family. Remember, those first dreams meant that his brothers and his parents would one day bow down to him. His family didn't like that much.

Here in Genesis 40 more dreams came into play for Joseph. This time two of his fellow prisoners—the king's butler and baker—had dreams. They didn't have any idea what their dreams meant, but Joseph was able to help them. God had given him a gift for interpreting dreams, and he told both of them what their dreams meant.

It turns out his interpretations were right! One of the prisoners—the baker—died in prison, but the other—the butler—was released. And Joseph had some hope that when the butler went back to service for the king—or Pharaoh—he would put in a good word for Joseph. But alas, the butler forgot Joseph, and two more years went by before Joseph was able to get out of prison.

It was the interpretation of more dreams that helped Joseph get out of prison. This time it was the pharaoh himself who had two different dreams. No one could help Pharaoh to determine what the dreams meant. So he called Joseph out of prison for help. Joseph was able to tell Pharaoh what the dreams meant—that there would be seven years of plenty in the land followed by seven years of severe famine. This was when Pharaoh put Joseph into a high place of leadership over all of the land of Egypt to help prepare for the coming famine.

- ? Wow! What an exciting and frightening life Joseph had. And do you remember why everything Joseph did seemed to turn out OK? We saw the answer earlier in Genesis 39. *Refer to the board work. The Lord was with him.*

That's right. The Lord was with him. And Joseph knew the Lord was with him, and he knew the Lord was the one in control of everything going on.

OK. I need your help reading again. I'd like four readers to read four different verses from chapter 41. Write on the board, "Genesis 41:16, 41:25, 41:28, 41:32." Assign one verse to each reader.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Listen very carefully to all of these verses. Each verse says the same thing in different ways. I want you to tell me what each verse is telling us. *Have the children read their verses.*

- ? What did you hear in those verses? *Allow children to answer.*
- ? Look at verse 16. Who would give Pharaoh an answer? *God.*
- ? Look at verse 25. Who had shown Pharaoh what was going to happen? *God.*
- ? Look at verse 28. Who had shown Pharaoh what was going to happen? *God.*
- ? Look at verse 32. Who would bring His plans to pass? *God.*

Discover the Truth

- ? Now everyone look up here. Who is in control? *God. Write on the board, "God is in control" after "Genesis 41:16, 41:25, 41:28, 41:32."*

Yes! God was in control with Joseph. And God is still in control today.

- ? What is that attribute? The one that tells us that God is in control of everything? *Sovereign.*

And remember, not only was God in complete control of everything, but He was also with Joseph every step of the way. *Point to the verses and statement you wrote previously on the board. "Genesis 39:2–3, 39:21, 39:23—the Lord was with Joseph."*



READ THE WORD

Well, we aren't finished yet! We are going to find out how God, who is in control of everything, reunited Joseph with his family.

Because the famine was so widespread, even Joseph's family—his brothers and his father—were affected. They heard there was food in Egypt, and Jacob sent his sons there to try to get some. When they got to Egypt they were directed to Pharaoh's court—and right to Joseph, the very one they had sold into slavery so many years before.

Now they didn't recognize Joseph, but he recognized them. And although he did not reveal himself immediately, he did eventually let them know that he was their brother.

Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 46:29. Someone read that verse for me. *Have someone read the verse.*

Genesis 46:29

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? **How did Joseph's reunion with his father go?** *It went very well. He wept for a good while. They were very happy to see each other.*

Now someone read Genesis 45:4–5. *Have someone read these verses.*

Genesis 45:4–5

? **What do these verses say about God?** *God was the one who sent Joseph to Egypt. God used the hatred of Joseph's brothers to bring all of this to pass.*

Let's say our memory verses together again. I'd rather you not look at the poster, but if you have to, go ahead. *Say Genesis 50:19–20 together.*

? **Who meant evil for Joseph? If you don't remember, look in Genesis 50:18.** *His brothers.*

Genesis 50:19–20

? **But who meant everything that happened to Joseph for good?** *Genesis 50:20. God.*

? **Why did all of this happen? Look at the end of verse 20.** *So that many people would be saved.*

? **Who was in control of Joseph's life from beginning to end?** *God.*

Discover the Truth

Do you see? God was in control of everything. He worked through terrible circumstances—including the jealousy and hatred of Joseph's brothers. And it was God who brought Joseph to Egypt and allowed him to rise to a powerful position so that later on, Joseph could save the very ones who had tried to kill him. God was always in control of everything. He acted sovereignly to move Joseph's family so they would wind up living in Egypt. God was setting the stage for the rest of history.

And the reunion between Joseph and his family was very sweet. It was a wonderful blessing. God once again rewarded Joseph. Joseph had been obedient to trust God all of his life. And God showed Joseph rewards for that obedience.





Trust and Obey Word Sort

MATERIALS

- Trust and Obey word sort cards
- Envelopes to hold the sets of cards

INSTRUCTIONS

Copy at least two sets of the Trust and Obey word sort cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. Cut the cards apart and place sets in separate envelopes. This could be a team activity. Pass out one set of cards to every 3–4 students.

Joseph lived his life in a trust-and-obey way. God rewards faith in Him and obedience to His Word.

There are words in these envelopes. The words *trust* and *obey* are in here, but there are words that mean the opposite of trust and obey. Words like *give up*, *give in*, *doubt*, *disobey*, *fear others*, *unbelief*, *sin*, *rebellion*, and *self-assured*. Get the picture?

We often want to do the opposite of “trust and obey.” Yet we know God wants us to trust and obey Him—just like Joseph did.

Now I am going to divide the class into teams. *Divide class into two or more teams.*

I’ll give a set of word cards to each team. When I say “Go,” each team has one minute to sort the “trust” and “obey” cards from all the other bad choices.

Whichever team has the most trust and obey cards when the time is up, wins. *If teams tie, remix the cards and play again, shortening the play time.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God expects us to trust Him and obey what He says.

Joseph chose to trust and obey God; what about you? What choices will you make?

There are many things in our lives that distract us from God. We all need to sort out what God wants us to do from sinful choices we might want to make. If we trust and obey with a sincere love for Jesus Christ, we will know more of God’s blessings.



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

I’m so glad that God had Joseph’s life recorded for us in the Bible, because in it we can see God’s work through all the hard times in Joseph’s life. Joseph was sold into slavery, separated from his family, lied about, imprisoned, and forgotten (by men, but not by God).

But God used all those situations, which seemed so bad at the time, to keep His promises, to glorify His name, and to show His love. God brought Joseph to power in Egypt at just the right time to save his family and the lives of many other people.

On top of all that, God never left Joseph but graciously rewarded his obedience by allowing him to do well at Potiphar's house, the prison, and the palace, and even to be reunited with his family.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Joseph believed God; he believed and feared God far more than he was afraid of what people thought. Joseph understood that it was God who was working in the world, and he was not ashamed to point it out even to Pharaoh.

There will be times in your life or the lives of your friends when things happen that don't seem very good at the time. Things like moving away, divorce, illness, accidents, parents losing jobs, death, and others. It is at these times that this lesson about Joseph can really help you. Remember, so many terrible things happened to Joseph. Yet we know from our memory verse that God always meant it for good. And in the end, God worked it all out. The lesson here is that we need to trust God—no matter what is happening. And we can know that what He is doing in our lives will turn out OK, no matter how hard it seems at the time.



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 50:19–20 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God that He never stops working in the circumstances of each of our lives.
- Ask God to strengthen our weak wills to trust and obey Him more.

