



# 3

## Joseph's Early Life

### Key Themes

- God is sovereign over all things.
- God's plans are perfect.

### Key Passages

- Genesis 37:6–8, 37:19–20

### Lesson Focus

- God's plan for Joseph was perfect.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

Teacher will tape newsprint over the table and draw a large basic outline of a boy with a striped coat. Students will tear pieces of colored construction paper and glue them onto the stripes.



### Circle Time

**Prayer**—Using the Prayer page of the Flip Chart, discuss prayer and give each child the opportunity to pray after determining what type of prayer you will offer today.

**God's Word**—In Joseph's early life, his father favored him while his brothers hated him. His dreams indicated that one day his family would bow to him, but instead his brothers persecuted him and sold him into slavery in Egypt. In spite of man's sins, God was organizing circumstances to fulfill His sovereign plan to save lives and change Joseph.

**Song**—Children will sing "12 Sons of Jacob" and the "God Is Sovereign" songs.



### Activity 1: Paper Chains

Students will loop and tape colored paper together to make paper chains.



### Activity 2: Joseph's Dream About Stars

Students will color the Joseph's Dream activity sheet, then stick 11 star stickers beside Joseph.



### Memory Verse Review/Snack

Children will review the memory verse while enjoying the snack for the day. You may want to use the snack as incentive to recite or repeat the memory verse.

# Lesson Preparation

## WHAT YOU WILL DO

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED



### FOR THE TEACHER

- Study the Prepare to Share section.

- Go Before the Throne. Student Take Home Sheets



### COME ON IN

- Gather a piece of large, blank newsprint to cover each table in your room. Draw a large basic outline of a boy with a striped coat on each piece of newsprint.

- Gather four or five colors of construction paper.
- Newsprint
- Construction paper, various colors
- Glue



### CIRCLE TIME

- Print one copy of Abraham's Family Tree sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use in teaching the lesson.
- Print one copy of Joseph's Dream illustrations from the Resource DVD-ROM for use in class.
- Before class, prepare a paper chain to show the children what the first activity will be.
- Practice the songs on the Songs Sheet at the back of this Teacher Guide.

- Lesson Flip Chart
- Abraham's Family Tree sheet
- Sheaves Dream and Stars Dream illustrations
- Small bundled sheaf of grass or pictures of wheat sheaves for illustration during class
- 12 Sons of Jacob and God Is Sovereign song sheets
- 20 silver coins in bag
- Paper chain sample



### PAPER CHAINS

- Cut six-inch strips of paper to be used by children to make paper chains.

- Strips of paper
- Tape



### JOSEPH'S DREAM ABOUT STARS

- Print one copy of Joseph's Dream activity sheet from Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- Gather enough star stickers for each child to have 11.
- Before class, complete one Joseph's Dreams activity sheet to show the children.

- Joseph's Dream activity sheet for each student
- Star stickers
- Completed Joseph's Dreams activity sheet



### MEMORY VERSE REVIEW/SNACK

- Prepare and bring snacks.

- Lesson Flip Chart for memory verse review
- Snacks



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Before beginning your lesson preparation this week, prepare your heart and your mind by reading Genesis 37:1–36.

The history of Joseph, beginning in Genesis 37, is a fascinating biblical account demonstrating God's sovereignty and orchestration of circumstances to fulfill His plan. The characters are colorful; the plot takes amazing twists and turns; and we see the full gamut of human emotion and experience including favoritism, envy, remorse, impatience, perseverance, temptation, self-control, resentment, hatred, lying, deceit, reconciliation, and faithfulness. But in the midst of it all, we recognize God at work accomplishing His eternal purposes, in spite of the sinful and deceitful nature of man.

In Genesis 35, God called Jacob to move from Shechem to Bethel. Bethel was the very place God had appeared to Jacob in his vision of the ladder (Genesis 28:12, 28:19).

It was in Bethel that God changed Jacob's name to Israel and again confirmed that he would become a great nation and would inherit the land of Canaan (Genesis 35:1, 35:10–12). God changed the names of several people in the Bible (Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Peter). Some believe this was to let these servants of God know that they were now marked for a life completely dedicated to Him and to His purposes.

God blessed Jacob with twelve sons—six from Leah, two from Rachel, two from Bilhah (Rachel's maidservant), and two from Zilpah (Leah's maidservant). Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah (Genesis 29:30), and he favored the two sons she bore to him—Joseph and Benjamin—above the others. Jacob's obvious favoritism toward Joseph provoked the dramatic and grief-filled accounts of Joseph's early life.

It was Jacob's evident fondness for Joseph that led him to give Joseph a coat of many colors—just one more event to provoke his brothers to envy and hatred (Genesis 37:3).

Joseph's humiliating dreams were the last straw for his brothers. His description of these dreams, inferring that one day his family would bow down to him, further enraged his brothers. They were more than ready to take advantage of the opportunity to be rid of him when he joined them on the plains of Dothan. There they seized him and flung him into a pit (Genesis 37:22). This, of course, was all according to God's perfect plan and timing. A caravan of traders came by

at this point and Joseph was sold to them as a slave and was on his way to Egypt (Genesis 37:27–28). God was moving men to accomplish His great purpose. And precisely because of Joseph's seemingly hopeless circumstances, the nation of Israel would be preserved during the coming famine. Our God's plans cannot be thwarted, and His counsel will stand forever (Psalm 33:10–11). He will use even the evil actions of men to fulfill His promises (Acts 2:22–23).

## APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

While we understand and accept the Bible as true history, inspired and preserved by God, it is helpful to know that there are historical and archaeological evidences that confirm the Bible's history. The Scripture passage we are studying this week tells us that Joseph's brothers were pasturing their flocks near Dothan (Genesis 37:17). Joseph traveled from Hebron to Shechem (about 60 miles) in search of his brothers, only to learn that they had moved on to Dothan (about 15 miles from Shechem).

The city of Dothan is identified with modern Tell Dothan in Israel. It lies along the ancient trading route called the *Via Maris*. This is no doubt the route the Midianite traders were taking when Joseph's brothers encountered them. This important route led from Damascus in the far North, across the Jordan River, and then along the seacoast to Egypt—where Joseph would be enslaved according to God's plan.

In Tell Dothan today, archaeological evidences of old buildings and two ancient cisterns have been discovered. One of these may have been the very cistern Joseph was tossed into. The land is still rich for pasturing flocks, and a natural spring supplies water to the area. It would have provided a great place for Jacob's sons to feed their flocks. These details lend support to the biblical account and once again confirm the accuracy of Scripture.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The covenant God made with Abraham over 200 years earlier (Genesis 12:1–3), reaffirmed with Isaac (Genesis 26:1–5), and then proclaimed to Jacob (Genesis 28:13–17) was continuing through history to its fulfillment. God had woven His plan through generations and through His ordained circumstances to this point in history—Joseph's enslavement in

Egypt—in order to continue leading His people to the Promised Land.

Jacob was 91 years old when Joseph was born in Haran to Rachel (Genesis 30:22–24). Joseph lived with his large family in Haran for another six years until finally Jacob fled from Laban, his father-in-law. After 20 years of servitude, Jacob returned to Canaan (Genesis 31:20–21).

On his return to Canaan, Jacob was reconciled with his brother Esau (Genesis 33:4). And then he at last made his way to Shechem, in the land of Canaan, where he erected an altar and worshipped the God of Israel (Genesis 33:18–20). God’s Word tells us of another altar built here generations earlier—when Abram first entered the land of Canaan and also worshipped the Lord (Genesis 12:7).

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



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Father, you have orchestrated events in the lives of men of the Bible to fulfill your promises and to make them more like you. I thank you for being in control of the events in my life, too. I pray that you will help me and my students understand your ways and trust you more through the hardships of our lives.



## COME ON IN

As children arrive . . .

- They will tear off colored pieces of construction paper and glue them onto the newsprint image of Joseph to give him a coat of many colors.

During this time you should be at the door welcoming the children as they come in and directing them to sit down at the tables and begin the activity. Have an aid/helper ready to engage the children with the activity.



## REVIEW

Using the Flip Chart, quickly review the previous lessons with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class. Remember, children learn by repetition and review.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the lesson pages from the Flip Chart. Remind the children of each lesson's focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



## Circle Time

*In an orderly manner, have the children assemble in a circle away from the tables—either on the floor or in their chairs.*

*Bring your Bible, stuffed animal, Flip Chart, Abraham's Family Tree sheet, Sheaves Dream and Stars Dream illustrations, grain sheaf pictures or sample of bundled sheaf of grass, 20 silver coins in a bag, a paper chain sample from Activity 1, and any other props you brought or prepared for this lesson.*

### PRAYER

*This prayer time is designed to get children to begin to understand some simple concepts about prayer and to get them to understand that they can pray. Use a special stuffed animal—prayer bear—or appropriate object to pass around the circle as each child gets a turn to pray. Only the child with the stuffed animal is allowed to pray or speak during this time. Using the same stuffed animal or other object all year will add continuity and structure to this time.*

**We start our Bible Study with prayer. Let's pray.** *Turn to the Prayer page in the Flip Chart. Briefly review the different types of prayer presented there. Then determine which type you want the children to pray today.*

- I love you prayers—Adoration
- I'm sorry prayers—Confession
- Thank you prayers—Thanksgiving
- Please prayers—Supplication

*Today Adoration is suggested. You might proceed this way.*

**God is worthy of all of our praise. Today let's say prayers of adoration—and tell God how much we love Him and why.**

- Before making your transition to circle time, we suggest you take time for restroom breaks and hand washing.
- Preschoolers need to move. This is a good opportunity to get them to move. Make an orderly transition to the circle time. You can have carpet squares if you want to sit on the floor, or help them to move their chairs into the circle.

The prayers you begin with should be specific to your needs. This will model to the children that you believe God does care about all the details of your life and you pray to Him about these things. Your example will increase their confidence in praying to God.

**I'll start. Dear God, . . .** (insert personal prayer here).

Pass the stuffed animal around the circle, giving all the children an opportunity to say a prayer telling God they love Him.

**Very good! Now let's put our stuffed animal away and we'll get into God's Word.**

## GOD'S WORD

*These first four questions will be repeated each week. The repetition of these questions will help to solidify these simple but foundational truths in the children's minds at a young age.*

- ? **Before we begin, what is this?** *Hold up your Bible. The Bible!*
- ? **What is in this Bible?** *God's Holy Word!*
- ? **What does the Bible tell us?** *Everything we need to know!*
- ? **And all God's Words in this Bible are what?** *True!*
- ? **Last week we learned about twin boys. Who remembers their names?**  
*Jacob and Esau.*

► As you teach, refer often to the Flip Chart picture to keep the children engaged.

In our lesson today, we are going to learn about Jacob's family. Remember that Abraham's family tree began with Abraham and his son, Isaac.

Abraham's son Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Now when Jacob grew up, he had 12 sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. *Show Abraham's Family Tree sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM.*

*Refer to the Flip Chart pictures of Joseph.* This lesson is especially about Joseph, who was Jacob's eleventh son. When he was 17 years old the family lived in the land of Canaan. The Bible tells us that Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other children. In fact, Jacob made Joseph a special tunic or coat—it was very colorful like the coat you decorated when you came in. Usually this kind of honor was given to the oldest son. But Joseph was the second to youngest son. His big brothers sure didn't like the fact that he was getting all this special treatment. The situation was bad, but it was about to get worse. Let's find out why. It had to do with two dreams Joseph had.

Listen very carefully now to what God's Word tells us about the first dream. *Open your Bible and read Genesis 37:6–8.*

- ? **What did Joseph's brothers think of him after he told them the dream?**  
*Reread Genesis 37:8b.*
- ? **They hated him even more. They didn't like the dream Joseph had. But what was the dream about? Do any of you know what a sheaf of wheat is?**  
*Allow for answers.*

Genesis 37:6–8

Here is a picture (or sample) of what a sheaf of wheat might be. You may see something like this out in the country in a farmer's field. *Show the picture of the wheat sheaves or the sample you brought in.*

And this is what Joseph said his dream was about. Twelve wheat sheaves stood for the 12 brothers. And all the brothers' wheat sheaves bowed down to Joseph's wheat. *Show the Sheaves Dream illustration.*

The Bible says his brothers hated him even more because this dream meant that one day they would bow down to their brother! But God's plan for Joseph was perfect!

And then Joseph had another dream! And it wasn't good. He ran and told his brothers about the second dream. It was about stars, the sun, and the moon. And in this dream 11 stars and the sun and the moon bowed down to Joseph. Now the stars were the brothers. And the sun and the moon were his mom and dad! Wow! The WHOLE family would one day bow down to Joseph! *Show the Star Dream illustration.*

One day, Joseph's brothers were far away from home taking care of the sheep. Jacob told Joseph to go check on his brothers and make sure they were doing okay. When the brothers saw Joseph coming they came up with an evil plan. Listen to this! This is right out of God's Word. This really happened to poor Joseph. It was terrible! *Read Genesis 37:19-20.*

Genesis 37:19-20

? What did they want to do to Joseph? *Kill him!*

But the oldest brother, Reuben, didn't want Joseph to be killed. So he said, "Let's not kill him. Let's just throw him in this deep, deep pit." Reuben didn't tell anyone, but he planned on rescuing Joseph when the other brothers weren't around. As soon as Joseph came close, the brothers caught him, ripped off his beautiful coat and threw him in the pit!

It didn't look like God's plan for Joseph was going to happen. How could the brothers bow down to him when he was left in a dark pit to die? We'll find out. God's plans cannot be stopped. And we will see that God's plan for Joseph was perfect.

After they threw Joseph into the pit, the brothers all sat down to eat, when suddenly a group of Ishmaelites came traveling by. The Ismaelites were people from a country far away. They were on their way to Egypt.

? Who do you think sent the Ishmaelites at just the right time? *God.*

That's right. God knew what to do. And the Ishmaelites were headed to Egypt. That is exactly where God wanted Joseph to go. God is sovereign. That means God knows what is going to happen and uses everything that happens for His plan. God is in control of everything! And God's plan for Joseph was perfect.

The brothers sold Joseph for 20 pieces of silver! His brothers betrayed him for silver. Just 20 pieces of silver and their brother was gone! He was now a slave! He could be put in chains, beaten, and worked to death by his owner. This was not good for Joseph. But God's plan for Joseph was perfect. *Pass around bag of 20 silver coins.*

*Refer to the Flip Chart.* Joseph went from being a beloved son to a sold slave in Egypt. Joseph got to Egypt just the way God wanted him to. It certainly didn't seem like Joseph's wonderful dreams were going to come true. But because God is sovereign—in charge of everything—and He doesn't lie, we'll see that Joseph's dreams were right all along. And God's plan for Joseph was perfect.

► Musical instruments, marching, and motions can be added to this section to add interest and help learning.

## SONG

Now we are going to sing! First a song that will help us all remember the names of Jacob's 12 sons. Then three different songs about God's sovereignty. When I say that God is sovereign, I mean He is in control of all things. Let's sing!

? Before we start, who was Jacob's favorite son? *Refer to the Flip Chart. Joseph. Turn to the Flip Chart Song page. Sing the song "12 Sons of Jacob."*

? Very good! Now what does sovereign mean? Who can tell me? *Allow for answers.*

It means God is in control of everything! Let's sing these songs to help us remember that God is in control and He does everything for our good! *Sing one or more of the "God Is Sovereign" songs.*

*Lyrics to the songs can be found on the Song page of the Flip Chart and in the back of this Teacher Guide.*



## Paper Chains

Remember, Joseph was probably put in chains when he was sold as a slave. We're going to make some paper chains like this. Remember, even though Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers, we know that God's plans for him were perfect. *Show the paper chain sample you have assembled.*

### MATERIALS

- Strips of construction paper
- Tape

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Help the children link and tape the paper strips to make paper chains. Allow the children to play with chains once completed and pretend to be chained like slaves.*

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave. It was an evil thing to do, but we know God's plan for Joseph was perfect. God can use even the evil things in our lives for good. God is sovereign. He is in control of everything that happens.



## Joseph's Dream About Stars

Today we heard about two special dreams God sent to Joseph.

? **Do you remember what bowed down to Joseph in his first dream?** *Show the Sheaves Dream illustration. The wheat bowed down to Joseph's wheat.*

? **And what bowed down to him in the second dream?** *Show the Stars Dream illustration. The sun, moon, and 11 stars.*

We're going to make pictures to remind us of one of the dreams that Joseph had—the one about stars.

### MATERIALS

- Joseph's Dream activity sheet for each student
- Star stickers
- Crayons

### INSTRUCTIONS

*Have the children color Joseph and the stars. Then pass out star stickers to be added to the sheet.*

### CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God gave Joseph special dreams about him being so important his family would all bow down to him. Then his brothers sold him as a slave! It didn't seem like the dreams would ever come true; but we know that even when all those evil things happened to Joseph, God's plan for Joseph was perfect. God used all the bad things for good! And that's what our memory verse says.



## Memory Verse Review/Snack

**Genesis 50:20** But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

*After thanking God for your snack, review the memory verse with the children while enjoying the snack for the day. You may want to use the snack as incentive to recite or repeat the memory verse.*

*Use the Memory Verse page in the Flip Chart. Explain the verse to the children as you go over the verse together. Say the verse and point at each picture several times. Ask the children if anyone wants to try to say it on their own.*



## Applying God's Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Today we learned about 12 brothers.

? **Do you remember their names?** *Sing the song again with the children. Turn to the "12 Sons of Jacob" song on the Flip Chart Song page. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.*

- ? Who was Jacob's very favorite son? *Joseph. Refer to the Flip Chart.*
- ? What happened to Joseph? *Refer to the Flip Chart. He was sold as a slave by his brothers!*

Joseph's brothers hated him, and they sold him as a slave. Joseph was taken far away from his home and his family to Egypt. It seemed like his special dreams would never come true. But even though his brothers were evil toward Joseph, we know God would work it out for good. We know that God's plans for Joseph were perfect even though it really looked bad.

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

You know, it was a long, long time ago that God promised Abraham that he would have a special land and descendants (family) that would be like the stars and couldn't be numbered. And Abraham's promise passed to his son Isaac. Isaac's promise passed to Jacob.

- ? I wonder who the promise will pass to now? *Joseph. Show the Abraham's Family Tree sheet.*
- ? And who is the very special descendant of Abraham? Who did God promise would one day come from Abraham's family? *Show the Abraham's Family Tree sheet, the cross, and Jesus's name. Jesus.*

God's plans for Joseph were perfect. And His plans for us are perfect too. Sometimes it doesn't seem that way. But we need to believe and trust that God knows what He is doing. And even when things look really bad, we need to know that His plans for us are perfect.

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



## Group Prayer Time

- Thank God that His plans for Joseph were perfect even when it looked terrible. He is more powerful than evil.
- Thank God that His plans for us are perfect, even when times are hard.

**Do you still have more time? Review the past quarters using the Flip Charts, add another coloring page, recite and review the current and past memory verses, sing more songs, or bring out play dough. Keep the children occupied with intentional, God-centered activities until their parents come to pick them up.**

# Song Sheet

## 12 SONS OF JACOB

*(To the tune of "Ten Little Indians")*

Reuben and Simeon, Levi, Judah,  
*(One little, two little, three little Indians,)*

Dan and Naphtali, Gad, also Asher,  
*(Four little, five little, six little Indians,)*

Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin,  
*(Seven little, eight little, nine little Indians,)*

These are the sons of Jacob!  
*(Ten little Indian boys!)*

## GOD IS SOVEREIGN

*(To the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb")*

God is sovereign, it is true,  
*(Mary had a little lamb,)*

It is true, it is true.  
*(Little lamb, little lamb,)*

God is sovereign, it is true,  
*(Mary had a little lamb,)*

He's in charge of all things!  
*(Its fleece was white as snow.)*

He controls all things for you,  
*(Everywhere that Mary went,)*

Things for you, things for you.  
*(Mary went, Mary went;)*

He controls all things for you,  
*(Everywhere that Mary went,)*

And does them for your good!  
*(The lamb was sure to go!)*

## GOD IS SOVEREIGN 2

*(To the tune of "Jesus Loves Me")*

God is sovereign, this is true;  
*(Jesus loves me this I know,)*

He takes good care of me and you!  
*(For the Bible tells me so.)*

He watches over everything,  
*(Little ones to Him belong,)*

And is King above all kings.  
*(They are weak, but He is strong.)*

Yes, God is sovereign.  
*(Yes, Jesus loves me!)*

Yes, God is sovereign.  
*(Yes, Jesus loves me!)*

Yes, God is sovereign.  
*(Yes, Jesus loves me!)*

He reigns above all things!  
*(The Bible tells me so.)*

## GOD IS SOVEREIGN 3

*(To the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")*

God is sovereign of the sea,  
*(Twinkle, twinkle, little star,)*  
*Move hands like waves.*

Of the stars, and grass, and bees.  
*(How I wonder what you are!)*  
*Point to sky, spread hands to floor, pretend to fly.*

He controls the ants so small  
*(Up above the world so high;)*  
*Scrunch down really small.*

And giraffes that stand so tall.  
*(Like a diamond in the sky.)*  
*Stretch up tall.*

God is sovereign, this is true.  
*(Twinkle, twinkle, little star,)*  
*Look up and point up.*

He's in charge of me and you!  
*(How I wonder what you are!)*  
*Shout "you!"*

