

**This is written as a 2-part lesson; some classes only have one week allotted due to school conferences. Please adjust accordingly!*

LESSON AIM:

To teach students that God is sovereign (*all-powerful, in control*) in all circumstances of our life.

KEY SCRIPTURE: **Genesis 37 and chapters 39-45.** (*This story covers a large portion of scripture; please read over the story and choose which verses you would have the kids read as you will not have time to read all of it!*)

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does the Bible say that Abraham was? (*Father of many nations, friend of God, father of faith, etc.*)
- 2) How old was Sarah and Abraham when they had their first child? (*90 and 100 yrs old*)
- 3) What does the name “Isaac” mean? Why did they name him that?
- 4) Review last week’s verse, have the students explain it in their own words.

INTRODUCTION:

- Have you ever said, "*That's not fair!*"
- Ask your students if anything that they think is "not fair" has happened to them.
- How do you react when you are treated unfairly? Do you fight back?
- We are going to hear a story about a young man name Joseph who had A LOT of very unfair things happen to him, but yet God had a plan in all of those things that He was going to use for good.

LESSON:

Genesis 37:1-10. Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob. It was Joseph's great-grandfather, Abraham, who God promised would be the father of a great nation. Joseph's ten older brothers were step-brothers, (do any of you have step-brothers or step-sisters? So did Joseph!) He also had a younger brother, who was his real brother, whose name was Benjamin. Because Jacob loved Joseph more than the older brothers, his step-brothers hated him. Their hatred grew even more after Joseph had several dreams which suggested that his brothers and even his mother and father would bow down to him (if you ever have a dream like that, it’s probably best NOT to tell others about it!)

Genesis 37:12-36. One day Jacob sent Joseph to check on his older brothers who were grazing the family flocks (*of livestock*) in Dotham. The brothers saw Joseph coming from a long way off and realized this was a perfect opportunity to kill Joseph once and for all. First, they threw him into a deep pit while they decided what to do. Later a group of Midian traders came by on their way to Egypt. The brothers had an idea, so they pulled Joseph out of the pit, ripped off the beautiful coat of many colors which his father had given him, and sold him as a slave to the Midianites. Joseph was screaming and crying and pleading for them not to do this, but they didn’t care and he left in chains never to be seen again.

The Midianites headed for Egypt with Joseph while the brothers headed home with Jacob's coat which they had covered in animal blood to make it look like he was eaten by a wild animal. When the brothers arrived home they showed their father the coat and asked if it was Joseph’s. Jacob was beside himself and crying uncontrollably and said that his life was over because his favorite son was dead. His family tried to comfort him, but he was beyond devastated. The brother’s kept this dark secret for a

long time and never told their father what they had done.

Genesis 39:1-23. Meanwhile the Midianites went to Egypt and sold Joseph to a man named Potiphar. Because Joseph did a good job Potiphar promoted him from slave to being overseer of his entire household. Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph and trusted him with everything he had. (*Genesis 39:3*).

Just then things were really beginning to look good for Joseph, another "unfair" thing happened: he was falsely accused of attempted assault by Potiphar's wife. This was a very serious crime! Joseph was totally innocent; she had tried to seduce him and Joseph had run away, but that just made Potiphar's wife angry! When Potiphar found out (even though it was a lie) he was furious and had Joseph thrown into prison. But even then the Lord was with Joseph and soon Joseph became the prison keeper's most trusted helper, and he trusted Joseph with all the duties of managing the prison! (*Genesis 39:22, 23*)

Genesis 40:1-23. During the time Joseph was in prison, two of the Pharaoh's officers were put in prison and both had dreams that upset them. Joseph asked them to tell him the dreams and told them that God would give him the interpretation to him. After Joseph heard the dream and asked God for the interpretation, God showed him that the cup-bearer of Pharaoh was going to be released, but the Pharaoh's baker was going to be executed. In three days everything happened exactly as Joseph had said! As the cup-bearer was being released, Joseph asked him to ask Pharaoh to release him from prison because he was innocent, and he promised Joseph that he would. But as soon as he was released, he forgot all about Joseph. (*40:23*)

Genesis 41:1-57. Joseph waited for days, then weeks, then months. Finally, two years later, the Pharaoh himself had a very upsetting dream; in fact he had two dreams the same night! When he awoke the next morning, he was very troubled and called all of his wise men in hopes that they might give him an interpretation of the dreams. None of the wise men could offer an interpretation. Suddenly, the cup-bearer remembered Joseph and told the Pharaoh that there was a man in prison who could interpret dreams. Joseph was quickly brought to the Pharaoh's place and soon he was telling Pharaoh the interpretation of the dreams. Joseph prayed that God would give him the interpretation for the dream, and He did! Joseph told the Pharaoh that this was a dream about the very near future. Soon in Egypt there would be seven years of great plenty (good crop harvests, plenty of food), but this would be followed by seven years of very bad famine (no food or water).

Joseph also told Pharaoh that he should choose a wise man to be in charge and collect a portion of the crops harvested in the plentiful years to be stored up for the years of famine. Because the Pharaoh saw the "Spirit of God" in Joseph (*Genesis 41:38*) he appointed Joseph to this position of responsibility! In that moment Joseph went from being a prisoner to being the second in command of the entire land of Egypt! (*41:40-41*) Just as Joseph had predicted, there were seven years of plenty, which were followed by seven years of famine. During the famine, all of the surrounding countries began to run out of food, and they went to Egypt to buy food from Joseph.

Who else do you think ran out of food? (*prompt kids to remember back to Joseph's brothers*) And guess who shows up at Joseph's door step? This is Joseph's chance for revenge...

Genesis 42:1-43:14. Back in Joseph's homeland of Canaan, Jacob (Joseph's father) sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. When they came before Joseph they didn't recognize him, he looked very different (have the kids picture an Egyptian Pharaoh: strange hat, black eye liner, speaking Egyptian, etc) but Joseph knew exactly who they were. Because Joseph was a very powerful ruler, the brothers all bowed down to him, and suddenly Joseph remembered his dream from when he was young! Seeing his brothers obviously brought back a lot of pain for Joseph, and he wanted to know if his younger brother

Benjamin was still alive. He accused the brothers of being spies and told them they must leave one of them behind in prison until they bring their youngest brother to prove they are telling the truth. The brothers said to each other “we are being punished for what we did to Joseph; we heard his cries and did not listen. Now his distress has come upon us!” They didn’t know that Joseph was listening to them, and Joseph ran out of the room and began to weep. The brothers returned home with food, and told their father what had happened, but Jacob refused to let Benjamin go back with them. He had already lost his favorite son, he wasn’t about to lose his youngest! But once they were almost out of food again, Jacob had no choice but to send Benjamin with them back to Egypt.

Genesis 43:15-45:28. When they arrived, Joseph prepared a great feast for them, and even sat them at the table in order of their birth, which shocked his brothers... how did this strange Egyptian man know this?! He sent them on their way home with more food, but secretly had one of his servants hide his own silver cup in Benjamin’s sack of grain. Later, he had his soldiers chase them down, search their bags and say, “Why did you steal from the one who gave you food? You are under arrest!” So they returned to face who told them, “Only the one who stole from me will stay and be my slave. The rest of you are free to go.”

But Rueben, in agony, pleaded with Joseph and said that if Benjamin didn’t return home, the grief would kill their father. Rueben begged Joseph, “let me take his place instead.” Joseph no longer could control his emotions, and he sent out all the guards from the room so it was just him and his brothers alone. He began to weep so loudly everyone in the house could hear. He said to his brothers, “I am your brother Joseph”. The brothers were frozen in shock and fear, they couldn’t believe it, it was impossible! Joseph told them to come closer, as he saw they were afraid, and told them, “Don’t be grieved at yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to save your lives!”

After the shock wore off, they all cried and hugged him, and Joseph had them all move to Egypt with their families, along with his father, who when he finally saw him, cried and hugged his son who he thought was dead all of these years! His brothers still carried the guilt of their sins against Joseph, but Joseph forgave his brothers and explained to them that it was all God’s plan; He used their evil schemes to save their family and a lot of other people. (**Genesis 50:19, 20**) Only God can help us forgive the way Joseph was able to forgive His brothers. God has forgiven us of our sins; He asks that we forgive those who have done us wrong as well.

CONCLUSION:

When unfair things happen to us, we can either become angry, resentful, and bitter or we can look to Jesus and ask Him to help us do our very best in difficult situations. In Potiphar's house, Joseph did his very best even though he came there as a slave. In prison Joseph did his very best even though he was innocent and didn't deserve to be in prison. There must have been times when Joseph felt completely abandoned, yet he remained true to God. When Jesus went to the cross, He gave everything He had even though He never sinned and didn't deserve to die. He died for us. Jesus knows what it's like to be treated unfairly and He knows how to help us when we are unfairly treated. And He promises to use all things for good, and promises us that He is always with us, even in the bad.

MEMORY VERSE:

(Even year):

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

(Odd year):

**“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.” Romans 8:28
(NKJ)**