

Joseph and The Cupbearer & the Baker (Genesis 40)

Main Point: God never forgets His children.

Key Verse: I, the Lord, made you, and I will not forget you. - Isaiah 44:21b NLT

Props: Cup of juice (Silver cup would be great), loaf of bread

Parent: If possible, before the lesson, choose a child who can read loudly, Psalm 139:7-10 when you call on him or her.

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Say: Joseph has been thrown into prison for a crime he didn't commit. Potiphar's wife had made up a big lie about Joseph. She was so angry that Joseph wouldn't pay attention to her that she accused him of something he did not do. Joseph was thrown into the dungeon that was under Potiphar's house.

Ask: It may seem that everyone had forgotten about Joseph, but who was with him? God was with him!

Say: There is nowhere you can go that God does not go with you! Listen to the words that King David wrote to the Lord.

Parent: Call on your volunteer to read Psalm 139:7-10.

How can I get away from your Spirit? Where can I go to escape from you? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I lie down in the deepest parts of the earth, you are also there. Suppose I were to rise with the sun in the east and then cross over to the west where it sinks into the ocean. Your hand would always be there to guide me. Your right hand would still be holding me close. - Psalm 139:7-10

David goes on to say that even the darkest night is not dark to God. He sees through darkness as if it's broad daylight. Remember that you are never alone. God is with you! He's with you on your first day of school when you walk into a classroom of strangers; He's with you when your friends turn their backs on you; He's with you when your parents argue; He's with you when someone you love passes away. God sees you no matter where you are, and He will never forget you.

The Bible says that God blessed Joseph while he was in prison. God made sure that the warden, the person in charge of the prison, liked Joseph a lot. Just like upstairs in Potiphar's home, Joseph was put in charge of everything in the prison. The warden no longer worried about anything because God gave Joseph success in everything that he did (Genesis 39:21-23).

THE CUPBEARER & THE BAKER (Genesis 40:1-4)

Say: While Joseph was in prison, two other important men were thrown into jail with him.

...The cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. - Genesis 40:1-4a NIV

One of the men was the cupbearer.

Parent: Hold up your cup of juice.

Say: Remember, Pharaoh was an important leader. Sometimes important leaders have powerful enemies, such as the kings of countries that he gone to war with. One of those enemies might even try to poison Pharaoh.

Ask: How do you think Pharaoh could be sure that his drink wasn't poisoned? Listen for answers.

Say: Pharaoh appointed a man that he trusted to be his cupbearer, which means cup holder. Choose a volunteer; ask him to hold the cup. The cupbearer would be very careful to protect Pharaoh's drinks. If Pharaoh was feeling suspicious, the cupbearer might even have to drink from the cup first. Have volunteer take a sip of juice. Then if he didn't die, Pharaoh would know the drink wasn't poisoned. Thank your volunteer.

The second man who was thrown into jail was Pharaoh's baker. We can all guess what he did for Pharaoh. Hold up your loaf of bread. Again, since Pharaoh had many enemies, the man who made food for him had to be a person that he trusted. We aren't told what the men did, or even if the men had committed the same offense. We are just told that Pharaoh was really angry.

Ask: Do you think it was a coincidence that these two men were thrown into the same prison as Joseph? *Listen for answers.*

Say: It was no coincidence. God had a plan and God's plans are always good! (Jeremiah 29:11) Potiphar had control over the dungeon. He put Joseph in charge of these two new prisoners.

Note to Parent: This act of Potiphar's leads us to believe that he still trusted Joseph, at least to a degree. It is possible that he trusted Joseph more than he trusted his wife. After all, Joseph was known for his loyal character. It would seem that perhaps Mrs. Potiphar was not known for hers. But when she made a spectacle of Joseph's robe in her clutches, Potiphar was forced to make a choice: either side with his wife, or side with Joseph, admitting that his wife was chasing after another man.

God gave Joseph the grace to obey Potiphar's command (Titus 2:11-12). Joseph cared for the two men for some time. He even knew them well enough to know when they were unhappy. Most importantly, Joseph taught the men about the one true God.

Application: The Bible tells us we should take care of the needs of others (James 1:27, Luke 6:31). Joseph cared for the other prisoners even when he was in a terrible situation. Caring for others is a great way to take your focus off of your own troubles! Hebrews 6:10 tells us that God will not forget your work and the love you show to others when you help them.

TWO DREAMS (Genesis 40:4-19)

After quite a while in prison, both the cup-bearer and baker had a dream on the same night. The men didn't understand what their dreams meant, and it bothered them.

When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.

And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean." - Genesis 40:6-8a NLT

In their part of the world, people took their dreams very seriously. Before God's word was written down in the Bible, God often spoke to people through dreams (Numbers 12:6, Judges 7:15, 1 Kings 3:5). Kings and Pharaohs had men who claimed that they could interpret dreams. Since the cupbearer and baker were in prison, they did

not have access to Pharaoh's interpreters. They didn't know that the only true interpretations came from the Lord. Joseph let them know that only the all-knowing God could tell them what their dreams meant. Because Joseph abided with God, God would reveal the meanings to him.

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."

So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

"This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cupbearer. And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it." - Genesis 40:8b-15 NLT

Say: Clearly God was with Joseph. God gave Joseph the meaning of the cupbearer's dream. Things would turn out very well for the cupbearer - soon he would be out of prison, serving Pharaoh once again.

Joseph trusted God completely. Joseph knew that the interpretation would happen exactly as God had revealed. So, Joseph asked the cupbearer to remember him when he was out of prison. Joseph wanted the cupbearer to ask Pharaoh to set him free because he was innocent. There was still one more dream:

The chief baker saw that Joseph had given a positive meaning to the (cupbearer's) dream. So he said to Joseph, "I had a dream too. There were three baskets of bread on my head. All kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh were in the top basket. But the birds were eating them out of the basket that was on my head." - Genesis 40:16-17

Again, God let Joseph know exactly what the dream meant. Sadly, things were not going to go well for the baker. It must have been hard for Joseph to tell bad news to the baker, but he had to tell the truth. The Bible says to always speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Joseph told the baker that in three days, Pharaoh was going to order that he be killed, and hang his body for everyone to see. This was a terrible fate for the baker!

Note to Parent: We know that once again, Joseph trusted that God was telling exactly what was going to happen. Knowing that Pharaoh would execute the baker, Joseph did not ask the baker to put in a good word for him.

Now, God was not going to cause these things to happen. He was just telling the future ahead of time. Why would God want these men, including Joseph, know what was about to happen?

God gave these dreams: - To reveal that He was the one and only true God. - To give the baker the opportunity to repent (turn from his sin) and TRUST in God. - To show Joseph that dreams that are given by God always come true.

Application: God has many ways of speaking to people today. The clearest way is through His written word, the Bible. Hold up your Bible. God's word is not just words on a page, or just good advice. It is the very truth of God, and it changes people.

God has breathed life into all of Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using Scripture, a man of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing. - 2 Timothy 3:17-16

The word of God is living and active. It is sharper than any sword that has two edges... It judges the thoughts and purposes of the heart. - Hebrews 4:12

God also speaks through prayer, preaching, teaching, prompting by the Holy Spirit, and in some parts of the world, through dreams. But be sure of this: God will NEVER speak in any way that is against His written word. Any time you think God has spoken to you, check it against what the Bible says. God wants to reveal Himself to you, and guide your life by His truth.

DREAMS INTO REALITY (Genesis 40:20-23)

Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cupbearer and chief baker to join the other officials. He then restored the chief cupbearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. - Genesis 40:20-22 NLT

The dreams came true, exactly as Joseph had foretold. Sadly, the baker was killed for what he had done. But the cupbearer was forgiven. This means the cupbearer was returned to Pharaoh's favor; Pharaoh trusted him once again. Can you imagine how excited Joseph must have been about this? Finally, the cupbearer could tell Pharaoh all about Joseph. He could tell Pharaoh that Joseph was a good man who had done nothing wrong. Surely, Pharaoh would let Joseph out of prison and he could go home to his father. I can just imagine that every time the prison door opened, Joseph jumped up hoping to be set free... But it wasn't to be:

Pharaoh's chief cupbearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought. - Genesis 40:23 NLT

After Joseph had unselfishly cared for the cup-bearer in prison and even interpreted his dream, the cup-bearer never gave Joseph a second thought. Apparently, as soon as the cupbearer was out of prison, he wanted to be completely separated from everything there. What a heartbreaking disappointment this was for Joseph! The Bible says, "Hope that is put off makes one sick at heart." (Proverbs 13:12a)

Joseph was stuck in that prison for TWO more years! (Genesis 41:1) But Joseph was not alone in that prison. God remained with him. God gave Joseph the grace that gave him strength and comfort. God's grace was like a hug around Joseph day and night.

I wish I could tell you the end of the story right now so you would know that God was in complete control of the situation. Even though the cupbearer forgot about Joseph, God did not! God did not forget the promise He made to Joseph back in Canaan through Joseph's two dreams. Come back next week to hear the amazing way that Joseph got out of prison!

Application: People often disappoint us. They forget about us, or forget promises they made to us. But God never forgets His children! God reminds us that He is with us by wrapping His grace around us like a big hug.

Key Verse: I, the Lord, made you, and I will not forget you. - Isaiah 44:21b NLT

Main Point: God never forgets His children