

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

Genesis 42

PPT Title

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

Main Point: God's grace gives us the ability to do the right thing.

Key Verse: *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.* - 2 Corinthians 9:8 NIV

Props: A pouch of silver coins, and a larger satchel

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Say: Last week, we saw that God's timing is perfect. Joseph spent many years in Egypt as a slave. Then, after spending over two long years in prison, the time was perfect for the cupbearer to remember Joseph. Joseph was released from prison so that he could interpret Pharaoh's dreams. God gave Pharaoh two dreams as a warning about a terrible famine that was going to come to Egypt. God also gave Joseph a plan to provide food during the famine. Pharaoh believed Joseph, and followed God's plan. Pharaoh honored Joseph and put him in charge of all of Egypt. Pharaoh was the only man more powerful than Joseph. **Ask:** Who can remember what God's plan was to provide food during the famine? *Listen for answers.* **Say:** According to God's plan, Joseph stored up all the extra grain in Egypt during seven years when there was plenty of food. Then, when the famine hit, and no food would grow, people came to Joseph to buy grain from the storehouses.



JOSEPH'S BROTHERS GO TO EGYPT (Genesis 42:1-26)

Say: So, what do you think was happening with Joseph's family back in Canaan? *Listen for answers.* **Teacher:** Show world map. (This is helpful in showing students where this history happened in relation to where they live. The world map helps students to see that these stories actually happened in a real place.) **Say:** Let's take a look at where all of this took place. Point to your own country or state. Here's where we are right now. Point to Egypt and surrounding area. **Say:** The famine not only affected Egypt, but all the land surrounding it. Now we'll take a closer look at the area in this box. Show slide of Egypt and Canaan. Point to Canaan. Here is Canaan, where Joseph's brothers and father, Jacob, lived. Do you think the famine affected them? Yes! **Say:** It certainly did. By this time, many of Joseph's brothers were married and had children. Jacob's large family ran out of food, and if they didn't find food soon they would die!



Say: Jacob was very upset about the food shortage, and he spoke unkindly to his sons.

Jacob found out that there was grain in Egypt. So he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" He continued, "I've heard there's grain in Egypt. Go down there. Buy some for us. Then we'll live and not die."

So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain there. But Jacob didn't send Joseph's brother Benjamin with them. He was afraid Benjamin might be harmed. - Genesis 42:1-4

Just as Jacob had done years ago, he favored one of his sons. Benjamin was the youngest of all the boys. Remember, Joseph and Benjamin were the only two children from Jacob's most beloved wife, Rachel. In order to protect Benjamin, Jacob did not allow him to travel to Egypt. This would make sense if Benjamin was just a child, but Benjamin would have been around thirty years old by this time. Jacob kept him home because he had become his new favorite! So Joseph's ten brothers took silver coins and traveled 200 miles to Egypt. **Show your pouch of coins.** This trip would have taken at least ten days on the back of a donkey. Crowds of people came from all around to buy grain in Egypt.



When Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.
- Genesis 42:6

Say: Wait just a minute. This sounds familiar. I'm going to turn back in my Bible to Genesis 37:5-7. This goes back to before Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery.

Joseph had a dream. When he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Listen to the dream I had. We were tying up bundles of grain out in the field. Suddenly my bundle rose and stood up straight. Your bundles gathered around my bundle and bowed down to it."

Wow! The dream that God had given to Joseph as a young man had finally come true. As his brothers bowed before him, Joseph remembered his dream. I wonder how many times Joseph had thought about this dream when he was a slave and a prisoner. By grace, God had made a promise to Joseph that one day he would be a leader, he would be respected, and his brothers would bow down to him. Now it had happened!

Joseph's brothers did not recognize him because when they last saw him, Joseph was not much older than a boy, but now he was a man. Also, they didn't know that the slave traders had taken him to Egypt. They would never have known to look for him here. Furthermore, they thought this important ruler was an Egyptian, not an Israelite. Joseph, however, recognized his brothers the moment he laid eyes on them. Can you imagine how Joseph must have felt when he saw his brothers? His eyes probably widened as his stomach turned into knots. Seeing his brothers this day might be the biggest challenge of Joseph's life.

Everyone close your eyes for just a minute. Pretend you are Joseph. Just imagine that you are dressed in fine Egyptian robes, standing high on a platform. As you look out, before you are your ten brothers. They look weak and nervous as they bow down low in front of you. Your mind flashes back to the last time you saw them. You can remember the anger in their eyes as they tore off your special robe and threw you into a dry well. You can remember their voices laughing as you begged them for mercy. Your mind races to your years as a slave, wondering if you would ever see your father again. And then you remember the long years you spent as a falsely accused prisoner. Now, don't say anything, but think for a minute about what you might say to these men who had caused you such pain, now that **you** have power over **their** lives. **Pause for thought.**

Say: Okay, you can open your eyes. The natural, human response would be to take revenge. We might expect Joseph to say, "You almost killed me! You sold me as a slave! Why should I give you anything to eat? Go home and fend for yourself." And, actually, that would be a "just" response. They would get what they had given. **But God's grace gave Joseph the power to do what was right, not what was natural** (Titus 2:11-12). By God's grace, Joseph realized that God had a purpose for placing him in this position of power, and this purpose was to save his family. Joseph had great power, but he **would not use his power to get revenge.** This is not a natural reaction! This reaction is possible only because of God's grace. God's grace gave Joseph the ability to say, "No" to revenge.

Application: The Bible says, "Stop being angry and don't try to take revenge. I am

the Lord, and I command you to love others as much as you love yourself," and "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. If he is thirsty, give him water to drink." (Leviticus 19:18 CEV, Proverbs 25:21). This may seem like a really hard thing to do sometimes. That's because our human nature wants to hurt those who have hurt us. Only God's grace can help us say "No" to revenge, and help us be kind to those who have been unkind to us. The best part is that God promises us eternal rewards when we rely on His grace to bless those who have hurt us (Proverbs 25:22, 1 Peter 3:9).



Say: Joseph decided not to let his brothers know who he was. Joseph had lived in Egypt for many years. By now he spoke the Egyptian language perfectly, but he also remembered how to speak Hebrew, the language that his brothers spoke. Joseph pretended not to understand them. When he met with them, he used an interpreter. Joseph thought of a way to find out information about his father and his brother, Benjamin, without giving away his identity.

So he said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see the places where our land isn't guarded very well."

"No, sir," they answered. "We've come to buy food. All of us are the sons of one man. We're honest men. We aren't spies."

"No!" he said to them. "You have come to see the places where our land isn't guarded very well."

But they replied, "We were 12 brothers. All of us were the sons of one man. He lives in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is now with our father. And one brother is gone." - Genesis 42:9b-13

Say: It must have sounded strange to Joseph when his brothers said they were "honest men." He told them he didn't believe that they weren't spies. He said he would not believe their story unless he saw their younger brother. He put them in prison for three days. On the third day, he told them he would keep one of them in prison, and send the others home with food for their families.

"But you must bring your youngest brother to me. That will prove that your words are true. Then you won't die." So they did what he said.

They said to one another, "God is certainly punishing us because of our brother (Joseph). We saw how troubled he was when he begged us to let him live. But we wouldn't listen. That's why all of this trouble has come to us."

Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we're being held accountable for killing him." - Genesis 42:20-22

Remember, the brothers didn't know that Joseph could understand them. They believed that Joseph must have died as a slave. They thought God was punishing them for what they had done. The brothers were sad that their sin was causing them to be punished. This is very different than agreeing with God that their action was wrong, and turning from their sin.

Application: For instance, let's say that your mom told you not to play soccer in the house, but you did it anyway, and you broke her favorite vase. There is a big difference between thinking, "Uh-oh, now mom will figure out what I did and she'll take away my favorite video games!" and thinking, "Oh no! I did a terrible thing. Mom was right, there is a good reason I shouldn't play soccer inside. It will break her heart when she sees that her vase is broken. I wish I had never done that. I'll never do that again." Just being sorry that you will be punished is NOT repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Repentance is *changing your mind*, causing you to turn away from sin. (**Teacher Note:** This point is key for next week's lesson.)

Say: At this point, it does not seem that the brothers have **repented** from the sins of their youth. When Jacob heard his brothers arguing about what they had done to him years ago, Joseph began to cry. Sin always causes pain. Joseph turned away so his brothers wouldn't see him cry.



Then Joseph had his brother, Simeon, chained up and put in prison. The Bible doesn't tell us why Joseph chose to keep Simeon, but we can make a thoughtful guess. We know that Reuben was the oldest brother, and Simeon was the second oldest. Reuben tried to help Joseph. So, out of all the brothers who wanted to harm Joseph, Simeon was the oldest. He may have been the ringleader of the whole gang. Even so, **Joseph was not going to harm Simeon**. He had to keep one brother to be sure the rest would return for him.



Joseph ordered his servants to fill his brothers' bags with grain. And, without them knowing it, he took the silver they brought to buy the grain, and put it back in their sacks. **Place your pouch of coins into the larger satchel**. Joseph didn't take their money! He gave them free grain that they did not deserve. This was an act of grace. Because God had given Joseph many blessings that he did not deserve, Joseph was able to give his brothers a blessing that they did not deserve (Genesis 43:23).

Application: If you listed all of the blessings God has given you, the list might be several miles long! You have lungs that work and a planet full of oxygen. You have friends, family members, ice cream, and so much more. Did you do anything to deserve your healthy lungs? No. Did you do anything to earn all of the oxygen you breathe? Of course not. God gives these blessings by His grace. When we think of all the blessings God gives to us freely, we should look for opportunities to bless others, even when they haven't "earned" it. It is actually a BLAST to bless people who have done nothing to deserve it.

THE BROTHERS RETURN HOME (Genesis 42:27-38)

Say: We have said that the trip between Egypt and Canaan took at least ten days. Now that the donkeys were loaded with food, the men were probably walking and it would have taken much longer. The men would have to stop at night to sleep and let their donkeys rest.



When night came, they stopped. One of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey. He saw his money in the top of his sack. "My money has been given back," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack." **Teacher:** Pull out your pouch of coins.

They had a sinking feeling in their hearts. They began to tremble. They turned to each other and said, "What has God done to us?" - Genesis 42:27-28

Say: Joseph's brothers didn't see this gift as a blessing at all. Instead, they thought it was a curse. They thought they would be accused of stealing. They felt so guilty for the sin they had committed against Joseph that they imagined that God was punishing them. They could not accept this gift of grace. Often, our unrepentant sin keeps us from seeing God's grace (Isaiah 26:10).

The men continued on their way and when they arrived at home, they told Jacob everything that happened. They explained that the man in charge of Egypt accused them of being spies, and how they told him that they were ten brothers from Canaan. They had to tell Jacob that Simeon was still in Egypt - in prison.



They began emptying their sacks. There in each man's sack was his bag of money! When they and their father saw the moneybags, they were afraid.

Their father Jacob said to them, "You have taken my children away from me. Joseph is gone. Simeon is gone. Now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is going against

me!" - Genesis 42:35-36



Say: Jacob also saw this blessing as a curse. He said, "Everything is going against me!" Jacob refused to allow Benjamin to go to Egypt. Jacob was going to leave Simeon there in prison forever! Jacob did not take this matter to the Lord. In fact, there is no mention of God at all. At one time, God had appeared to Jacob and made awesome promises to him personally (Genesis 28:13-15). God promised to be with Jacob, watch out for him, and bless him wherever he was. How is it that Jacob had so little faith now? Could it be that when Joseph was taken, Jacob stopped abiding in God? At one time, Jacob trusted God completely. Somewhere along the way, Jacob stopped trusting God. He couldn't even imagine that **God had kept His promises!** Jacob never dreamed that Joseph was alive and well, and blessed beyond Jacob's wildest dreams! Jacob should have known that God ALWAYS keeps His promises.

Note to Teacher: At one time, Jacob clearly saw God's grace. After God had blessed him in Paddan Aram, *Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups."* (Genesis 32:9-10) At that time, Jacob lived with a clean conscience before the Lord, abiding with Him, depending on Him.

Come back next week to see the next twists and turns in the amazing story of Joseph and God's grace.

PPT Verse

Key Verse: *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. - 2 Corinthians 9:8*

PPT Main Point

Main Point: God's grace gives us the power to do the right thing.