

LESSON 1



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 01 2023

life is hard—work!

Scripture Story: Genesis 39–41.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 20.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This part of the story of Joseph picks up with Joseph running Potiphar's house. The story is so well known that detail is not necessary. However, it is important to note that Joseph always rose to the challenge of the work that was given to him. He succeeded among men because of his faithfulness to God.

After the incident with Potiphar's wife, we see Joseph move into another function of his ministry. That is, he became a messenger of God's interpretations of the dreams of those around him. This is important—Joseph never interpreted a dream; rather, he brought God's interpretation to those dreaming. This point should not be lost on us! God did not give him the ability to decipher dreams. However, by continuing to be faithful, Joseph was able to be used by God with special insights into the dreams God was giving to others. Sometimes God does not equip us miraculously, but He does use those who are available to Him.

As we close this Scripture portion, we see God setting the stage for a later answer to prayer. What a great God we serve who sets in motion things that will answer prayers for us before we even pray!

Our part in all of this is significant. We are to be faithful in the mundane tasks set before us in order to (1) demonstrate God's character being worked out in us, and (2) show God's faithfulness in response to human faithfulness.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God values faithfulness in everything, large or small. (*Know*)
- Feel the importance of doing our best for God. (*Feel*)
- Have the opportunity to respond to God's leading in their lives. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Growing in Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 11.

“By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life.

In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving

service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience” (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

On a white/chalkboard or large paper, have the students write down a list of the silliest and smallest jobs they have ever had to do. Have them create another list of the most boring jobs they have ever had to do. Once you have a good number of suggestions on each of the lists, have students vote on which job seems like the silliest, and which the most boring. Give prizes to those whose entries are chosen. Bring the winners to the front and have them answer the following questions:

1. Give one good thing that came out of this job.
2. Would you ever do it again?
3. Do you think you glorified God by the way you did what was asked of you?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

I can't believe I have to do this! Mark was angry at his dad for making him stand next to the car his dad was working on. He wouldn't let Mark get his hands on the engine; in fact, he wouldn't let Mark do much of anything but hand him the tools. Mark felt helpless, useless, and very angry that his dad didn't think he could handle any more responsibility. In fact, Mark was so mad that he kept ignoring his dad's requests for tools. It was frustrating for Mark's dad to continue to ask Mark for a tool more than once. Also, when Mark's dad had lifted the engine off the motor mounts and needed Mark's muscles to help him move the engine, Mark was so angry he couldn't hear his dad's urgent calls.

When the engine was put back in and the car

was running, Mark's dad came to him and said these words: "Son, I was hoping that you could show me how responsible you could be in the little things that I give you to do. It seems that if a job is not to your liking, you don't care about doing a good job. I was going to give you this car when we were done working on it. I had even set up a job for you in town and you could have used the car to get to your new job. However, after working with you, I'm not sure I am ready to allow you to represent me in the job. I guess I'll keep the car a bit longer . . ."

Mark was devastated, but he learned a good lesson. Every job is important. If we are faithful in the little things, we can be trusted with the big things!

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Our story this week gives us the same sort of example as the story just told. Joseph was faithful in the smallest things, and those small things led to larger and larger things, even to ruling under the Pharaoh in Egypt. Joseph is a great example of how we are to deal with the work that comes our way in this world. Our faithfulness is a witness to the character of God, and what we do in little things, we will do in big things. God knows this about us. The story of Joseph continually reminds us that no matter what the situation is, we should honor God and His requirements of us.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- What are the exciting parts of the story?
- What did you learn that was new to you?
- *Underline* the texts that you found particularly important.
- What were the important decisions that Joseph made in order to remain faithful to God?
- What would his other options have been?
- How do you think this story relates to your life?
- In what way does your life parallel Joseph's?
- What are the pivotal decisions that you have had to make in order to remain faithful to God in your life?



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

The Importance of Being Personal

We don't know your students. How can we? But you know them, and they know you. These examples and speaking points in this teacher's guide should be used to get your creativity flowing.

Any suggestion we have pales in comparison with what you have to bring to your relationships with your students. Don't tell our stories as yours. Tell your stories that relate to the topic and theme.

In this way the students get to know you and trust you more, and you get to be transparent about the things that mean the most to you. You too can be as transparent as Joseph in order to do the work God is calling you to do.

Last, students have an uncanny ability to discern truth from fiction in our lives. God has called you to be exactly who you are as a teacher, and the students will appreciate it and be changed by God in you!

RABBI 101

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Joseph's story is an ageless tale. It has intrigue,

betrayal, and all the things that make up a good story. It also has a main character who is continually beyond reproach. He is thrust into extraordinary circumstances and yet always seems to prevail. Even in the situation presented to him by Potiphar's wife, we see Joseph as a man of integrity:

"Joseph suffered for his integrity, for his tempter revenged herself by accusing him of a foul crime, and causing him to be thrust into prison. Had Potiphar believed his wife's charge against Joseph, the young Hebrew would have lost his life; but the modesty and uprightness that had uniformly characterized his conduct were proof of his innocence; and yet, to save the reputation of his master's house, he was abandoned to disgrace and bondage" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 218).

After being thrown into prison, Joseph continues to be a man of integrity who again rises to prominence in the responsibilities given to him there. This reminds us of another man who understood the importance of making the best of any situation given to him. Philippians 4:13 tells us: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (NKJV). This is Paul's response to the situation he found himself in. Much like Joseph's experience, Paul found himself in prison and had to learn to serve his God from there. Joseph maintained his faithfulness in the responsibilities given to him, and therefore honored God. Paul did the same, and the result was the same.

In Philippians 4 Paul tells us that he knows the "secret" to being content. Perhaps Joseph knew this

cornerstoneconnections

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from *Out of the Story*.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

same secret. While Joseph lived much ahead of Paul's time, they both were able to tap into the same secret of contentment—that is, complete faithfulness to and reliance on God.

There are many other examples of this in Scripture, but perhaps these two men, at least for a short time in prison, both understood that this whole thing called life is not about them, but rather about God. How often do we get caught up in the idea that we are the important focus of our lives, when the focus should be on faithfulness to God's call in our lives? We too often let ego and pettiness get in the way of the larger picture. That picture is one of a God who is intimately involved in every aspect of our lives. And it continues to be a picture of a God looking to bless us with His gifts for us.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Give each student a card and have them put a job they have to do in the upcoming week on the card. It might be schoolwork or job-related. Have them put their names on the cards and hand them in. Let them know that next week you will take some time to go over the cards with them and ask how they did on the com-

mitments they made before God. Pray with them that God will give all of us the courage to remain faithful in the little things, both to honor Him, and in order for Him to be able to give us the big things.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

This part of the story of Joseph can teach us so many things: how to take ownership of the small things God gives us to do, how to remain faithful in times of struggle, how to be responsible with the words God gives us. The list goes on and on. But most of all, Joseph shows us how to represent God in a world that does not know Him. By the successes that Joseph had in life, he gained the respect of his employers, his captors, and even his king. This was no accident or coincidence; God placed Joseph in those situations in order to gain credibility for the larger jobs God had for him, and Joseph never failed.

This story also shows us that God is in preparation for the prayers we *will* ask but have not yet asked. This part of the story foreshadows what is upcoming: the arrival of his brothers during the famine. God had all this in mind when He put Joseph into the situations he handled so well.

God puts us where He needs us to be in order to be able to answer prayers for others. What a wonderful God we serve!



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 20.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Genesis 39–41.

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flashlight

“God was glorified by the faithfulness of His servant. It was His purpose that in purity and uprightness the believer in God should appear in marked contrast to the worshippers of idols—that thus the light of heavenly grace might shine forth amid the darkness of heathenism” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217).

keytext

“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.’”

(Genesis 41:39, 40, NIV)

what do you think?

Have you ever had to do something that you wouldn't have chosen to do? Write down five things that you would never have done if someone hadn't made you do it!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now answer these questions:

1. Which of these would you do again even though you didn't want to do it originally?
2. Which of the above will you never do again?
3. Has anything good ever occurred out of a situation that at first seemed like nothing good could possibly come from it?
4. Do you work hard at something even if you don't necessarily want to do it?

did you know?

- Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to Zaphnath-paaneah when he promoted Joseph to vizier.
- Ancient Egypt was known for its architecture and grand monuments. It is possible that the Hebrews who came into Egypt during the time of Joseph were responsible for building many things we still see today.

INTO THE STORY

“The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. . . . Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, ‘Come to bed with me!’ But he refused. ‘With me in charge,’ he told her, ‘my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. . . . My master has withheld nothing from me except you. . . . How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?’ ”

“When his master heard the [false] story his wife told him, saying, ‘This is how your slave treated me,’ he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.”

“After they had been in custody for some

time, each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.”

“Then Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.’

“Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand—but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.”

“When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.”

“Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.’ ”

“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit



to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.’ ”

(Genesis 39:2, 6-9, 19, 20; 40:4, 5, 8, 20-22; 41:1-4, 25-27, 39, 40, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Where do you see God’s hand in this story?

What is the difference between interpreting dreams and relaying God’s interpretation?

What made Joseph succeed so often in the tasks he undertook?

Did Joseph ever take the easy way out? Explain.

How did God answer Jacob’s prayer for the safety of His people years ahead of the request?

What do you think it is more important to do—to go where God leads us, even when it is unpleasant, or to understand what God is doing every moment of our lives?

punch lines

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing. . . . And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain” (Philippians 2:14, 16, NIV).

“The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything” (Deuteronomy 2:7, NIV).

“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty” (Proverbs 14:23, NIV).

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. . . . I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12, 13, NIV).

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV).

further insight

“Let the young ever remember that wherever they are, and whatever they do, they are in the presence of God. No part of our conduct escapes observation. We cannot hide our ways from the Most High.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

connecting to life

Sabbath

Read Genesis 39–41.

Look at your answers to the *What Do You Think?* exercise. Looking back at the text, what two things made Joseph continually stand out? One was his connection with God; the other was his willingness to live honestly and transparently. He was just not willing to change the truth in order to be safe. In this way, he lived recklessly. He lived by a code that compelled him to do his best no matter what the job. In every situation there were things he would rather not have done, but he did his best regardless.

Sunday

Read Genesis 39:2.

The Bible says that “the LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered” (Genesis 39:2, NIV). What does this mean? Can you go through life saying that “the Lord is with me”? Why do you think Joseph prospered because of this? Whose will came first in his life—his own, his employer’s, or God’s?

Note that he was truly seeking what God wanted for him, and in return he was honored by those around him as being wise and hardworking. How would that approach make a difference in your life?

Monday

Read Genesis 41:39, 40.

Read the *Key Text* again. How would you feel if someone said that to you? But notice to whom Pharaoh gave credit first. He seemed to understand where Joseph’s wisdom and discernment had come from.

What would cause people to see you as someone who is filled with the wisdom of God? How often do you take time to listen for what God wants you to do? How does God speak to you? Besides through His Word,

it might be that He tries to communicate with you through circumstances; it might be through people in your life, or the leading of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever taken the time to find out?

Tuesday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:58.

What was Joseph’s role in the events happening to him? In the *Flashlight* section it says that “God was glorified by the _____ of His servant.” What does that mean? How did Joseph’s faithfulness affect how the Egyptians viewed God? What might your faithfulness do for those in your world? What are the people around you learning about God’s character from your faithfulness? How does Joseph’s life encourage you that it is possible to affect how others see God?

Wednesday

It is always good to dig deeper into the Word of God. Go to www.biblegateway.com and do a search for the words you think are a theme for this week. You might come up with your own list of texts that relate to what this lesson is about.

Read the *Punch Lines* and focus on the last texts. What do they mean to you? Do you ever feel as if you are working in vain? Have you ever felt that you are trying to do what God is asking but can’t seem to get it right? Paul knew the secret to contentment—faithfulness in every situation, through His grace.

Thursday

Read Philippians 4:12, 13.

Faithfulness is a question of commitment. Are you committed to doing something regardless of how you feel? Are you willing to try something radical over the next few weeks? Commit to something you know is good for you (eating habits, exercise, etc.) and practice it for no less than a week. Once

you have made it a week, try for two, and then try for more. It is a good idea to keep a journal for yourself in order to track your successes. In three weeks you will have built a new habit.

It might not feel good all the time, but in the end you know it is good for you. It’s about making a commitment to something and staying faithful. Imagine how much better it will be to make a commitment to something eternal rather than only those temporary things of this world. See if practicing the small commitments can lead to even greater commitments in time!

Friday

Read Philippians 2:14-16.

What does the example of Joseph mean to you today? Is there a way to relate Joseph’s trials and tribulations to yours? Can his successes be yours? Where does the biblical story intersect with your life? Are you willing to enter into a similar type of relationship with God for the long haul? Can you be faithful even when you don’t feel like it? It won’t hurt to give it a try!

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 20.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.