

Living the Word:

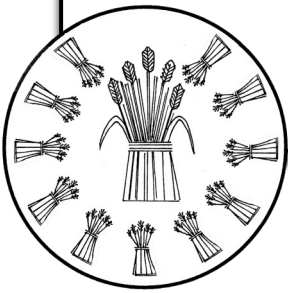
Teaching Youth God's Story

Narrative Lectionary, Year 3

Joseph: The Promise Threatened

Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34, 50:15-21

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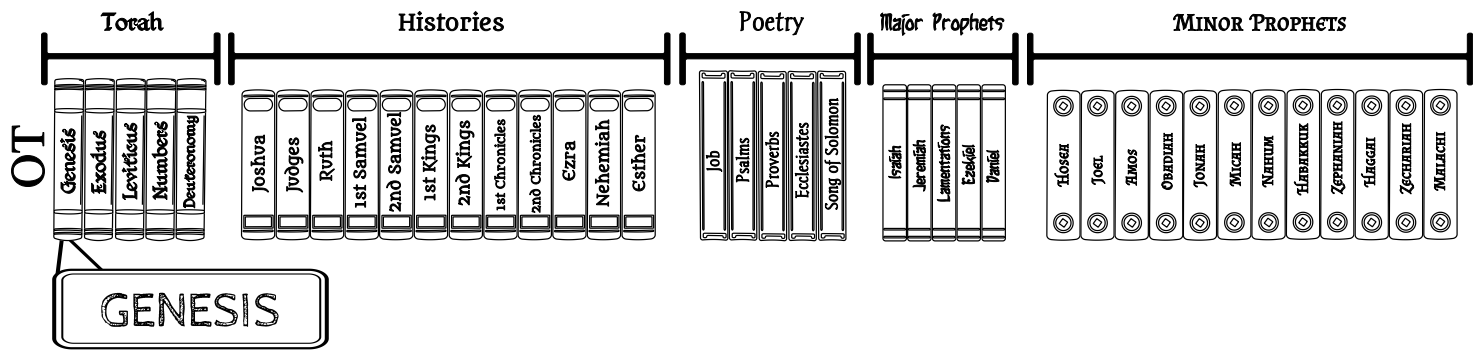
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Joseph: The Promise Threatened

Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34, 50:15-21

What happens when a recipient of God's promises falls into terrible trouble? This week we see God provide for Joseph. What Joseph's brothers mean for evil, God redeems for good.

Story Connections

Last week, we saw God make a big promise to Abraham about his descendants. This week we meet Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, and discover how God continues to carry out God's faithful promises in the life of this family.

Story Summary

Joseph: The Promise Threatened

Seventeen year old Joseph is part of the fourth generation to know God's promise. The favorite of his father Israel (or Jacob), Joseph falls into trouble when his brothers grow

Lesson @ A Glance

#3-3: Joseph: The Promise Threatened

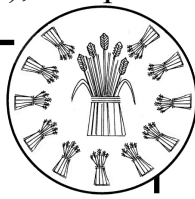
Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34, 50:15-21

The Point: Even when we try as hard as possible to harm each other, God can turn our work towards good.

Making Connections: Promises Made, Promises Broken

Spiritual Practice Emphasis: Fellowship

Bible Nuts and Bolts: OT & Divisions



jealous. They grow angry when Joseph shares a dream he had in which they were all sheaves in a field, and their sheaves bowed down to him. This dream foreshadows what will happen later. Joseph's brothers treat him like an enemy. They cast him into a pit and then cover his coat in blood. They sell him into slavery, betray him, and lie to their father so that he believes Joseph is dead. In this dark time, God continues to be faithful, preserving Joseph's life in Egypt and raising him up as a leader during famine to help him save his father and brothers from starvation. It is because Joseph is in this strategic place that

the people of the promise do not die. The brothers intended to harm Joseph. God protects him and brings good out of a terrible situation. When the brothers see Joseph again, they expect him to want revenge, but instead he treats them in the same faithful ways that he has seen God act, and offers them forgiveness.

The Point

Even when we try as hard as possible to harm each other, God can turn our work towards good. Joseph's story provides

deep encouragement. When we experience dark and painful times, we may not always understand why, but God is faithful in those times and can redeem them for good purposes.

Bible Nuts & Bolts: OT & Divisions

What we call the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, is the portion of our Bible that was written by and for the people of Israel, before Jesus was born. The Old Testament is a

Even though you
intended to do harm to
me, God intended it for
good, in order to
preserve a numerous
people, as he is doing
today.

Genesis 50:20

collection of 39 books, often divided into five sections or genres: the Torah or Pentateuch, History, Poetry, Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets. The Joseph story is part of the first division of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch or Torah.

Spiritual Practice: Fellowship

Broken fellowship can be painful, especially among families and communities where we expect closeness. Thankfully, God is in the business of restoring broken fellowship, as we see in today's reading.

For Your Reflection:

1. Have you ever experienced a time of broken fellowship in community? What did you do to hold on to God and your faith during that difficult time?
2. Can hard times help us to learn more about ourselves and about God? Does that make them easier to bear?
3. How can you help youth to think about God's providence, (God's "hidden behind the scenes" work) even in very hard or painful situations?

Overview, Objectives, and Materials You'll Need

Core Elements

+Into the Story

5 min.

- › Long-sleeved robe (choir robe or vestment)

The Dreamer's Robe

Try on a long-sleeved robe while sharing about a dream.

+Learning the Story

20 min.

- › Bibles
- › Colored pencils

Things Meant for Good,

Things Meant for Evil

Identify and decide whether characters' actions were good or evil.

Living the Story

20-25 min.

- › Mosaic tiles
- › Pencils
- › Poster board or rectangle of wood
- › Glue

Broken Relationship Between Brothers

(and Sisters)

Create a mosaic design that reflects brokenness and reconciliation.

+Sending the Story

5 min.

- › None

Short on time?

*Items marked +
can be adjusted to be done with
what you probably already
have in your pocket or
classroom.*

Extending the Learning:

Hands On

20 min.

Drawing a Dream

Draw a picture that reflects God's faithfulness to God's dream for the world.

- › Chalk pastels
- › Colored paper

Mixed Media

10 min.

The Dreamer's Got to Go!

Watch a colorful, musical version of Joseph and his brothers.

- › Video player

+The Competitive Edge

15 min.

Trusting in the Dark

Walk blindfolded through obstacles while following a silent leader.

- › Blindfold
- › Tables, chairs, boxes

Simply Serving

20 min.

Food for the Hungry

Create dried soup mixes to raise money for hungry people.

- › Canning jars
- › Potato flakes,
- › Dry milk
- › Bullion powder
- › Spices
- › Spoons
- › Measuring cups
- › Ribbons
- › Tags
- › Pens

+Worship Connection

10-15 min.

God's Faithfulness to Israel

Responsive reading of Psalm 105.

- › Bibles

Into the Story:

The Dreamer's Robe (5 minutes)

Try on a long-sleeved robe while sharing about a dream.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Find a long-sleeved robe that will fit most sizes. If your church does not have choir robes or other vestments, a bath robe could work.

Supplies:

- › Long-sleeved robe
(choir robe or other vestment)

DURING CLASS:

1. Invite each youth to try on a long-sleeved robe.
2. While they are wearing the coat, they get a half-minute to share an image or scene from one of their dreams. (Nothing too scary please!)
3. **Today we will hear the story of Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham. Joseph's father Israel loved him so much that he gave Joseph a special coat to wear. This led to trouble when Joseph's brothers became jealous.**

Learning the Story:

Things Meant for Good, Things Meant for Evil (20 minutes)

Identify and decide whether characters' actions were good or evil.

DURING CLASS:

1. Pass out Bibles or Bible passages to youth, along with colored pencils.
2. Have them read the story to themselves, circling the different characters in the story: Israel, Joseph, the brothers, Reuben, Judah, Midianite traders, God.
3. Lead them through the passage, looking at each character or set of characters in turn. The guiding question to ask about each character should be: **Do you think this person's actions were good or evil? Think about their intentions as well as the outcome of their actions.**
4. Focus in on several main actions: *Israel giving Joseph the coat, Joseph telling the brothers his dream, the brothers deciding to sell Joseph into slavery, Joseph forgiving his brothers.*
5. Allow youth to speculate on the motivations of each of the characters. Sometimes this is made clear in the text. For instance, Israel's motivation in giving Joseph the coat was love, but the gift led to difficult consequences because the brothers got jealous of what they considered Joseph's special treatment. **Sometimes even the things we do with the best intentions can turn out to be difficult. And sometimes, like Joseph's brothers, we fully intend to do someone harm and cause others pain. Even in those situations, however, God can bring good out of what was meant for evil. God worked through the circumstances of Joseph's life, not only to protect and help him, but to protect and help others. Sometimes we may not see how God is working things out, but we can trust that God is faithful to work for our good.**

Supplies:

- › Bibles
- › Colored pencils

Living the Story:

Broken Relationship Between Brothers and Sisters

(20-25 minutes)

Create a mosaic design that reflects brokenness and reconciliation.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Purchase ceramic mosaic tiles at an art and craft store or cut multiple colors of cardstock into very small pieces.

Supplies:

- › Mosaic tiles
- › Pencils
- › Poster board or rectangle of wood
- › Glue

DURING CLASS:

1. **Today we are going to work together to create a mosaic design. In a mosaic, we use broken pieces to create something whole and beautiful. This makes it a kind of picture of how God can bring good even out of very painful and broken times in our lives, just as God did for Joseph in today's story.**
2. Have youth work together to draw a simple design or picture on poster paper or cardboard. If they want to tie the design into today's story, they might want to draw a simple robe or coat.
3. Youth will then work together to choose the pieces and colors they want to place to fill the design in. Note: It might be easier to place glue on the flat surface and lay the tiles/pieces down than to put glue on the backs of the individual pieces.
4. Once the mosaic is done, place it in a shared space for prayer and contemplation.

Hands On: Drawing a Dream (20 minutes)

Draw a picture that reflects God's faithfulness to God's dream for the world.

DURING CLASS:

1. **In the Bible, we learn about God's dream or vision for the world. That vision is sometimes referred to as God's kingdom – a time when people in broken fellowship are fully restored to God and each other. In God's vision for the restored world, there will be peace, justice, and mercy.**
2. Pass out colored papers and pastels.
3. **Today you are going to draw a design or picture that you feel represents God's dream for the world.**
4. You might want to point out the appropriateness of using chalk as a medium. It produces colorful and beautiful results, but it also smudges easily. That can remind us that God's kingdom is not yet complete. There are times in our lives when it might be hard to see clearly the picture of all that God is doing.

Supplies:

- › Chalk pastels
- › Colored paper

Mixed Media:

"The Dreamer's Got to Go! (10 minutes)"

Watch a colorful, musical version of Joseph and his brothers.

DURING CLASS:

1. Show youth the performance of Joseph's Dreams from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. This Broadway musical takes some license with the story but does a good job of capturing major events in Joseph's life. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58yTaxyksow&list=RDQtpzoGj-1V8&index=24> This song shows the brothers' anger and jealousy. It speculates that they might have been worried that Joseph's dreams could have some truth to them.
2. This would be a good place to discuss Joseph's coat. Although some Bible translations call it "a coat of many colors," biblical scholars are not really sure if the original expression means a colorful coat, a patchwork coat, or just a coat with long-sleeves. Whatever it looked like, it was well-made and a sign of Jacob's favor toward the son he loved so much.

Supplies

› Video player

The Competitive Edge:

Trusting in the Dark (15 minutes)

Walk blindfolded through obstacles while following a silent leader.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Set up a brief obstacle course for youth, using things you have on hand such as chairs, small tables, or boxes. If possible, do this in a place where they will not be able to see it beforehand, otherwise you might need to set it up right before the activity. An unused room or hallway would be ideal.

Supplies:

- › Blindfold
- › Tables, chairs, boxes

DURING CLASS:

1. Choose a youth to be the “follower” and send them out of the room. Send another youth with them to help blindfold them.
2. Send another youth in to the room to get the blindfolded youth. This youth will be the leader, and they need to be silent.
3. The leader needs to lead the blindfolded youth through the obstacle course without saying anything. They will guide the youth who cannot see through all the obstacles.
4. Before taking off the blindfold, give the youth who was led through the obstacles a chance to guess who was leading them.
5. Time permitting, ask youth: **How hard was it to trust when you could not see?** If they figured out who was leading them, ask: **What clues helped you know who was leading you?**

Simply Serving:

Food for the Hungry (20 minutes)

Create dried soup mixes to raise money for hungry people.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Set up a generous-sized workstation so youth can assemble ingredients in jars. A large table that youth can gather around would be ideal.

DURING CLASS:

1. **Joseph was able to gather food during the famine so that people would not be hungry during the years when there was not enough. Today we are going to make soup mixes to sell. We will be giving the proceeds to a ministry to hungry people.**
2. For each jar of soup mix, have youth measure out the following amounts of ingredients: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of potato flakes, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of dry milk, 2 Tbsp bullion, and smaller amounts of spices to taste. (Spices might include onion flakes or powder, parsley, pepper, thyme, or others that would go well in a potato soup. Bacon bits or dehydrated vegetables might also be used.)
3. While some youth layer the ingredients in the jars, others could create tags to tape or tie onto jars with ribbon. They should label the tags with the name of the soup mix and provide simple directions such as “Add one cup of hot water per $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of soup mix and stir.”
4. Have youth choose a time and place, perhaps right after church, when they can sell their soup mixes. Make sure to let the congregation know that the proceeds from the soup sale will benefit hungry people.

Supplies

- › Canning jars
- › Potato flakes
- › Dry milk
- › Bullion powder
- › Spices
- › Spoons
- › Measuring cups
- › Ribbons
- › Tags
- › Pens

Worship Connection:

God's Faithfulness to Israel (10-15 minutes)

Responsive reading of Psalm 105.

BEFORE CLASS:

1. Arrange a time when youth can lead the responsive reading with the wider congregation. This can be part of a time where they share what they have been learning as a class, or it might take the place of a regular responsive reading.

Supplies

› Bibles

DURING CLASS:

1. Pass out Bibles to youth and have them turn to Psalm 105.
2. **Psalm 105 rehearses the story of God's faithfulness to Israel. Many of the stories it mentions are stories that you are studying in this unit! Some of them you will recognize and others are stories we will be reflecting on together later.**
3. Assign different verses for different youth to read. Have them practice reading the words aloud clearly and audibly.
4. Remind them of any response that should come at the end of the Psalm (this may be a standard part of your congregation's liturgy) or craft one together that can be said in unison with the congregation.
5. If any youth wants to share something with the congregation about the stories they are learning in this unit, and the overall theme of God's faithfulness to God's promises, it might be appropriate as an introduction to the reading.

Sending the Story (5 minutes)

God can—and often does!—bring good even out of our worst moments and intentions. Joseph’s story shows us how God was able not just to redeem a situation that affected the life of one person, but how God could use the circumstances intended for bad to further good plans for others and to continue working out the fulfilling of God’s promises. Turn with youth to Romans chapter 8, particularly focusing on verses 18-30 with their emphasis on God working things together for good in the lives of those God has called. Help them to see not only Joseph’s story in those verses, but their own stories too.

Close with the following benediction from Ephesians 3:20-21 (from *The Message*). If you are able to project this onto a wall or screen, then youth can read it together while standing in a circle.

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

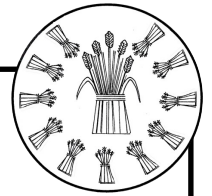
Glory to God in the church!

Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!

Glory down all the generations!

Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!

Remember to send “The Story @ Home” take home sheet with youth before dismissing them.



The Point

Even when we try as hard as possible to harm each other, God can turn our work towards good. Today's story is important because it provides encouragement to us in our own dark times. Like Joseph, we may go through times of difficulty that we do not understand, but we can be assured that God is faithful in those times and can redeem them for good purposes.

Story Connections

God continues to be at work in the life of Abraham's family! The promise that God made to Abram last week seems to be in jeopardy during the life of Joseph, but once again, we see that God is faithful and carries out God's purposes to bless that family, and through them, the world.

Story Summary

The Promise Threatened

Seventeen year old Joseph is part of the fourth generation to know God's promise. Beloved of his father, Joseph falls into trouble when his brothers grow jealous. They grow angry when Joseph shares a dream he had in which they were all sheaves in a

field, and their sheaves bowed down to him. This dream foreshadows what will happen later. Joseph's brothers cast him into a pit and then cover his coat in blood. They sell him as a slave.

The brothers treat Joseph like an enemy. They betray him and lie to their father so that he believes Joseph is dead. In this dark time, God continues to be faithful, preserving Joseph's life in Egypt and raising him up as a leader during famine to help him save his father and brothers from starvation.

It is because Joseph is in this strategic place that the people of the promise do not die. The brothers intended to harm Joseph. God protects him and brings good out of a terrible situation.

Spiritual Practice: Fellowship

Broken fellowship can be painful in many places, especially in our families and other places where we expect there to be closeness! This week, strive within your family to say, "I am sorry," as soon as you know you have wronged or hurt someone. Do not let anger fester into bitterness that can turn to broken fellowship.

Last Week/Next Week

Last week, we learned about God's amazing promise to Abram and his family. This week, we see how God preserved that promise a few generations later when Joseph fell into trouble. Next week we will hear about God's faithfulness to rescue God's people hundreds of years after Joseph's time, when they had fallen into slavery in Egypt.

Bible Nuts and Bolts: OT & Divisions

What we call the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, is the portion of our Bible that was written by and for the people of Israel, before Jesus was born. The Old Testament is a collection of 39 books, which are often divided into five sections or genres: the Torah or Pentateuch, the Histories, Poetry, the Major Prophets, and the Minor Prophets. The Joseph story is part of the patriarchal narratives (stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their families) in the first division of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch or Torah. These stories repeatedly show the faithfulness of our promise-keeping God.

Joseph: The Promise Threatened

Going Deeper

As you hear and study these stories each week, consider what God has to say to you and your family. What is God's message to us? Consider the following basic pattern as a way of forming family devotions:

- ✠ Light a candle to help you focus this time as "God time." Pray a simple prayer together.
- ✠ Take a moment to check in with each other; what are each person's "highs" and "lows" today?
- ✠ Read aloud from the Daily Bible Readings from below. Discuss the questions following each.
- ✠ End with a blessing, by simply tracing a cross on each other's forehead. The Lord's Prayer is a good way to end your devotion time. If you used a candle, extinguish it as a sign of the end of the devotions.

Note: This is only a suggested pattern. It will vary with your household's context and patterns. What works best for you? First thing in the morning? Over breakfast? Bed time? Be creative and flexible with how you practice and keep your devotions!

Daily Bible Readings

Sunday - Read Genesis 37:3-8,

17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-21

Joseph's brothers intend to do him harm, but God turns their actions to good.

- Why were Joseph's brothers so jealous of him, and what did they do about it?
- How did God redeem the situation to help not just Joseph but others?

Monday - Read Exodus 1:8-22

The Hebrews grow numerous in Egypt and the Pharaoh enslaves them. Pharaoh tries to kill all the infant Hebrew boys.

- Why did Pharaoh fear the Hebrews?
- Why did God bless the midwives?

Tuesday - Read Exodus 2:1-10

A Hebrew woman comes up with a plan to save her baby son from Pharaoh.

- What did the Hebrew mother plan to do to save her son?
- How did God save Moses?

Wednesday - Read Exodus 3:1-12

God calls Moses to help free God's people from slavery.

- What unusual means does God use to get Moses' attention?
- Why did God appear to Moses and what does God want Moses to do?

Thursday - Read Exodus 4:1-17

Moses lets God know he's afraid the people will not listen to him.

- Why is Moses afraid to do what God asks him to do?
- How does God assure Moses that God is with him?

Friday - Read Exodus 7:14-17; 8:5-6, 16-17, 20-21; 9:1-3, 7

Pharaoh will not let God's people go and God sends plagues upon Egypt.

- What kinds of plagues does God initially send on Egypt?
- How do these plagues show God's power?

Saturday - Read Exodus 9:8-9, 22-23, 10:1-2, 22-24, 11: 9-10

Pharaoh continues to refuse to let the people go, and God continues to send plagues.

- What kinds of plagues does God continue to send?
- Why do you think Pharaoh continues to refuse to free the people?