

LESSON 8 || JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

SESSION SNAPSHOT

NARRATIVE PASSAGE: Genesis 35:9-12; Genesis 37; Genesis 41:37-49

GOSPEL FOCUS: Matthew 5:10-12

STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- See how God's faithfulness extended to Abraham's descendants, even amid trying circumstances.
- Understand that the Gospel is all about God redeeming our suffering and turning our loss into great gain.
- Commit to turning to God in the midst of their tough times, trusting that He will redeem their suffering.

OVERVIEW:

All of Scripture tells a single story. It's the story of man's sinfulness and God's faithfulness to redeem us as His own. In the continuation of the first covenant with Abraham, we see his grandson Jacob receive the same promise: from his line, God will make a great nation that will bless all people, and they will return to their land. While the timeline may not be what any of them expected, we see from a big-picture perspective that the events along the way are always moving toward the fulfillment of that promise. The beauty of it is that while there are victories along the way that encourage God's people, God's plan is bigger than they could have ever imagined. We see Joseph rise up, save his people from certain death, and redeem his family. At the same time, we understand that this is just a shadow of the ultimate Redeemer that will rise up from this family as the living Christ!

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

GENESIS

- *Author:* While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- *Time frame:* It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), the date for the writing of Genesis is estimated to be sometime in the 1400s or 1200s BC.
- *Purpose:* Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eve's fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group that God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

MATTHEWS

- *Author:* Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the events he details in his gospel.
- *Time frame:* Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though some think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- *Purpose:* Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to persuade them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. He was also probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel declares that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- **GETTING STARTED**— An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**— A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**— A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**— An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To get students thinking about how God can work good out of our suffering.
- *Set-Up:* You'll be introducing your students to the story of a Vietnamese pastor through a video from *The Voice of the Martyrs*. If you have the capability, show the following video, stopping it at the 0:48 mark:
 - <https://youtu.be/PBNGysBkbe4>
- If not, watch the video ahead of time and be prepared to summarize it for your students.

FIRST, tell students that today you'll be continuing your look at the big-picture story of the Bible by looking at how God can work great things out of terrible circumstances. Explain that before you dive into Scripture, you'll let them see a modern-day example from another part of the world.

THEN, if you have the ability, show the video, stopping it at the 0:48 mark. If you don't have video capability, summarize the video for them. When you've finished telling the story to your students, lead them in a short discussion. **Ask something like:**

- What are your initial reactions to this man's story?
- This man experienced great suffering for Christ. If you had to point out what good came out of it, what would you say?
 - *Answer:* Many people came to faith in Jesus that day. His faith was also likely strengthened, which means he will continue preaching the Gospel.
- What would it take for you to be able to respond similarly if you experienced that much trouble?
 - *Answers may vary.*

FINALLY, begin transitioning to The Story by telling your students that in today's lesson, they'll see that God often works out His perfect plan in the midst of people's sinfulness. **Say something like:**

- While those who oppose God continue doing evil, God's purpose still prevails in His people. For those who trust and follow God, this means that their suffering is never in vain. Let's see how the Bible demonstrates this to us.

TRANSITION TO THE STORY.

THE STORY

- *Goal:* To clearly show how God's faithfulness extended to Abraham's descendants, even amid trying circumstances.
- *Set-Up:* Students will need a Bible or a Bible app.

FIRST, begin by telling students that you are continuing to look at how God kept His original promise to Abraham. In today's lesson, you will see this promise shared with Jacob and discover how it plays out in the life of his son, Joseph.

THEN, remind students that God's hand was on Joseph through many bizarre circumstances. His life was instrumental in preserving God's people during a difficult time in history. If you'd like, use the Connecting the Dots section below to review or fill in the gaps between your last lesson and this one.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach The Thread, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- God made two promises to Abraham. First, He promised Abraham that a great nation would arise through him and that from his offspring, all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). Second, God promised that Abraham's offspring would inhabit the land of Canaan (Gen 12:7).
- Abraham waited 25 years for Isaac, the son God promised him (Gen 22:15-19).
- Isaac was the father of Jacob, and God once again reminded this chosen family of His promise to create a great nation through which He would bless the whole earth.
- Joseph is the second youngest son of Jacob, the "son of his old age." Isaac would have been Joseph's grandfather.

NEXT, tell students to turn to Genesis 35:9-12. While they do this, give a brief reminder of the background of Genesis using the Bible Background provided. Then, read or have a student read Genesis 35:9-12. Help your students grasp the significance of this event by **asking the following questions:**

- **What two-part promise does God make to Jacob in verses 11-12?**
 - *Answer:* A royal nation will come from his offspring, and they will inherit the same land promised to Abraham and Isaac.
- **How does God introduce Himself to Jacob, and why do you think this is significant?**
 - *Answer:* First, He blesses him and then says, "Your name is Jacob," and "I am God Almighty." It puts things in a pretty clear perspective, doesn't it? There is no mistake that this is a divine encounter.
- **What new name does God give to Jacob?**
 - *Answer:* Remind students that God originally changed Jacob's name to Israel upon their first meeting when he wrestled God in Genesis 32:28.

Explain that this encounter sets the stage for the rest of the story. Explain that you're going to move forward in time a few years and see how this promise begins to take shape in Jacob's offspring.

THEN, have students turn their Bibles to Genesis 37. As they get there, **say something like:**

- I know this is going to look like a lot of Scripture, but trust me when I say that this is just a small slice of the drama that takes place in Joseph's life. We're going to look at these key events to see how God kept His promise to Abraham and Jacob.

Read or have a student read Genesis 37:2-11. After these verses have been read, ask the group these questions:

- What are both of Joseph's dreams about?
 - *Answer:* The rest of the family bowing down to Joseph.
- Jacob rebukes Joseph for upsetting his brothers and sounding arrogant, but then we are told that Jacob "kept the saying in mind." What part of God's promise to Jacob do you think these dreams sound like?
 - *Answer:* God has already told Jacob that royalty will come through his offspring. It's possible that this dream reminded him of that, even though the details are still unclear.
- What reasons do you think Joseph's brothers have for being angry and jealous at this point?
 - *Answer:* He is openly favored by their father. Further, dreams at this time were usually associated with divine revelation. In their understanding, Joseph wasn't just sharing a dream; he was telling them that he believed he would have authority over them.

NEXT, read or have another student read 37:12-24. Then, lead students in a brief discussion, Ask:

- What evidence do you see in this passage that the brothers were angry over Joseph's dreams?
 - *Answer:* They mock him and call him a "dreamer" as they conspire to kill him.
- At this point, do the actions of Jacob's sons seem to be moving his family toward God's promise of a blessed royal legacy or away from it?
 - *Answer:* It seems that most of his sons' actions are working against the promise.

THEN, read or have another student read 37:25-36. Remind students that at this point, Jacob has been told by God that his offspring will be a great nation that will rule over the land promised to his grandfather Abraham. And yet, his children are trying to kill each other! This doesn't sound like what Jacob probably had in mind! Yet through all of the dark times his family encounters, Jacob's faith in God never wavers.

NEXT, instruct students to turn over to Genesis 41 to see how this all plays out. Tell them that this is where we have to skip over much of Joseph's journey but that they can read it on their own in chapters 39-50.

Tell your students:

- When Joseph is sold into slavery, he becomes the favorite servant of a powerful man named Potiphar. Joseph was, unfortunately, also a favorite of Potiphar's wife. While Joseph is gaining position and responsibility in Potiphar's house, he's also dodging the advances of Potiphar's wife. He is loyal to his master, and she is deeply offended by the rejection. She accuses Joseph of being the one who sought after her, and he is thrown into prison without question.
- While in prison, God uses Joseph to interpret the dreams of two other prisoners, one of whom is released back into Pharaoh's service.
- Later, when Pharaoh has a disturbing dream, the former prisoner remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh that he knows who can help him interpret his dream. This leads to Joseph's release from prison.
- Joseph tells Pharaoh that his dream means that there will be seven years of plenty in Egypt followed by seven years of famine and that he should plan now to save his people later. Pharaoh is pleased and recognizes that God is working through Joseph.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Genesis 41:37-49 aloud. Ask your students:

- In what way do you see God working to fulfill His promise to Jacob through Joseph's circumstances?
 - *Answer:* Joseph is ending up in a position of power, despite his brothers' attempts to prevent it.
- Joseph suffers through many unfair and cruel circumstances before he sees God raise him to a position of influence. God allows him to be reduced to nothing so that He can work through him in a way that could only be credited to God. Later, Joseph's family comes to Egypt to beg for food, and Joseph is in charge of giving it to them. God led Joseph to a place of power in Egypt so that His people might be saved through him at the right time. In what way does this foreshadow the role of Christ?
 - *Answer:* Joseph predicts his own rise to power but is then humbled by those who seek to destroy him. In the end, God uses him when he seems weakest to bring about redemption (from famine) for His people. In the same way, Christ is humbled by men and brings ultimate redemption to His people through His death and resurrection. Joseph's life provides a faint example of the Christ that is yet to come.

Through Joseph forgiving his brothers and saving their lives, he is able to teach his family an essential truth about how God works. Read or have a student read Genesis 50:20 aloud. Then, say something like:

- Throughout Scripture, we see that people do many evil deeds, but God's purposes and promises never fail. In countless cases, what man means for evil, God uses for good!

IF STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE THREAD.

THE THREAD

Have students turn to Matthew 5:10-12 and ask someone to read it aloud. **Ask students:**

- **Does Jesus say we are always blessed when bad things happen? What is the catch?**
 - *Answer:* No. We are blessed when bad things happen as a result of following Him. Being persecuted means that others are against you because of your faith and obedience to God.
- **What hope do we, as God's people, have when we suffer for His name's sake?**
 - *Answer:* Jesus calls us blessed and promises that we will share in the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the same promise given to the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament. We share in suffering and reward!

FINALLY, explain that the Gospel changes the way we look at suffering. We live in a time and culture that teaches us to avoid pain and disapproval at all costs. Remind students that this way of thinking is actually the opposite of the Gospel. The Gospel calls us to come and die; it calls us to rebel against our own nature and live in a way that the world doesn't understand. **Say something like:**

- **To do this, we draw strength from the accounts in Scripture, where we can plainly see that God does the impossible through His people just when it looks like the world has won. Joseph's life, like many of ours, saw some dark times. Yet as he trusted God and continued to look for His promise, God was proven faithful. Because of the Gospel, we understand that apart from darkness, we cannot understand the light. When God brings something beautiful out of suffering, He receives glory, and we share in His blessing.**

WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* For students to commit to turning to God in the midst of their tough times, trusting that He will redeem their suffering.
- *Set-up:* Provide some scraps of paper and envelopes. (Or you can make envelopes by using paper with a stapler or tape.)

FIRST, explain to your students that today's lesson may have seemed heavy, but the truth is that everyone experiences suffering in some way. Explain that if they haven't yet, they will! Again, remind them that for the Christ-follower, suffering is never wasted. **Say something like:**

- **For Jacob and Joseph, God used the suffering they experienced in an incredible way that they could never have predicted. Trusting God means accepting that we don't have to understand why suffering is happening; we just have to trust that God has a plan and that we're a part of it. Whatever we give over to Him, He uses for good.**

THEN, distribute scraps of paper and an envelope to each student. Instruct students to jot down a particular struggle they may be experiencing. Inform students that these will not be shared; they will be writing these down and keeping them for themselves. Explain that while their struggles may not be as bad as Joseph's, they may have difficulties in their own family. They might have struggles at school or within themselves, making it hard for them to see God at work right now. Encourage them to write that down on their paper and put it inside their envelope.

FINALLY, when everyone has had a chance to write something down and put it in an envelope, direct them to seal it. As they are sealing it, **say something like this:**

- **As you seal the envelope, say to God that you trust Him to be in control of that situation. Save this in a place where you can find it later. Be looking for evidence of God at work in this area over the next few weeks. In time, you may see signs that He's working, signs you might have missed had you not been looking. He is present in your suffering, and He has a plan!**

If students don't have any more questions or feedback, close in prayer.

- If you've purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they'll be working through Week 8 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.
- If you're utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at feedback@youthministry360.com.