

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Genesis

PHARAOH'S DREAM

Genesis 40-41

Elementary Lesson

Year One, Quarter Two, Lesson Six

[0190]

AIM: to use the story of Pharaoh's dreams to teach my students to wait for God's timing.

OBJECTS TO HAVE: A picture of the butler
 A picture of the baker
 Seven strong cows
 Seven weak cows
 Seven strong stalks of corn
 Seven weak stalks of corn
 Your Bible

POINT OF CONTACT: How many of you have ever had a really scary dream? Sometimes dreams can seem so real, and make us very scared. It is always good to wake up and find out that it was just a dream, isn't it? But even after you wake up, you might still be scared.

How many of you have ever had a really happy dream? Maybe you were dreaming that you got to do something that you have always wanted to do. But then you woke up and you found out that it was only a dream.

Most of the time our dreams mean absolutely nothing, and once we wake up we should just forget about them. But in the Bible, God sometimes used a dream to send someone an important message. Today we are going to learn about three people who had dreams that meant something very important.

STORY: Last week we talked about Joseph. I told you how Joseph was thrown in prison for something that he did not do. But Joseph did not complain or give up. Joseph decided that he was going to trust God and do his very best, even though things did not go like he wanted them to. Because Joseph kept a good attitude and kept doing right, God blessed him. God caused the keeper of the prison to put Joseph in charge of the entire prison. But God was not through yet.

While Joseph was in prison, two of the men who worked for Pharaoh were also thrown into prison. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt, and when he got mad, he could have anybody thrown in prison that he wanted to. First, Pharaoh threw his *butler* into prison. A butler is somebody who takes care of things in your house, and makes sure everything gets done right. Then he threw his *baker* into prison. Pharaoh's baker was the man who baked bread and desserts and things for Pharaoh and his palace. These two men ended up in prison the same time that Joseph was there.

One morning, after they had been in prison for a while, the butler woke up saying "I had had a weird dream last night. I think it means something, but I can't figure it out!"

The baker said, "That's funny! I had a weird dream last night, too, and I think it means something, but I can't figure mine out either."

Just then Joseph walked in, and Joseph said, "Good morning, fellas. How are you?"

They both looked at Joseph and told him their problem. "We both had really weird dreams last night, and we think that our dreams mean something, but we can't figure them out."

Joseph said, "Well, God can help us with that. But first you have to tell me what you dreamed. Mr Butler, why don't you go first."

The butler said, "Okay. I dreamed that there was a vine, and that vine had three branches. Those branches grew buds, and those buds grew into grapes. So I squeezed the grapes into grape juice, and put it in Pharaoh's cup. What does that mean?"

Joseph said, "That's simple. In three days, Pharaoh is going to take you out of here, and give you your old job back. And when he does, Mr Butler, please remember that I helped you. Please put in a good word to Pharaoh for me."

The butler said, "Oh, that's great! I'm getting out of jail! And I sure will remember you! You can count on it."

The baker said, "That was so good! I can't believe it! Tell me mine!"

Joseph said, "Okay, go ahead."

The baker said, “Well, I dreamed that I had three baskets on my head. In the top basket there was a bunch of meat. And the birds came and ate that meat out of the basket.”

Joseph said, “Well, your dream means that in three days Pharaoh is going to take you out of here and hang you by your neck until you’re dead, for the crime that you committed.”

Of course, the baker was very sad. After three days, it happened exactly as Joseph had said. The butler got his job back, and the baker was hanged on a tree.

After the butler was released from the prison, Joseph waited to hear from the butler. He thought, “It won’t be long now. The butler will tell Pharaoh about my case, and I’ll be out of here.” But you know what happened? The butler was so happy to be out of the prison that he forgot about Joseph. Do you know how long he forgot about Joseph? For two whole years!

That wasn’t fair, was it? Joseph had helped that man, and he forgot all about Joseph. Did you ever have somebody forget about something good that they said they were going to do? What should you do when that happens? Should you get upset? Should you get mad at God? Should you try to get back at the person? No. You should do just what Joseph did. You should trust that God knows what He is doing. God knows what to do and when to do it. God has not forgotten about you. God is always right on time for those who trust Him and obey Him.

Joseph waited for two whole years, and he never heard anything from that butler. But one day, Pharaoh had a dream. Pharaoh went to his people one morning and he said, “I had two dreams last night, and I don’t know what they mean. Can anybody help me?”

All of Pharaoh’s employees looked at each other, and none of them knew what to do. Then the butler said, “Oh, no! I can’t believe I forgot about Joseph all this time!” He said, “Pharaoh, two years ago I made some mistakes, and you had me put in your prison. While I was there, I met a man who interpreted a dream for me. His name is Joseph.”

Pharaoh called for Joseph, and had him taken out of prison. Joseph took shower, shaved, combed his hair, brushed his teeth and put on some clean clothes before he went in before Pharaoh. Pharaoh said, “Young man, I had two dreams last night, and I don’t know what they mean.”

Joseph said, “If you can tell me your dreams, God will help us.”

Pharaoh said, “Okay. In my first dream there were seven cows down by the river. They were seven strong, healthy cows. But all of a sudden seven weak and sick cows came along. And the seven weak and sick cows ATE the seven strong and healthy cows. Then in my second dream, there were seven stalks of corn. They were seven strong and healthy stalks of corn. But then, seven weak and wind-beaten stalks of corn sprang up. And the seven weak stalks of corn ate up the seven strong stalks. Now, what does all of this mean?”

Joseph answered, “The answer is simple. Both dreams point to one thing. The next seven years are going to be years of plenty. There will be plenty of food in the land. But after that there will be seven years of famine. The famine will be so bad that it will make everybody forget the seven years of plenty.”

Pharaoh said, “I believe your interpretation is right. But what should we do?”

Joseph said, “Appoint a man to prepare for the famine. During the seven good years, let him store up food, so that you will be ready during the famine.”

Pharaoh thought a minute, then he said, “That’s a great idea. I want you to be that man! You will be the most important man in the land of Egypt, next to me.”

Wow! Can you believe that? One day, Joseph was a prisoner, and the next day he was the second most powerful man in Egypt! Why did that happen? Because Joseph waited for God’s timing. You see, if Joseph had gotten out of prison two years earlier when he wanted to, he might not have been around when Pharaoh needed him. But because he waited for God’s timing, he was where he was supposed to be when God needed him.

When you are doing right, trusting God and obeying Him, and things go wrong, don’t give up. Don’t get discouraged. God has a plan for you. His timing is perfect. Let Him give you His best exactly when He is ready to.

Let’s learn our memory verse. **Matthew 6:33 – *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.***

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Teen and Adult Lesson

Year One, Quarter Two, Lesson Six

[0190]

Teacher, choose one of the following truths to expand upon in teaching this portion of Scripture to your teen/adult class. Teach and apply the truth that you choose using statements and illustrations that are most helpful and applicable to your students.

- I. **TRUST GOD'S TIMING.** Imagine being in prison for a crime that you did not commit. Then imagine, after years of endurance, having the hope that you may be released any day. This was true for Joseph, as he watched the butler leave, and heard the butler promise to "put in a good word for him" to Pharaoh. Imagine the emptiness that Joseph felt as the days turned into weeks and the weeks became months. For two more years Joseph continued in prison, and heard nothing. Everyone would have agreed that it would have been better for Joseph to have been released before two more years had passed. But if he had been released at that time, then when Pharaoh needed someone to interpret his dream, they would not have known where to find Joseph. God's timing kept Joseph right where he needed to be when Pharaoh went looking for him. You will face times when you feel "stuck" in God's will. Stay faithful, as Joseph did, and you will be exactly where you need to be when God is ready to promote you.
- II. **NO PERSON CAN KEEP YOU FROM GOD'S BEST.** The butler is another good example of someone who made a mistake that affected the future of a godly, surrendered person. We can easily point at this butler and say, "See! This butler's negligence prevented Joseph from making progress. But God worked in spite of the butler's negligence. Nobody's negligence, nobody's mistakes, nobody's failure, nobody's attacks against you can keep God from blessing and advancing you. Only YOUR actions can keep God from blessing and advancing you.
- III. **GOD WILL USE THE ABILITIES THAT HE HAS GIVEN YOU TO ACCOMPLISH THE WORK HE HAS MADE YOU TO DO.** We can clearly see how Joseph's ability with dreams fit perfectly God's purpose for Joseph's life. It is just as true that your abilities will fit perfectly God's purpose for your life. God knows what He is doing. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2:13.
- IV. **GOD KNOWS WHERE TO FIND YOU, AND HOW TO DELIVER YOU.** As Joseph waited patiently in the prison, he could easily have been tempted to feel hopeless. He could have been tempted to wonder, "Where can I possibly be going from here?" But when it was time for God to move Joseph forward, God knew where to find him, and how to bring him out. God knows where you are. Be faithful, trust God and obey Him, and He will deliver you when He is ready.
- V. **WHEN GOD IS READY TO USE YOU IN A NEW WAY, THE CHANGES OFTEN HAPPEN VERY QUICKLY.** Imagine that long, endless tunnel called prison where Joseph found himself for years. Every day seems the same. Then one day, without any warning, he is brought out of prison, and brought before Pharaoh. By the end of that day, he has a position in Pharaoh's kingdom that makes him second in authority to Pharaoh. As Joseph begins his new life as director of the Egyptian economy, it surely must have crossed his mind, "Wow! This morning I was a prisoner; tonight I'm a ruler in Egypt." When you stay faithful to God, and patiently trust Him, you have times of marvelous blessing that cause you to say, "Wow! I can't believe how quickly that all happened!"

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God Moves Joseph from the Prison to the Palace

- I. GENESIS 40:1-23 Joseph Interprets Dreams in Prison
 - 1-4 Pharaoh's butler and baker are imprisoned with Joseph
 - 5-15 Joseph interprets the butler's dream
 - 16-19 Joseph interprets the baker's dream
 - 20-23 The dreams are fulfilled and Joseph is forgotten

- II. GENESIS 41:1-8 Pharaoh Seeks the Meaning of His Dreams
 - 1-4 Pharaoh has a dream of 14 cows
 - 5-7 Pharaoh has a dream of 14 stalks of corn
 - 8 Pharaoh can't find anyone to tell him the meaning

- III. GENESIS 41:9-36 Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams
 - 9-14 Joseph is brought out of prison
 - 15-32 Joseph tells Pharaoh of 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine
 - 33-36 Joseph advises Pharaoh to prepare for the famine

- IV. GENESIS 41:37-57 Pharaoh Makes Joseph a Part of His Cabinet
 - 37-45 Joseph is made a very powerful man in Egypt
 - 46-53 Joseph prepares for the 7-year famine during the 7 years of prosperity
 - 54-57 The famine begins

Matthew 6:33

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.*

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Search the puzzle below to find the ten words in the wordlist from today's story. Words may be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal. Circle each word that you find.

B A K K S C R O W M J O
U I D R E A M S E V K O
L J O S V R U M O P A D
T P H L E B A K E R T D
J B R U N F W Q A I G U
O V U B A J A J I S D L
P C O T R O D M C O W S
E O K U L S H L I N E D
S J G L C E M R A N K F
C O R N R P R E L V E G
F W M W P H A R A O H K
A P H A R M D Y P R T V

WORDLIST:

BUTLER

PHARAOH

BAKER

COWS

JOSEPH

CORN

PRISON

SEVEN

DREAM

FAMINE

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Matthew 6:33

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The answers to this week's puzzle

B A K K S C R O W M J O
U I D R E A M S E V K O
L J O S V R U M O P A D
T P H L E B A K E R T D
J B R U N F W Q A I G U
O V U B A J A J I S D L
P C O T R O D M C O W S
E O K U L S H L I N E D
S J G L C E M R A N K F
C O R N R P R E L V E G
F W M W P H A R A O H K
A P H A R M D Y P R T V

WORDLIST:

BUTLER

BAKER

JOSEPH

PRISON

DREAM

PHARAOH

COWS

CORN

SEVEN

FAMINE