

11.04 Joseph in Prison (Genesis 39:20–23; 40:1–23; Psalm 105:17, 18)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) Flash cards from “Joseph,” Genesis Series 5, A Beka Book, Pensacola, FL
- (optional) Herein Is Love Commentary Series; *Genesis, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *cupbearer* (sometimes translated *butler*): “an officer of high rank in royal courts whose duty it was to serve the drinks at the royal table; on account of the constant fear of plots and intrigues, a person must be regarded as thoroughly trustworthy to hold the position” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cup-bearer>).
- *interpretation*: explanation of the meaning of something

Scripture: (NASB)

Genesis 39:20 So Joseph’s master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible *for it*. 23 The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph’s charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

40:1 Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. 2 Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. 3 So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the *same* place where Joseph was imprisoned. 4 The captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time. 5 Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his *own* dream *and* each dream with its *own* interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. 7 He asked Pharaoh’s officials who were with him in confinement in his master’s house, “Why are your faces so sad today?” 8 Then they said to him, “We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it.” Then Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *it* to me, please.”

9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, “In my dream, behold, *there was* a vine in front of me; 10 and on the vine *were* three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, *and* its clusters produced ripe grapes. 11 Now Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh’s hand.” 12 Then Joseph said to him, “This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; 13 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh’s cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer. 14 Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. 15 For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon.”

16 When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, “I also *saw* in my dream, and behold, *there were* three baskets of white bread on my head; 17 and in the top basket *there were* some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.” 18 Then Joseph

answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; 19 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you.”

20 Thus it came about on the third day, *which was* Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh’s hand; 22 but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Psalm 105:16 When he summoned a famine on the land
and broke all supply of bread, 17
he had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave. 18
His feet were hurt with fetters;
his neck was put in a collar of iron;

Introduction/Review:

[Review the events of the story so far by singing stanzas 1–3 of “Joseph” found at 11.01 or on the Songs page of teachingthebibleto kids.org.]

Story:

After Potiphar’s wife accused Joseph wrongly, Potiphar had to do something with Joseph; so he put him in prison, a special prison—not the city jail but the jail where Pharaoh’s prisoners were kept. Since Potiphar was captain of the bodyguard, we assume with evidence in the text (40:3, 4) that he was in charge of this prison. In fact, the prison-dungeon might have been very close to his house if not attached to it somehow (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/genesis-39-20.html>).

Psalm 105 tells us Joseph’s “feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron.” What a terrible circumstance for an innocent young man. Yet, no complaint by Joseph is recorded in Scripture. Joseph is a type of Jesus, who, “when He was reviled, reviled not” (1 Peter 2:23).

Again, just as the Lord had been with Joseph in Potiphar’s house, so God was with him even in prison. The Bible states, “The Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph’s charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper.” Those fetters and iron collar came off so that Joseph could walk around freely and supervise the prisoners. What a testimony to the Lord’s care of His own.

After a while (we don’t know how much time), two men from Pharaoh’s household were thrown into the prison. The captain of the bodyguard (was it Potiphar?) put them under the charge of Joseph.* Let’s imagine ✓their conversation with Joseph as they got acquainted in prison:

Joseph: What did you two guys do to get put into this prison?

Cupbearer: I was Pharaoh’s cupbearer. I have no idea what I did. He just got mad at me one day and sent me here.

Baker: Me too. I haven’t burnt any of his toast; my dinner rolls were fluffy and tasty. I don’t get it.

Both: All we know is that somehow we offended our lord, the king of Egypt, and Pharaoh was furious with us. So here we are.

Joseph: Well, I’ll take care of you here.

✓Day after day, week after week, month after month, and maybe a whole year went by. Again, we don’t know how much time passed, but the Bible says it was “some time.”

Then, one morning as Joseph went about his routine, he stopped by to see and care for Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. This morning the two men looked dejected.

"Why are your faces so sad today?" Joseph asked.

They both answered, "We have had dreams last night, and there is no one to interpret them."

"Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please," answered Joseph. "You go first, Mr Cupbearer."

"Okay. Well, in my dream there was a vine in front of me. On the vine were three branches. As the vine was budding, its blossoms came out, and its clusters produced ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup. I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand. That was all."

Joseph, being led of God, said to the cupbearer, "This is the interpretation of your dream: The three branches are three days. Within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office. You will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer."

That was a great interpretation, wasn't it? But Joseph added a personal request: "Keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

The chief baker, seeing the positive interpretation of the cupbearer's dream, was eager, now, to tell Joseph his dream. He said, "In my dream there were three baskets of white bread on my head. In the top basket was a variety of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh. The birds were eating the bread out of the basket on my head."

Joseph answered, "Your interpretation is not so favorable. The three baskets are also three days. Within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head too, but it will be *from* you. He will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you."

One day went by. Two days went by. The third day . . . [dramatic pause] was Pharaoh's birthday. He made a feast for all his servants. He called his chief cupbearer back to his position, and the cupbearer presented Pharaoh his beverages.

The head of the baker was also lifted up—on a gallows. Both interpretations of the dreams were totally fulfilled.

Are you hopeful that this is Joseph's chance to get out of prison? Let's read what happened. "The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." [Disappointedly] Oh.

Did God forget Joseph? No. "But," you say, "Joseph is innocent; yet he is in prison!"

Fear not. God is working.

*Notice Genesis 40:7, which states, "Pharaoh's officials . . . were with him in confinement *in his master's house*." The *master* in every other verse of the story to this point refers to Potiphar.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
He did not utter complaints in His trouble.
- Trust God even when troubles abound.

Activities:

- Play dough: barred prison door; grapes; bread in a basket; birds

- Snack: Prison fare—bread and water (I used ½ flour tortilla and after a bit offered butter and preserves to put on the tortilla.)
- Discuss some features of Egypt: pyramids, Sphinx, pharaohs
- Sing stanzas 1–4 of “Joseph” found at Lesson 11.01 or on the Songs page at teachingthebibleto kids.org, where an audio and a visual are available.
- Sing “Joseph Trusted God” (tune: “Farmer in the Dell”; found on the internet, site unknown)

To Egypt Joseph went; To Egypt Joseph went.
He was bought to be a slave by captain Potiphar.

For Joseph all went well; For Joseph all went well.
Until the day his master’s wife had him put into jail.

But Joseph trusted God; But Joseph trusted God.
And once again God cared for him and kept him from all harm.

- Review questions: (Game: Each person who answers a question correctly may add a link to a paper chain.)
 1. Into what prison was Joseph cast? [The one for Pharaoh’s prisoners.]
 2. Why did Joseph find favor with the chief jailer? [Because the Lord was with Joseph, extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.]
 3. What was Joseph’s responsibility in the prison? [He was in charge of all the prisoners.]
 4. Which two officials of Pharaoh were put in Joseph’s prison? [Cupbearer and baker.]
 5. Who took care of these two men? [Joseph.]
 6. Tell the cupbearer’s dream. [A vine with three branches produced ripe grapes. The cupbearer took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and put the cup into Pharaoh’s hand.]
 7. What was the interpretation of the cupbearer’s dream? [In three days he would again be cupbearer.]
 8. Tell the baker’s dream. [On his head were three baskets of bread for Pharaoh. The birds ate the bread out of the top basket on his head.]
 9. Tell the interpretation of the baker’s dream. [Within three days Pharaoh would “lift up” his head and hang him. The birds would eat his flesh.]
 10. What did the cupbearer do after the dreams were fulfilled? [Forgot Joseph.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Lamentations 3:26—It is good to wait patiently for the salvation of the Lord.

Handwork:

- Cut ½-inch by 4 ½-inch strips of paper, or cut the strips found below. Make a paper chain by gluing the ends of the first strip together. Put the next and ensuing strips through the preceding loop before gluing the strip ends.

cupbearer

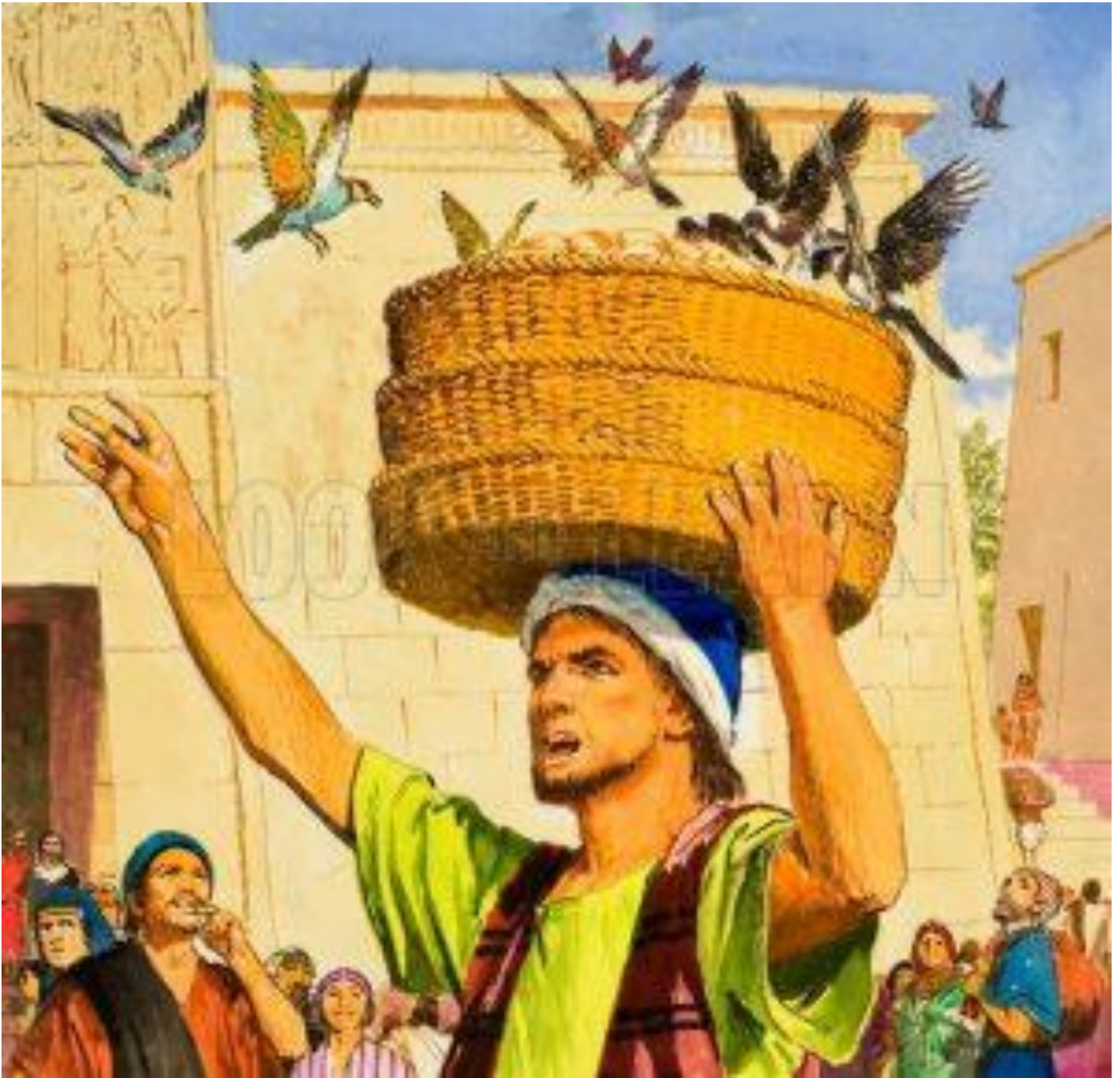
interpretation



The King and the Cupbearer







<https://thelandegod.com/dreams-come-true-series-10-the-chief-butler-and-baker/>

