** BIBLE 101**

Unit 3: The Lord is My Helper

*Joseph – Dream Decoder*

**A Note to the Teacher:** The story of Joseph teaches us how God can take even the most difficult of situations and use them for good. Joseph was sold in to slavery by his own brothers, but not all was lost. Had he not been a slave, Joseph would not have been able to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, and would never have become second in command of all of Egypt.

While it has a very happy ending, the story of Joseph may elicit some difficult questions, especially among older classes. Students may ask about the brothers’ jealousy and how poorly they treated Joseph. Joseph’s is also a bit of a Cinderella story, which may lead to questions about bad things that happen without such a happen ending. Remind students that not all bad situations become victories, but God helps us in all times and God’s love and grace are enough to get us through anything that comes our way. Even before he interpreted Pharaoh’s dream, Joseph was at peace because he had God to pray to and God’s love to comfort him.

**Gathering**

As students enter the space, gather them in a seated circle. Hand one student an oversized coat. **Say, “We usually begin our lessons with a story and then move on to the activity, but today we are going to do things a bit backward. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (student with the coat) is going to be “it.” The rest of you will have to chase him/her, trying to tag them. At any time, he/she can call out someone else’s name. Then we will all pause, and that person will take the coat. Keep chasing whomever has the coat until everyone is out!”**

Play the game a few times through, depending on attendance.

Take the coat back and gather the group in a seated circle in the center of the space.

**Ask, “Why did everyone chase the person wearing the coat, but no one else?”** Explain that the coat made one person special.

**Say, “Today, we are going to talk about someone else who had a special coat. Just like in our game, his coat got him in to a bit of trouble.”**

For grades 2-5, have students turn to the Genesis 37 in their Bibles. For prek-grade 1, open the teacher’s Bible to Genesis 37.

**Say, “The story of Joseph teaches us an important lesson about the way the God helps us in challenging times. Joseph was Abraham’s great-grandson. Abraham had Isaac, Isaac had Jacob and Esau, and then Jacob had many sons, including Joseph. The story of Joseph takes up 5 chapters of the book of Genesis in the Bible, so this morning, we are going to paraphrase a little bit.”**

Read the following summary, pausing throughout to ask questions in bold.

*Jacob had many sons, but Joseph was his favorite.*

 ***Is it right to have a favorite child?***

*Joseph’s brothers were very jealous, because his father always treated him better than the rest. One day, Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful new coat. It was made of beautiful, expensive, colorful fabric. When Joseph showed his coat to his brothers, they were more jealous than ever.*

*Joseph’s brother threw him in to a well. They saw some people from another country walking by, and sold Joseph to them as a slave for 20 silver coins.*

***Was it right of the brothers to sell Joseph as a slave? Even though they were mad?***

*The brothers took Joseph’s coat, killed a goat, and dipped the coat in the goat’s blood. Then, they took the coat to Jacob and told him that Joseph had died.*

*Meanwhile, the people that had bought Joseph as a slave took him to Egypt and sold him to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar was the captain of the Pharaoh’s guards. He was so impressed with how smart Joseph was that he put Joseph in charge of his whole house.*

*Potiphar’s wife thought that Joseph was very handsome. She wanted him to come to bed with her. Every night, she asked him, and every night, Joseph refused.*

***Would it have been right for Joseph to go to bed with Potiphar’s wife?***

*Potiphar’s wife finally became so angry that she lied, saying that Joseph had tried to trick her. Joseph was sent to prison. While he was in prison, Joseph met two men: the Pharaoh’s baker and chief cupbearer – the ones that brought him breakfast every morning. One day, the men told Joseph about dreams they had had. They were worried, because they couldn’t understand what the dreams meant.*

***Have you ever had a dream that you thought meant something?***

*Joseph told them what their dreams meant, and three days later, exactly what Joseph had said came true.*

*Two years later, while Joseph was still in prison, Pharaoh had a dream. He asked his counsel, but no one could figure out what it might mean. Then, the cupbearer remembered that Joseph had deciphered his dream. So Pharaoh called on Joseph to interpret his dream.*

*Pharaoh had dreamed of seven fat cows coming out of the river. They were eating grass near the river when seven skinny cows came along and ate the fat cows.*

***What do you think this dream could mean?***

*God showed Joseph that the dream meant that there would be seven good years in Egypt when a lot of food would grow and everyone would have enough to eat, but that then there would be seven bad years when not very much food would grow and people wouldn't have enough to eat. So Joseph told Pharaoh what they could do to make sure people didn't starve during those seven bad years.*

*Joseph told Pharaoh to store up food during the seven good years, so that the people of Egypt would have food to get through the seven bad years that would come.*

***Was Joseph’s idea a good one?***

*When Pharaoh saw how smart Joseph was, he made Joseph second in command of the country of Egypt.*

**Say, “And so Joseph goes from being the outcast brother, sold as a slave, to second in command of all of Egypt. Throughout his time in prison, God helped Joseph. God showed him what the dreams of the baker and the cupbearer meant. God showed him what Pharaoh’s dream predicted and gave him an idea for saving the people of Egypt. God saw Joseph through a hard time and allowed him to turn his struggle in to good that saved a nation.”**

**A Coat of Many Colors**

**Say, “The story of Joseph, and the lesson that his story teaches us about God as our helper, begins when Jacob gives him a special coat of many colors. In fact, if Jacob had never given him the coat, Joseph may have never ended up in Egypt, and who know what would have happened without his ability to interpret dreams and his idea to store food for the future!”**

Explain that this morning, we are going to create coats to remind us of Joseph’s story and God’s help in saving both Joseph and Egypt.

Set out a variety of materials: paper cuts, glue, markers, water colors, washi tape, and any other supplies you may want.

Give each student a cut-out coat.

**Say, “You may use whatever materials you like to make your coat as colorful and special as you can. Remember that Joseph’s coat was so beautiful that his brothers were jealous enough to sell him as a slave. Add color and sparkle to make your coat a masterpiece!”**

As students work, move between them offering help. Ask questions about where they saw God helping in the story of Joseph, and where they see God helping in our lives and our world today.

**Closing**

As students finish, have them share their coats with the class. Work together to put away materials.