

Joseph Tests His Brothers

Genesis 42:1-44:34

MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 8:17

“For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Chocolate chips, dry chow mein, a cookie sheet or waxed paper, a crock pot, and a spoon.

A clear and possibly glass bottle, baby oil, water, and food coloring.

Magazine pictures (or other pretty pictures), sheets of cardboard or poster board, rubber cement, scissors, and markers.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Mud Huts

You will need chocolate chips, chow mien, a cookie sheet or waxed paper, a crock pot, and a spoon. Before class put the chocolate chips in the crock-pot to melt. When melted, have the children gather around for this little story while you make the “Mud Huts.”

There once was a man who had no house. He got wet when it rained and hot from the sun. He looked around and all he saw was mud (show the spoon with chocolate on it) and sticks (pour the chow mein noodles in the chocolate and stir gently). He asked the Lord to provide him a house and the Lord told him to mix the sticks with the mud and build (drop the cookies by spoonfuls onto the cookie sheet or waxed paper). And that is what he did. Soon other people around him learned to build Mud Huts, too. Instead of complaining that all they had was mud and sticks, they had houses to live in.

Explain that **God is in control of our circumstances.** Save the cookies and send home with the children. (Do not let the children eat them in class without parental permission.)

LESSON TIME!

**NOTE TO TEACHERS – Due to the length of this passage consider telling this lesson in story form. You will need to familiarize yourself with the highlights of the story and make application throughout. You probably will not have sufficient time to read all of the verses and make application within the class session.*

How could a slave in a prison cell, know that everything would work out okay?--only by trusting in the Lord! Joseph had been sold by his own brothers into slavery and, later, falsely accused and thrown into prison; when it seemed that he had opportunity to become free (the Baker), Joseph was “forgotten” for two years. Now, God’s purposes begin to unfold. We see indeed that God worked all things "together for good" for Joseph. **God is in control of our circumstances.**

Oftentimes, for a man to be used by God, he must first be broken. Joseph's dreams of his family bowing down to him must have seemed like a long forgotten story at this point. But God, who holds our lives in His hand, had a purpose in every situation that came into Joseph's life, just as He has in our lives. God has a wonderful plan in the making, and all we must do is wait to "read the next chapter." **God is in control of our circumstances.**

GENESIS 42:1-5

When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?"

And he said, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die."

So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "Lest some calamity befall him."

And the sons of Israel went to buy grain among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

The famine that was in Egypt had now spread to the land of Canaan and the other lands in the area. Jacob was aware that there was grain in Egypt, and he wanted to send his sons there to buy grain. When he told his sons of the abundance in Egypt, the Bible tells us that they looked upon one another. Why did they do that? Perhaps their reluctance to go was because of their guilty conscience concerning Joseph. For twenty years, they had been living with a secret: they had sold their brother Joseph to a caravan going to Egypt.

The brothers did go, but only ten of them; the youngest son, Benjamin, stayed home. Jacob did not want to take a chance on anything happening to him on the long and dangerous trip; the pain of losing Joseph was still strong in his life. We must remember that the abundance of food in Egypt was due to Joseph's wisdom, directed by God. If his brothers had not sold Joseph into Egypt, would there be grain for everyone? Again, what seemed to be such tragedy in Joseph's life, God had used for good for many people. **God is in control of our circumstances.**

GENESIS 42:6-20

Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth.

Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"

And they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. We are all one man's sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies."

But he said to them, "No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land."

And they said, "Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no more."

But Joseph said to them, "It is as I spoke to you, saying, 'You are spies!'

"In this manner you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

"Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies!"

So he put them all together in prison three days.

Then Joseph said to them the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God:

"If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.

"And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they did so.

As the brothers came to buy grain, they stood before the governor of Egypt. It was their own brother Joseph, though they did not know it was him. The brothers bowed down before Joseph with their faces to the earth. A twenty-year old dream was fulfilled! Joseph recognized his brothers, for they had not changed as much in appearance as he had. The last time they saw him, he was seventeen years old. He was now about thirty-eight and dressed as Egyptian royalty.

Verse seven tells us that he spoke roughly with them. Joseph was testing his brothers. Perhaps he wanted to see if their hearts had changed. Were they still hardened? What was their heart toward Benjamin?

The brothers told Joseph that they had come from Canaan simply to buy food. Joseph replied by accusing them of being spies (insinuating that they were using an excuse as a cover for finding the places in Egypt which might be vulnerable to invasion). As he saw them bowing and fearfully protesting that he had misunderstood them, it is certain that he was recalling the dreams he had had so long ago.

To support the case that they were not spies, they began speaking of their family as evidence of good intentions. They explained that they were twelve brothers. They not only counted Benjamin, but Joseph also. "One was not," they continued (indicating that they thought Joseph was dead yet still counted him as a member of the family).

Joseph decided to test them further and to prove to himself that their story was true. They were to send for their younger brother, Benjamin. In the meantime, he would continue to assume they were spies and keep them all in prison until their story could be proven true. As they once rejected Joseph's pleas, so does he reject their plea. As they had once sent him away into slavery and imprisonment, so now they would have a similar experience.

Joseph put them into prison for three days. After the three days, Joseph summoned them again and told them that they would not all need to remain there; perhaps, he thought of the grief of his father. He told them that his change of mind was because he feared God. (Joseph did not worship the Egyptian idols; he continued to look to the true and living God.)

GENESIS 42:21-24

Then they said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."

And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us."

But they did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter.

And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

As the brothers received this ultimatum from Joseph, they all acknowledged to one another that this had all come on them because they had sinned against their brother Joseph. Their consciences had been stirred up. Not only had they conspired to kill, later deciding to sell their brother, but they had ignored his cries of anguish to save him. In all reconciliation, offenders must first come to the place where they acknowledge their wrong and are sorry for their sins.

Reuben reminded them that he had tried to persuade them not to carry out their crime. But, Reuben had also failed in not being willing to tell his father the truth or attempt to rescue Joseph. He may not have been as guilty as the others, but he was not innocent either. They did not know that Joseph could understand what they were saying. Joseph had been careful to carry out his conversations with them through an interpreter.

The true character of Joseph breaks through his stern exterior when he turns away and weeps as his brothers confess their sins before him. After again gaining control of himself, he continued with his instructions. One of them must stay bound in prison while the others went home. The brothers agreed to the new condition Joseph set to prove they were innocent.

Joseph had his guard take Simeon and put him in bonds before their eyes. To the brothers, it seemed God's justice was being served. Yet, as we see, it was all a part of God's plan to ultimately bless the family. **God is in control of our circumstances.**

Shake It Up

You will need a clear plastic or glass bottle, baby oil, water, and food coloring. Fill the clear glass bottle half-full of baby oil, and half full of water (leave a little air space). Add a few drops of food coloring and let the children shake it up (to represent the trials and trouble we experience).

Tell the children that sometimes God does not work on our timetable. "We usually want an immediate rescue when we call on God for help." Set the bottle aside and go on with other activities. Tell them the fizzy mess in the bottle will get back to being beautifully clear in a little while. Ask them to keep checking.

GENESIS 42:25-28

Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.

So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there.

But as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack.

So he said to his brothers, "My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!" Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, "What is this that God has done to us?"

Here Joseph gives orders to supply the brother with corn, deposit their money in their sacks, and furnish them with provision for their trip home--all without their knowledge. We see Joseph's heart as he not only provides for them the grain, but he also provides extra provisions for their trip.

Their response to this kindness was fear. They knew that they had paid for the grain; but now, it was obvious that somehow not all of the price of the grain had been paid, and it scared them. They feared that upon their return to Egypt, the governor would have more accusations against them. Again, the guilt of their sin against Joseph was plaguing their hearts.

GENESIS 42:29-35

Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying:

"The man who is lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

"But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies.

"'We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is with our father this day in the land of Canaan.'

"Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, 'By this I will know that you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, take food for the famine of your households, and be gone.

"'And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men. And I will deliver your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.'"

Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

Now the sons related to Jacob all that happened in Egypt (no lies or deceit this time). They told him of Simeon's captivity, and the need to bring Benjamin down with them if they wished to buy grain again and bring Simeon home. They explained their shock to find the money they were to pay for the grain in each one of their sacks. The brothers realized the seriousness of the situation, would they be accused of being thieves?

GENESIS 42:36

And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin away. All these things are against me."

There is much in this one verse that we can learn from. Jacob was looking at the things that are seen, rather than at the things unseen. He was walking by *sight* rather than by faith. It does not appear that he thought that the Lord had a purpose for all this.

We must remember that even when the circumstances look like disaster, our God is working His wondrous purposes on our behalf. We never have to fear that God has let things get out of control. They may be out of our control, but never His. God has a higher purpose, related to our eternal future, for which He is preparing us

through all our difficulties. "All things" were *not* against Jacob. *All things* were actually working together for good! All Jacob had to do was to "read the next chapter." **God is in control of our circumstances.**

GENESIS 42:37-38

Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."

But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave."

Reuben promises that he would be responsible for Benjamin if Jacob would let him go with them. If anything happened to Benjamin, Jacob could then kill Reuben's own two sons. Yet, Jacob completely refused to consider letting Benjamin go down to Egypt. He had grieved so bitterly over Joseph that he was not willing even to think about allowing Benjamin to risk his life. And, there the matter was left for the time being.

GENESIS 43:1-10

Now the famine was severe in the land.

And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."

But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you'."

"If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.

"But if you will not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'"

And Israel said, "Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?"

But they said, "The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?"

Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.

"I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

"For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time."

The famine continued to be severe and, now, the grain the brothers had brought back from Egypt was gone. Jacob instructed his sons to go back to Egypt to buy more food. Judah urged Jacob to let them take Benjamin with them. The governor he feared, would not even talk to them without Benjamin; he would just believe that they had lied to him earlier about having another brother, presume that they were spies, and put them in prison or kill them.

Now Jacob would have to trust his beloved Benjamin to the Lord. How often do we, as Jacob, complain and become fearful in time of heavy trial? Interestingly enough, it is at this point that the name Israel begins to be used instead of Jacob. The name had not been used since Genesis 37:13. It seems that losing Joseph caused a struggle once more with the nature of the "old Jacob." Perhaps the faith he stirred in willingness to release of Benjamin meant that God was once more assuming control.

Judah argued that if they did not go back to get more grain, they would all die, including Benjamin, and offered himself as a guarantee for his youngest brother. He also reminded Jacob that, if they had not waited so long, they could already have made the trip to Egypt and back twice.

GENESIS 43:11-14

And their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man--a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

"Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.

"Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man.

"And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

Jacob saw the situation and knew that it was out of his hands. So, he prepared a gift for the man. He also reminded them to take back the bundles of money that had been restored in their sacks on the first trip, and "double money" for the purchase of grain. He then told them to take their brother Benjamin with them to the man down in Egypt with the prayerful hope and confidence that God Almighty would overrule in the heart of the man and have him return both Benjamin and Simeon to them again. If not, Jacob was content to leave the matter with God. Jacob committed Benjamin into the hands of God. God often touches that which we cling to the most. He wants us to surrender everything to His control and trust in Him.

GENESIS 43:15-25

So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph.

When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for these men will dine with me at noon."

Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, "It is because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may seek an occasion against us and fall upon us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys."

When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house, and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food;

"but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand.

"And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks."

But he said, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed.

Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there.

Now the brothers were on their way to Egypt. When their arrival was announced to Joseph, he immediately had them brought into his presence. Imagine the emotions Joseph must have felt when he laid his eyes upon his little brother Benjamin for the first time in twenty years. He then gave instructions to prepare a dinner at noon for the men at which time he would join them.

Since the brothers will still concerned about the money that had been replaced in their bags, this lavish display of kindness made them suspicious. They feared a trap. Before, they entered Joseph's house, they told the steward about the discovery of the money in their bags and explained that it had been returned to them entirely without their knowledge.

The steward assured them that they needed not fear, because he himself had received the money from them in payment for the grain. They should thank God and the God of their father who must have mysteriously put the money in their bags. Simeon was then released to them.

GENESIS 43:26-34

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth.

Then he asked them about their well-being, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"

And they answered, "Your servant our father is in good health; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.

Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son."

Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep. And he went into his chamber and wept there.

Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, "Serve the bread."

So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.

And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another.

Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.

Finally, Joseph arrived. When they brought him the present, they bowed themselves before him calling him, "Thy servant our father." Again, we are reminded of the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams.

Joseph then inquired about the welfare of his father and was moved to tears when he saw his youngest brother, Benjamin. We see that Joseph's heart had remained tender as he embraced the Lord through his years of difficulty.

Even natural affection is often destroyed by adversity and prosperity. Joseph could have become bitter and hardened. May we as Joseph remain tender-hearted through times of difficulty. When we walk in fellowship with God, we understand His great love and realize even our most adverse circumstances are working together for good for us. God keeps our hearts tender and protects us from bitterness. **God is in control of our circumstances.**

Upon seeing Benjamin, Joseph could no longer hold back his emotion; he quickly left the room before they could see him crying. Finally, he was able to keep his feelings under control and gave instruction to begin the meal. Joseph sat apart from his brothers according to the custom of the land (Egyptians were not permitted to eat bread with the Hebrews).

There were three tables: one for the Hebrews, one for the Egyptian guests, and one for Joseph himself. The brothers noticed something incredible. They had been seated in order of age, from the oldest to the youngest.

Just a fun little fact: If one were to do the math, there are no less than 39,917,000 different orders in which eleven individuals could have been seated. They were seated perfectly in order.

Evidently, this man knew more about their family than they realized. They also saw that Benjamin was given five times as much as the others. Thus, Joseph was deliberately honoring Benjamin five times as much as the others. Perhaps he wanted to see if there was any resentment towards Benjamin. There was not, and Joseph was happy with their attitudes.

GENESIS 44:1-3

And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack.

"Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money." So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.

Joseph commanded the steward to fill his brothers' sacks with food, as much as they could carry. He instructed him to return their money once again, in the mouth of each sack. Then the steward was told to place Joseph's own personal drinking cup, made of silver and beautifully ornamented, in Benjamin's sack. In the morning, at dawn, the brothers found their donkeys loaded and ready to go. And thus they left.

GENESIS 44:4-6

And when they had gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?

'Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.' "

So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words.

After the brothers left the city, Joseph ordered his steward to follow them. When he had overtaken them, he was to accuse them of stealing his lord's most cherished possession, the silver cup from which he drank and which he used for divining the future. (The Egyptians must have attributed Joseph's prophetic insight to his cup of divination.)

GENESIS 44:7-13

And they said to him, "Why does my lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing.

"Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?"

"With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

And he said, "Now also let it be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless."

Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack.

So he searched, and he began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

When the steward overtook the brothers and accused them of the theft, they denied the charge. They proposed death for the thief and slavery for the rest of them if the missing cup should be found in one of their bags. The steward, offering easier terms, said the thief alone should be enslaved. He then started searching the bags, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest; the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

Would these same brothers who had sold Joseph into slavery leave Benjamin to bear the blame of the "theft" and continue on home? The Lord had been at work in the hearts of these men. They stood by Benjamin and returned to Joseph to plea for their brother. They who had once sold a brother were now willing to be sold into slavery rather than give up another brother.

GENESIS 44:14-17

So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there; and they fell before him on the ground.

And Joseph said to them, "What deed is this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?"

Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found."

But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so; but the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father."

As they came back to Joseph's house, he asked them why they had done such a thing. How did they expect to get away with such a crime? Judah could say nothing in defense of himself or his brothers except that God was evidently punishing them for some secret sin they had committed. Judah proposed that they all remain in Egypt as Joseph's slaves.

Joseph refused the severe proposal. He suggested that only Benjamin stay in Egypt as his slave while the rest of them return to their aged father. By giving them this choice, Joseph was subjecting the brothers to a hard test. Would they abandon Benjamin, as they had abandoned Joseph before, or would they refuse to return to Canaan without their brother?

Even though they were innocent in this particular situation, they were guilty sinners. Judah and his brothers were deeply burdened with the enormity of their misdeed in selling Joseph into bondage 20 years ago; now, it was only fitting that they themselves should also become slaves in Egypt for the rest of their days.

GENESIS 44:18-34

Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even like Pharaoh.

"My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'

"And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, who is young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.'

"Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'

"And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.'

"But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.'

"So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord.

"And our father said, 'Go back and buy us a little food.'

"But we said, 'We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.'

"Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons;

'and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since.

'But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.'

"Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life,

"it will happen, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

"For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.'

"Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

"For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?"

Judah came to Joseph and pleaded for Benjamin, his brother. With tenderness and beauty, Judah described the aged father's unwillingness to let Benjamin go with his brothers to Egypt for food. Particularly moving is the description of Jacob's feeling for his lost, beloved son, Joseph.

Those who had cruelly torn their young brother from their father's side now plea for mercy and offer themselves as slaves rather than see Benjamin suffer the same fate as his brother.

Joseph had been severely tested by the wickedness of his brothers as well as Potiphar's wife. Yet, man's designs cannot thwart God's well laid plans; more often, they contribute to the accomplishment of His purposes. May we, as Joseph, remain faithful through adverse times. God is faithfully working out His good plan. **God is in control of our circumstances.**

Puzzles

You will need magazine pictures (or other pretty pictures), sheets of cardboard or poster board, rubber cement, scissors, and markers. Glue several pretty pictures to the sheets of cardboard, trim the edges neatly, and cut the glued boards into pieces to create home made puzzles.

In class, mix all the pieces of all the puzzles together and form as many groups as you have finished puzzles. Let the class work on them collectively.

Explain that even when things are a great big mess God can still put things together. **God is in control of our circumstances.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's grace in working our circumstances for good. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity.