Preschool–Grade 6

Pharaoh's Dream

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God gives wisdom. Like Joseph, we can ask God for wisdom and give Him the glory for every good answer.
Bible passage: Genesis 41:1–40. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." *Genesis 41:16 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Plan Ahead (5–10 minutes)

Put kids in teams of three or four with paper and a pencil. Say: "Imagine you knew this for sure: for seven years there will be more food than ever, and then for seven years almost nothing will grow. What would your team do?" Give them 3 minutes to write a plan, then each team shares. Ask: *How would you even know something like that was coming?* Say: "Today God shows a king what is going to happen, and He gives Joseph the wisdom to make a plan."

2. Bible story: God Gives the Answer (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Genesis 41. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Forgotten in prison. Joseph had been sold as a servant and put in prison in Egypt, even though he did right (Genesis 39:20). In prison, he told Pharaoh's chief butler what his dream meant, and it came true, but the butler forgot Joseph (40:21–23). **Look up Genesis 41:1.** Two full years went by.

Two strange dreams. Pharaoh dreamed he stood by the river. Seven **well favoured** (good-looking) and fat **kine** (cows) came up out of the river and fed in a meadow. Then seven ill favoured and **leanfleshed** (skinny) kine came up after them, and the lean kine ate up the fat kine (41:2–4). Pharaoh woke, slept again, and dreamed a second time. **Look up Genesis 41:5–7.** Seven **rank** (plump) and good ears of **corn** (grain, like wheat) grew on one stalk, and seven thin ears, **blasted** (dried up) by the east wind, sprang up after them and **devoured** (ate up) the full ears.

Nobody can tell. In the morning Pharaoh's spirit was troubled. He called the magicians and the wise men of Egypt, but there was none that could **interpret** the dreams, which means tell what they meant (41:8). Then the chief butler said, "I do remember my faults this day," and he told Pharaoh about the young Hebrew in prison who had interpreted his dream (41:9–13).

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Before Pharaoh. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they brought him **hastily** (in a hurry) out of the **dungeon**. Joseph shaved himself and changed his **raiment** (clothes) and came in to Pharaoh (41:14). Pharaoh said he had heard Joseph could understand a dream (41:15). **Look up Genesis 41:16.** Joseph answered, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

What the dream meant. Pharaoh told Joseph both dreams. He said the lean kine were so bad he had never seen any like them in all Egypt, and after they ate the fat kine, they looked just as thin as before (41:17–24). **Look up Genesis 41:25.** "The dream of Pharaoh is one": both dreams meant the same thing. The seven good kine and the seven good ears were seven years; the seven thin kine and the seven empty ears were seven years of **famine**, when food would not grow (41:26–27). Seven years of great **plenty** would come to all Egypt, then seven years of famine so **grievous** (terrible) that the plenty would be forgotten (41:29–31). **Look up Genesis 41:32.** God gave the dream twice because He had **established** it (made it sure), and He would do it soon.

God's plan. Joseph told Pharaoh to find a man **discreet and wise** (careful and wise) and set him over Egypt, with officers to take up the fifth part of the land's food in the seven good years and keep it in the cities, so the land would not **perish** (be ruined) in the famine (41:33–36). **Look up Genesis 41:38.** Pharaoh said, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" **Look up Genesis 41:39–40.** Pharaoh set Joseph over his house and all his people. Only on the throne was Pharaoh greater than Joseph.

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3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Joseph waited two full years after the butler forgot him (40:23; 41:1). What helps you keep trusting God when it seems like you are forgotten?
2. Joseph could have said, "Yes, I'm good at dreams." Instead he said, "It is not in me" (41:16). Why does it matter who gets the credit?
3. God gave Pharaoh a warning before the famine came (41:25). Why do you think God warned him?
4. Joseph didn't only tell what the dream meant. He also gave a plan (41:33–36). Where do you need wisdom to make a good plan?
5. Even Pharaoh could see "the Spirit of God" in Joseph (41:38). What would people see in you that shows you belong to God?

Recall questions

1. How many kine and ears came up in each part of the dreams? *(Seven, Genesis 41:2–7)*
2. What did Joseph do before he went in to Pharaoh? *(Shaved himself and changed his raiment, 41:14)*
3. How much of the food would be gathered in the good years? *(The fifth part, 41:34)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the words: **It is not in me** means "I can't do it by myself," and **an answer of peace** means a good answer that brings peace. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Pharaoh saw that the Spirit of God was in Joseph (Genesis 41:38). God wants to fill you with His Spirit too. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: before a test, a hard choice or a problem, ask God for wisdom. When someone praises you, give God the glory.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Genesis 41:1: Where was Pharaoh standing in his dream? *(By the river)*
2. Genesis 41:2: Where did the fat kine feed? *(In a meadow)*
3. Genesis 41:5: How many ears came up upon one stalk? *(Seven)*
4. Genesis 41:6: What blasted the thin ears? *(The east wind)*
5. Genesis 41:12: What nation was the young man in prison from? *(He was an Hebrew)*
6. Genesis 41:16: Who did Joseph say would give the answer? *(God)*
7. Genesis 41:35: Where were they to keep the food? *(In the cities)*
8. Genesis 41:38: Who did Pharaoh say was in Joseph? *(The Spirit of God)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You know everything and that You give wisdom. Help us ask You when we don't know what to do, and help us give You the glory for every good thing. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Left out on purpose: the chief baker's end (Genesis 41:13) is not told. If a child asks, say: "Joseph told the baker the truth God showed him, and it happened just as God said (Genesis 40:22)." **About the magicians:** the Bible says only that none of them could interpret the dream (41:8). Keep the focus on God, who alone knew the answer.

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