Pharaoh's Dream

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: God gives wisdom to those who ask Him, and the wise give God the glory instead of taking it for themselves.
Bible passage: Genesis 41:1–40. Students read Genesis 41:1–16 and 41:25–40 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." *Genesis 41:16 (KJV)* and "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." *James 1:5 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Genesis 39–41. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Who Gets the Credit? (5–10 minutes)

Name one side of the room "take the credit" and the other side "give the credit." Read each situation, and students walk to the side they would honestly be tempted to choose. 1) Your group project gets an A, but one friend did most of the work. 2) A coach says you played great, but your teammate set up every goal. 3) You prayed hard before a test and did well. 4) Someone thanks you for an idea your mom gave you. Ask: *Why is it so easy to keep the credit?* Say: "Joseph had the biggest chance of his life to look great in front of a king. Watch what he does."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Genesis 41:1–16. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **kine** (41:2): cows; **well favoured** and **fatfleshed**: good-looking and fat; **ill favoured** and **leanfleshed** (41:3): ugly and skinny
- **corn** (41:5): grain, like wheat (not the corn we eat on the cob); **rank**: plump and full
- **blasted with the east wind** (41:6): dried up by the hot wind; **devoured** (41:7): ate up
- **magicians** (41:8): men in Pharaoh's court who claimed hidden knowledge; none of them could answer; **interpret**: tell what something means
- **put me in ward** (41:10): put me under guard, in prison
- **hastily** (41:14): in a hurry; **dungeon**: the prison; **raiment**: clothes
- **It is not in me** (41:16): I can't do it on my own; **an answer of peace**: a good answer that brings peace

Tell the middle part in your own words: Pharaoh told Joseph both dreams again. He said the lean kine were worse than any he had ever seen in Egypt, and after they ate the fat kine, "it could not be known that they had eaten them": they were still as thin as before (41:17–24).

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Read out loud: Genesis 41:25–40. Old words in this passage:

- **The dream of Pharaoh is one** (41:25): both dreams have one meaning; **shewed**: showed
- **plenty** (41:29): more than enough food; **famine** (41:30): a time when food will not grow; **consume**: use up, destroy
- **grievous** (41:31): terrible, very hard to bear
- **established by God** (41:32): made sure and settled by God; **shortly bring it to pass**: make it happen soon
- **discreet** (41:33): careful, sensible; **the fifth part** (41:34): one fifth, 20 out of every 100
- **store** (41:36): a saved supply; **perish**: be ruined
- **Forasmuch as** (41:39): because

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Joseph was forgotten in prison for two full years (40:23; 41:1). How do you think God used that waiting time?
2. In front of the most powerful man in the world, Joseph said, "It is not in me" (41:16). What would it have cost Joseph to take the credit? What did giving God the glory cost him?
3. The magicians and wise men of Egypt had no answer (41:8). What does this story say about where real wisdom comes from?
4. Joseph twice says God "hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do" (41:25, 41:28). Why would God warn Pharaoh, the king of Egypt?
5. Joseph gave a plan, not just an answer: save one fifth in the good years (41:34–36). What does planning ahead have to do with trusting God?
6. Pharaoh said Joseph was "a man in whom the Spirit of God is" (41:38). What did Pharaoh see? What do people see in you?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in James 1:5: **lack** means don't have enough; **liberally** means freely and generously; **upbraideth not** means He does not scold you for asking. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Genesis 41:16 this week; keep working on James 1:5 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Pharaoh saw the Spirit of God in Joseph (Genesis 41:38). That same Spirit is the gift God offers you. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where do I need God's wisdom right now (a choice, a friendship, school, home)?
2. When was a time I took credit that really belonged to God or someone else?
3. Write a short prayer asking God for wisdom, using James 1:5.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: ask God for wisdom every morning, and once this week give God or someone else the credit out loud.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You give wisdom freely to everyone who asks. Help us trust You when we feel forgotten, plan wisely, and give You the glory for every good thing. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Left out on purpose: the chief baker's end (41:13; 40:22) is not read aloud; if students ask, answer in one plain sentence from 40:22. **About the magicians:** say only what 41:8 says, that none of them could interpret the dream. Nothing about magic is taught; the point is that God alone gave the answer.

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