

Jacob's Well

Lesson Title: Loss and Grief—Dreams



Key Concept: In a broken world, loss and grief are inevitable. Life's circumstances may defer or even kill our dreams, but God works all things for good.



Scriptures:

But the LORD was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love.
(Genesis 39:21 *New Living Translation*)

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people."
(Genesis 50:20 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Genesis 37; 39–50; Proverbs 13:12; Jeremiah 29:11–12;
Romans 8:28



Lesson Thoughts:

From a bird's-eye view, the story of Joseph's dreams wraps up neatly at the end of Genesis with the reconciliation between him and his father and brothers. But a closer look reveals years of suffering and loss along the way that, somehow, Joseph had to navigate.

Dreams and hopes point to the future and set our course. We experience joy and satisfaction when we attain our dreams. But what about those times when it seems like our dreams and hopes will never materialize? What about those times when they never *do* materialize? Proverbs 13:12 states, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." In other words, circumstances that get in the way of our dreams cause us to despair. Joseph's story is filled with hope-deferring situations. He was betrayed by his own brothers who hated him and sold him into slavery. He was falsely accused and thrown in prison. He was left forgotten by a fellow prisoner whom he helped. For many years, Joseph's circumstances were harsh and unjust. They were enough to kill any dream or hope for the future Joseph

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had except for two things: Joseph kept God first, and God remembered Joseph.

We hear sayings like “follow your dreams.” And it’s great when we can. We hold onto dreams waiting for their fulfillment, but when we don’t see them unfolding, we think time is running out or opportunities have disappeared. Sadly, our dreams can be dashed by things like death, illness, age, broken relationships, economic struggles—and we are left “heart sick.” Our dreams and hopes fuel our momentum, but our spirits are deflated when they become unattainable or lost, and we don’t know what to do. We can rest assured, however, that God does know what to do. Joseph’s story illustrates the overarching principle that God is always at work behind the scenes. Even though his original dreams were dashed by life’s circumstances, Joseph understood the bigger picture of God the master planner when he said to his brothers, “God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive” (Genesis 45:7).

The Bible is full of assurances from God that he is the master of our dreams and future. Jeremiah 29:11–12 says, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” Romans 8:28 states, “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” Even though the authors of these verses experienced harsh circumstances, they understood that, not only is God’s plan supreme, but he is the master of each of our lives in his plan.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Have you ever had a dream die? How did you move forward?
- 2) What do you do when your God-given dream brings you suffering?
- 3) How can you keep God first even if your dream is deferred/lost?
- 4) Share a time when you realized God was working behind the scenes.
- 5) Do you have a dream you know is from God, but it hasn’t come true yet?

Next Lesson: Identity

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) Read the compelling story of Joseph in Genesis 37–50. Consider 1) how God positioned Joseph in his greater plan, 2) how Joseph reacted to the circumstances and situations that he faced, and 3) what Christians can learn from this story about suffering under the watchful eye of God.

- 2) Psalm 105:16–22 is a mini-account of Joseph's story in God's greater plan for his people. Consider the power of hindsight and how it can help us understand God's plan—the bigger picture. How does that help you see yourself in God's plan?

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Notes and Reflections, cont.