

God is in control.

Lesson for Sunday, January 4, 2026

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Happy New Year! What could 2026 hold for us as a church? Or for you as an individual? Or for your family? Or for your career or relationships?
- ⇒ If there is one thing we know for certain at beginning of a new year, it is that we have no clue what this year may hold. That thought is a little unsettling, isn't it?
- ⇒ But there is another fact – established clearly in the Word of God – that Christians must cling to. God is sovereign. God is in control.
- ⇒ Teacher, do you have a personal story where the fact of God's sovereignty helped you through a time of uncertainty? Share those circumstances with your class.
- ⇒ Today, we are wrapping up our series in Genesis with the familiar account of Joseph. It is one of the clearest examples of God's sovereignty.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. The **Unfortunate** Life of Joseph (*This is an overview that does not allow you the time to read every chapter and verse. You will need to plan and practice so you can share the story in the appropriate time allotted.*)
 - a. Not many people would want to live the life Joseph had to live. We can summarize his life in three divisions.
 - b. Division 1 – **Leading** to Egypt (Genesis 37)
 - i. We are introduced to Joseph as his father's favorite son (vs. 3). This caused some serious conflict between Joseph and his brothers.
 - ii. Their hatred came to a boiling point in 37:19-20. Fortunately for Joseph, his brother Reuben convinced his other brothers not to kill him. Instead, they sold Joseph to some Midianite traders (vs. 28) and Joseph ended up in Egypt as a slave of Potiphar (vs. 36).
 - c. Division 2 – **Lost** in Egypt (Genesis 39-40)
 - i. Read 39:2-6 and point out that even in a bad situation, God was with Joseph and He blessed Joseph. *Write on the board: Sold into slavery – God was with him*
 - ii. Eventually, Joseph had a run in with his master's wife. She falsely accused Joseph of attempted rape and the end of chapter 39 we find him now in an Egyptian prison.
 - iii. But there is another interesting note in verse 21. *Write on the board: Falsely accused – God was with him*
 - iv. In chapter 40 Joseph meets Pharaoh's butler and baker. Both men had dreams they could not understand. With God's help, Joseph was able to explain the meaning of their dreams. Joseph only had one request (read verse 14).
 - v. Joseph's interpretation was correct, but the butler forgot his end (read verse 23). In verse 1 of chapter 41 we see that Joseph remained in prison another two full years. *Write on the board – Forgotten in prison – God was with him.*
 - d. Division 3 – **Leader** of Egypt (chapters 41-50)

- i. Two years later Pharaoh had a dream that no one could seem to interpret (vs. 8). The butler remembered Joseph and Pharaoh summoned him out of his cell.
- ii. Not only did Joseph interpret Pharaoh's dream, but he also presented a comprehensive strategy on how Egypt could survive the coming famine.
- iii. Even when his luck seemed to be improving, Joseph still trusted in the Lord. Read verse 16. *Write on the board: Before the most powerful man on the planet – God was with him*
- iv. Verse 37 tells us that Pharaoh was impressed – so impressed that he put Joseph in charge of the entire operation (vs. 41).
- v. The climax of Joseph's story comes in the last chapters of Genesis. After a life of mistreatment, disappointment and endless tragedy, the tide finally appears to be turning when Joseph's brothers appear in his presence seeking food.
- vi. In chapter 45 when Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers. Instead of revenge, he shows great insight into God's sovereignty in his life. Read verses 4-9 and point out the following phrases:
 1. Vs. 5 – "for God did send me"
 2. Vs. 7 – "God sent me"
 3. Vs. 8 – "but God"
 4. Vs. 9 – "God hath made me"

2. The **Blessing** of God's Sovereignty

- a. Did Joseph do anything to deserve or cause his circumstances – both good and bad? Joseph's life is a powerful reminder that God is always in control even when it seems like He is not.
- b. There are three truths that we need to remember from Joseph's life in relation to God's sovereignty.
- c. First, God is sovereign over **PEOPLE**.
 - i. We have an advantage in that we know Joseph's entire story. God had a great purpose for Joseph's life. But we often forget that God had to lead Joseph through some very difficult circumstances before he could see that purpose come to life.
 - ii. God's purpose was not dependent on people, and it could not be deterred by people.
 - iii. Joseph's brothers seemed evil. Who would actually sell their own flesh and blood into slavery? But God used his brothers to get Joseph right where he would be needed in due time.
 - iv. Think about the decisions of Joseph's brothers, Potiphar's wife, and the butler. How do their actions seem to contradict God's plans?
 - v. How does it make you feel to know that God is not dependent on you for His purposes?
 - vi. Is it possible that God has put certain people in your life (that you might not like) that He is using to fulfill His purpose in your life?
- d. Second, God is sovereign over **CIRCUMSTANCES**.
 - i. God used and caused events to accomplish His purpose in Joseph's life. As we saw in our summary, the Bible points out several times the fact that God was with Joseph every step of the way.

- ii. We love to control our own lives. When circumstances don't seem right, we typically stress out. But just like Joseph, we have the same promise of God's presence.
 - iii. What difference would it make in your life if you could remember that God is sovereign over life's circumstances?
- e. Third, God is sovereign over the **OUTCOMES**.
 - i. God directed the final outcome as we saw in those selected verses in chapter 45.
 - ii. God directed all the details for His purpose.
 - iii. Knowing God has His hand in our lives at all times, why is it difficult to trust His sovereignty in our present circumstances?

APPLICATION:

- ⇒ What was Joseph's responsibility throughout the ups and downs of his life? He simply had to be faithful in the moment.
- ⇒ God is sovereign; Joseph was not.
- ⇒ God is still sovereign; we never will be.
- ⇒ Our job is to be faithful in the place and the time that God has placed us in.