



SESSION 4

Joseph



MEETING AIM

To understand that God has a plan.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 37, 39-47



BACKGROUND

Joseph's story is one that is packed with drama, danger and dilemmas. Although the action took place thousands of years ago, many of the issues are still current for our young people. Trouble with family, misplaced blame and wrongful arrest, being forgotten by the authorities, even slavery are all continuing issues. We need to help young people interrogate the story to explore the issues within and what God is saying about them. Through Joseph's story, we also discover the fact that God doesn't solve everything immediately: Joseph's redemption and the family's reunion is decades in the making.

GATHERING TIME



You will need: refreshments; a comfortable place to sit and chat

As the young people arrive, serve them the refreshments you have provided. Try to have something a bit more interesting than biscuits and squash - is there someone in your congregation who could make cake? Do you have the facilities to make toast and tea? As you eat and drink together, chat about the young people's lives - do they have anything to share? Any triumphs? Any disasters?! Share stories from your life too, if appropriate.

FILM CHAT



Ask the young people what films they have seen recently. What plotlines did they have? Were there any in which a character had to put up with great hardship before things resolved themselves? What makes these stories so enjoyable? Anything from Hacksaw ridge to Frozen would be good sources of story!

BIBLE EXPLORATION



You will need: Bibles; emojis (printed off from the internet); paper; marker pens

Review the story of Genesis so far. Remind the young people of the beginnings - of creation and of the story of Noah. Say in session three, we looked at the story of Abraham and the promise God made that Abraham's family would be a huge nation. Jacob was the grandson of Abraham, and his sons would turn into the nation of Israel - God's people. Explain that you're going to explore the story of Jacob's sons, in particular Joseph, Jacob's favourite son.

Spread out the emojis in front of the young people and have some fun trying to identify all of them. Ask the group if any are missing, and encourage the group to draw any more that they'd like to add. If you think there are any gaps in the emotions expressed, then write those emotions on the paper and add them to the emojis.

Tell the group that you are going to read out or retell sections of the story of Joseph. If you're reading from the Bible, give out Bibles so that the group can follow along. Ask the young people to think about which emojis might best describe the action and emotions of the characters.

Read Genesis 37 or retell the story of Joseph and his brothers. Once you have finished, ask the group to choose an emoji or word that you feel best describes one of the characters. Encourage people to share who they chose and why they chose the emoji to go with them.

Go on to do the same thing with Genesis 41:1-36, 42:1-24, 44 and 45:1-15, filling in the gaps between the different episodes. If you're short on time, miss out chapter 42, but stress the fact that a lot of time has passed.

At the end of your encounter with the story of Joseph, ask the group to give their immediate reaction to it by choosing one or two emojis that best describe their own thoughts, and to say why, if they would like to.

CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the young people these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- What is your favourite part of this story?
- When Joseph looked back on his life, how do you think he felt about God?
- What does this story tell us about God? What is he like?
- Can you see yourself in this story?
- What do you want to say to God after hearing this story?

CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: pens and paper; felt-tip pens or pencil crayons

Remind everyone that God didn't resolve many issues in Joseph's life for a long time. It was only at the end of his life that Joseph could see God making it "turn out for the best" (Genesis 50:20). Ask the group to think back on their life so far. Can they see God at work? To help the young people understand a bit more, give an example from your own life, where you didn't understand what was happening at the time, but when you looked back you could see God's plan in action.

Ask the group to think about such a time in their own lives and to write about it or draw a cartoon strip of the events. As everyone is working, make sure you're available to chat with any young people who might want to talk about anything, or those who don't feel like God has been at work. Be ready to sit with young people in their sadness or frustration.

Once everyone has finished, encourage people to share their stories, if they would like to.

PRAYER



You will need: a Bible

Comment that, during his life, Joseph must have prayed to God to change things (when he was in the well or in prison, for example) and been frustrated that God didn't seem to be answering. Ask the group to share anything that they have prayed about but that God doesn't seem to have answered. Have a time of prayer for those long-standing prayer requests. Read Luke 18:1-8 and / or Ephesians 6:18 to the group and talk about the need to keep on praying.

Be ready to chat with young people who feel that God doesn't listen or who prayed for something (eg a family member to be healed) that didn't happen.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor of Premier Youth and Children's Work.