

It's Their Story Too!

Making Genesis Come Alive

by Eleanor A. Daniel

I love stories! Most people do. Stories excite the imagination and stimulate thinking. Your challenge is to use stories in such a way that your learners travel with you on a progressive journey to see God at work.

A series of lessons from Genesis provides a great opportunity for storytelling. Genesis involves wonderful narratives that demonstrate an unfolding drama of God in relation to his creation and his people. These narratives invite us to adopt them as a part of our own faith story. Your success as a teacher in this regard will help prevent your learners from approaching the studies as a mere series of facts.

You will do more than tell stories, of course. But don't ignore the fact that adults respond well to them. Part of your task is to ask questions that engage learners in their own involvement in the story line. Consider the following story development ideas and questions.

Genesis 1:1-25. Don't get bogged down in theoretical discussions of cosmology that cannot be adequately addressed during your brief class. Instead, begin where the text does: "In the beginning God." *Questions:* Reflecting on the creation account in Genesis, what does it tell you about God and yourself for humans to have been created in his image? Adding Psalm 8 to your reflection, what response is appropriate to our Creator God?

Genesis 1:26-31. Pick up the story from the earlier part of Genesis 1 and expand on the nature of humankind as created in God's image. Emphasize God's intention to create those who could interact with him. *Question:* Though marred by sin, what glimpses do we see of people expressing the image of God?

Genesis 12 and 15. Connect these two narratives to paint the agony of waiting for a promise that no longer seemed to be fulfillable. *Question:* In what ways did Abraham's responses make him a model—or perhaps not a model at all—for you as you wait on God in your life?

Genesis 21. Return to the story of God's promise that Abraham would have a son, and show how Abraham tried to resolve his wait for a son. Then cast the story to show the consequences that result from trying to solve problems on our own terms. *Questions:* How was Abraham shaped by the choices he made?

How are you shaped by the choices you make?

Genesis 24. Check out marriage customs of the patriarchs! Emphasize the importance of finding a spouse in the larger clan to allow for a continuity that would please God. Stress that marriage is a sacred, spiritual contract. The choice we make has profound implications for our relationship with God.

Questions: How do you see these facts demonstrated in this story? How do you see them demonstrated in the lives of those you know?

Genesis 25. Emphasize how differences among siblings can create rivalry, especially when parents express disappointment or delight with one child or make overt comparisons between children. *Questions:* How can sibling rivalries affect a person's future? How have you seen this develop?

Genesis 28. Emphasize how Jacob was invited into the same covenant as Abraham. *Questions:* Why was it important for God to confirm to Jacob his place in the covenant? Why is an understanding of *covenant with God* important for every believer?

Genesis 29. Shape the story to emphasize Jacob's deep love for Rachel. *Question:* What does Jacob teach us (positively or negatively) about response to disappointment?

Genesis 33. Focus on reconciliation and how to achieve it. *Question:* What does this account teach us about reconciliation?

Genesis 37. Examine how rivalry can result in mistreatment. *Question:* If you had been 17-year-old Joseph, what would have been your thoughts as you were sold into Egypt?

Genesis 41. Continue to emphasize Joseph's profound disappointments and God's continuing affirmation of him. *Question:* What difference do you think it made to Joseph's character to endure the difficulties he experienced?

Genesis 45. Emphasize Joseph's part in protecting God's people. *Question:* How was Joseph able to maintain a perspective about God's work in his life?

Genesis 48. Provide an overview of the waning days of Jacob's (Israel's) life. *Questions:* What legacy did Jacob consider to be most important to his sons? What do you think is important for your own family in this regard?

Enjoy the great narratives of God's work that are set forth in Genesis. More importantly, make them your own (and your learners') narratives as well!