

## Sermon for Sunday, July 15, 2007 *“VBS Rocks – Joseph Rules”*

**Scripture References: Selections from Genesis on Joseph and Luke 18:15-17**

What a great year! I know I've said that every year for the past ten years that we've been doing Marketplace, but it just keeps getting better and better!

- We had 118 enrolled kids this year – that's a record.
- 34 of those kids are not affiliated with our church – yet!
- We had 87 volunteers. That's one volunteer per 1 1/3 children.
- Of those volunteers, 28 do not have children in the program.

We don't have to require that parents work in this program. Many adults will tell you they enjoy VBS as much as their kids! Families plan their vacations around VBS. Someone suggested that we try something besides the Marketplace program for a change and all I can say is “It ain't broke!”

So, yes, we've been doing this for ten years, and consequently, we're getting pretty good at it. But please don't think it's a walk in the park. It takes a lot of planning and organizing to put it all together, and that wouldn't happen without Joanne Starnes and Diana Tyrrell. In fact, one of our Tribe Leaders asked me where the woman in charge was. I said “I thought that was me”, and she said, “no – it's the one with the short dark hair.” She was looking for Dianna. And Joanne – well, she lets me think I'm in charge. She puts up with my “creativity” while she deals with reality. I've never known a person who got such a kick out of organization. I certainly don't understand that, but I definitely appreciate it. We do make a great team.

There is one thing I'm going to strongly recommend we do NOT do next year and that's to try to put every volunteer's name in the Sunday bulletin. No matter how hard we try, it always seems that we leave out someone. And this year we left out two very important someone's – Kim and Chris Bishop – who did that great music program. I am so sorry. When I first heard all those songs, it took me back to my childhood Baptist VBS days. So thanks to the Bishops for all they did.

Marketplace usually is 29 A.D., when Jesus waked the earth. But this year it was a “B.C.” environment, when Jacob had twelve sons who would become the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Specifically our week was about Joseph, Jacob's eleventh son and his favorite. It's no wonder this is such a popular story, and it's not all about the coat. The story of Joseph has all the elements of an R-rated academy-award winning movie – a cast of thousands, over-the-edge costumes, concubines, deceit, jealousy, slavery, lies, feast and famine and an abundance of S.E.X.

Rest assured, our storytellers told the G-rated version of the story of Joseph. However, our storytellers had a few stories of their own to share from this week. Tuesday's story mentioned Joseph working for the Pharaoh, and Betsy Telford asked the children if anybody knew what a Pharaoh was. One of the kids answered, “A Pharaoh's a king before he's a mummy”.

When the tribes visit one of the three storytellers who are down by the lake, they sit on blankets at the storyteller's feet and the storyteller reads the story from a scroll. After the story, the snack is served, which is food that may have been served in Bible times like unleavened bread, grapes, oranges, apples, and just how do you know they didn't have cheese whiz and Kool-Aid back then?

Anyway, one day Janet Montgomery was finishing reading from her scroll. The last paragraph read:  
What a story, though. First Joseph was the son of a rich man who loved him and gave him everything;  
then he was sold as a slave by his own brother; then he worked for Pharaoh's captain and did very  
well; then he was accused of something he didn't do and was thrown in prison; and he even did  
well in prison. I wonder what will happen next?  
As on cue, a little guy said, "I think it's snack next."

There is a reason why we continue to do programs such as Marketplace:

- Yes, it gives the kids something to do in the middle of the summer;
- Yes, it's fun;
- Yes, it's different than the "normal" VBS Programs; and
- Yes, it's my job.

But there is something else. These children probably won't remember the story content of this particular VBS program years from now, or what our wonderful Rabbi taught them, or who their Tribe Leader was, but – believe me- they left here on Friday with something that will always be with them. They will remember, perhaps vaguely, the story of Joseph, the coat, the mean brothers, the dreams, Joseph's constant belief that God would take care of him, and God will take care of us.

The end of Wednesday's story says it all:

That's how God works for those who love and trust God, defeating the plans of their enemies and making everything come out right in the end. Remember this when you find yourself in a situation that seems will never get better. Don't be afraid. God is always with you. Be faithful Be true. God will take of you.

You see, we need to teach them now:

- The stories of the Bible,
- The songs to remind them of the stories,
- The good feeling of helping others,
- Of spending them with different generations, and
- Of feeling the love of God in the people all around them.

They need this now – they need to get a strong religious education while they are young; they need to develop a spiritual life now while they are young; they need to learn that God IS always with them – they will carry this knowledge with them through the rest of their lives. And just like Jacob taught his children who taught their children, and so on, and so on...Our children will share these stories, the songs, and the love of God, with their children...and on and on.

And that is all I Want!

And the people of God said – AMEN.

Linda Eldridge