

# THE BIG PICTURE

by Dave Weiss

At a youth meeting or Sunday School Class several weeks before the service, give each graduating senior one of the packages grad packages include. Be sure to have one pack for each graduate and be sure they understand that they must turn them all in before the service. In the pack is a paper with one side is a portion of a picture and on the other side is a series of questions. Give the instruction that they are to answer the questions on the back of the sheet. Their answers will be their part of the Grad Service. They are then to add color to the front of the sheet however they see fit. You may want to supply some art supplies for this, paints, markers, crayons, pencils, glitter, fabric swatches, etc. but try to have the students do

them at home so that they do not try to piece their work together.

Start the service off by calling the graduates forward while playing the song or video, History Maker by Delirious. Depending on your time let the video finish or project the lyrics as a praise song for the congregation. As the students arrive at the sanctuary, give them each their piece. Have the group standing and facing the congregation, introduce themselves and give their answers to the questions on the back of the sheet. As they finish they may sit down, in the front row.

Have the last student to present read the scripture Genesis 41: 41-46 and then be seated.



Generate a picture like this. Then divide it into the number of pieces that you have graduates and scale each piece up so that you will finish with a poster to mural size image.

## TALK:

Looks like Joseph had it made, right? Thirty years old and in charge of one of the most powerful nations in the world. He had it all, beautiful wife probably with some serious money, the best clothes, jewelry, gold chains, the fastest chariot, and lots and lots of power. But if you know the story of Joseph, you know things weren't always that way.

There was another time in his life when Joseph thought he had it all. He was about your age, seventeen. His dad had twelve sons and he was the favorite of them all. His dad set him up with this fancy robe. Life was good. But there was trouble in paradise, you see the more Joseph's dad showed he was the favorite, the more his brothers hated him. It got to the point where they hated him so much that they decided to kill him and throw his body in a dry well. To make a long story short, they changed their minds and sold him as a slave and he ended up in Egypt in the house of a rich guy named Potiphar.

Joseph could have given up. He could have sat there thinking, well this is it, I had it all and I blew it, but he didn't. He could have played the victim and drowned himself in self-pity, I mean who could blame him, his own brothers sold him into slavery. But he didn't do that either. You see those kinds of attitudes are small picture thinking. In small picture thinking you can only see the here and now. But the Lord was with Joseph and Joseph held onto the Lord. He worked hard as if he was working for the Lord. He made the best of a bad situation and through all of his hard work Potiphar could see that the Lord was with Joseph and made him head of the whole house.

Once again life is pretty good for Joseph. He is the head of a big household. Yes he's still a slave but the Lord is with him and he rises to the top. Problem is, Potiphar isn't the only one to notice Joseph. Mrs. Potiphar notices him too, and her motives are far less honorable. She tries to seduce him but he turns her down flat and not just once but over and over again. He could have given up. He could have fallen to the

temptation. He could have thought, "Who's gonna know?" He could have thought, "What difference does it make I'm nothing but a slave anyway?" But that kind of thinking is small picture thinking. Small picture thinking trades a few minutes of pleasure for a lifetime of pain. Small picture thinking lives in the here and now with no thought to the future. He did the right thing, he ran away but she got his robe and accused him and he wound up in prison. No good deed goes unpunished, or so it would seem but that's small picture thinking too.

In jail, Joseph could have given up, but he didn't. He could have wallowed in his cell but he didn't. He did everything he did as if unto the Lord and the Lord was with him and the jailers could see it. In time he came to be in charge of the whole prison. One day two of the prisoners that Joseph had in his care were very concerned over dreams that they had. These prisoners were officials in Pharaoh's court who were thrown into prison because they had disturbed Pharaoh in some way. These dreams were so troubling that surely they had to have some meaning but they had no one to interpret them. Joseph reminded them that interpretations were only possible through God and then asked them to share their dreams. Notice two things here first even though he was in prison, Joseph still had no doubt that God was with him and second that when he does interpret, he gives credit where credit is due, he gives glory to God. One man, the king's cupbearer, will be restored to his position and the other will be hanged. Then Joseph makes a simple request of the man who will be restored to his position. When you are restored tell Pharaoh of my story because I didn't do anything to deserve being in prison. The man was restored but he quickly forgot Joseph and Joseph spent two more years in prison. Can you imagine how upset Joseph must have been as the days turned into months and turned into years. He must have felt like he had been forgotten by everyone but that is small picture thinking. He had been forgotten by the man he helped but God never forgot Him. No God was with him every step of the way.

Well you know the rest of the story. Two years later Pharaoh started having dreams of his own and the cupbearer was reminded of Joseph. Joseph was called before Pharaoh. Joseph gave Glory to God and then interpreted the dreams. Seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. Then Joseph laid out the plan of action appoint a man and put him in charge of Egypt and put commissioners under him to take a fifth in the years of plenty so that there will be food throughout the famine. Pharaoh sees the wisdom in the plan, and he sees God in Joseph. And pharaoh puts Joseph in charge of the whole nation.

I think many of us have heard this story a lot of times and we may miss this. Imagine this picture in your mind. You turn on your TV tomorrow night and you see President Bush's face smiling back at you. Those of you who would flip the channel find his face on every channel so you decided you'd better listen. President Bush says that he has appointed a blue ribbon task force of commissioners to come to every home and take a fifth of everything you have. Yes, I know they call that the IRS and some of you may have already had some experience with them They're the ones that take \$5.15 an hour and make it about \$3.00 an hour, just wait it gets better. but let's go a step beyond. He wants this fifth above your tax burden, not just a fifth of your income but a fifth of everything you produce, too. Other than the fact that other party is salivating realizing that they could nominate a popsicle stick and win the White House, what would happen? There would be protests. There would be chaos. There would be a revolt. But wait, calm down, President Bush has a good reason for asking for this tax. A famine is coming. Oh hold on a famine is coming, maybe this is a good idea. How does he know a famine is coming, advanced satellite forecasts, economic predictions, the farmer's almanac? No, not exactly, he had a dream about it and the dream was interpreted by an inmate from the local federal penitentiary. That's why he wants a fifth of everything. What would happen? Well for one thing we'd have President Cheney and

President Bush would be headed for some place quiet for a very long time.

You see the point is Pharaoh a pagan and a non-believer saw the presence of God in Joseph that he put him in charge of the whole nation. When you live your life for God when you trust him with your life, God makes a difference and it's a difference people can see. Everything happened just as Joseph said and eventually everyone outside Egypt was starving, including Joseph's family. It got so bad that they went to Egypt for food and when they got there, they had to go to Joseph. At first they didn't recognize him, but when he finally revealed himself to them they were terrified. Somehow their lives were in the hands of the brother that they sold into slavery. This could not be good. Joseph could have made their lives miserable. Joseph could have had them all beaten and imprisoned and maybe even killed them. Joseph could have left them starve. Revenge would have been so sweet but that's small picture thinking and by now Joseph was seeing the big picture. In Genesis 45 Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. He says, "I am your brother Joseph, the one that you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." God had a plan and a purpose for Joseph's life and through the good times and the bad times God was with Joseph. Joseph could have given up at any of the hard times along the way, but he never did he held fast to God and he made history

God has a plan and purpose for your lives too. As you approach the next phase in your life I want you to see a couple of things in Joseph's story.

1. No matter how tough things got God was with Joseph and Joseph walked with God. God promised never to leave us nor forsake us. When the tough times come, God is there, He never leaves. He will stand by you and help you. Hold onto him no matter what!
2. Joseph lived his life in a way that everyone could see that God was with him. If you will do the same, people will notice. You may not wind

up in charge of a whole nation, but God will bless your life.

3. Doing the right thing will not always be easy, but it will always be right. Joseph did the right thing with Potiphar's wife and still wound up in jail. But had he not ended up in jail he never would have ended up the head of Egypt.

4. God's timing is not always our timing. If Joseph had been freed from prison right after he interpreted the dreams, Pharaoh may not have known where to find him when he needed him. Waiting on God is never easy, but He knows everything so the best that we can do is wait on him.

5. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. All the hard things that Joseph went through were the training he needed when God's plan became complete. If we could see the whole picture of our lives we would walk around all the tough stuff and miss all the blessings God has for us.

It may not always look that way, but the best thing that we can do is follow God's plan. It may not always seem like it but if you walk with God, he will walk with you. His plan for your life is perfect because while you can only see a small part of your place and history, God can see the big picture, trust Him.

After the Talk

After the talk have all the students stand and give affirmation to the following questions by answering, "With God's help I will."

Will you go out into the world as witness for Jesus Christ?

Will you strive to remain in the body of Christ by attending church and participating in the ministries of this or another congregation?

Will you strive to make good decisions and choices?

Will you let your light shine?

Will you live a Christ centered life?

Will you strive to walk with Jesus daily, for the rest of your life through disciplines of prayer, Bible reading and study?

## PRAY OVER THE STUDENTS

Then one by one have them come up to get a graduation gift. As they come up have them stick their paper to the appropriate place on a large grid. When the last person has placed his/her picture on the grid, The picture is of Jesus, saying I will never leave nor forsake you.

## CLOSING:

As each of you created the your picture, you were only given a small piece to see, You were only given a glimpse and you took the information you had in front of you and used your gifts to create the best piece you could. You did your part in the big picture. This picture is an illustration of life. Just as the picture is made up of many different pieces, so the body of Christ is made up of many different people with different gifts, talents and unique qualities. That includes all of you graduates. God has made each of you to be a part of his body. The trials that come in life are part of the training required to grow into being all that you can be. Don't get stuck in the small picture of struggles and difficulties. Keep your eyes on Jesus and trust him to control the big picture. Congratulations.



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Front side of the student piece. This is the piece that they are to add color too in whatever way they choose. Don't worry about getting them to make the piece the right colors, the idea is for each piece to be different (see conclusion). On the back should be the following questions.

Name

School

Future plans

How will your future include your faith?

How can someone in your field make history?