



STORY FROM...
Genesis 37–39, 41–50

Joseph

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **TELL THE STORY** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

Israel (Jacob) and his 12 sons now lived in the Promised Land. Out of all of his sons, Israel loved Joseph the most and made him a beautiful coat with long sleeves. When Joseph was 17, he helped his brothers tend the cattle—and reported to his father anything they did wrong.

Joseph's brothers grew to hate him because he was their father's favorite. They hated him even more when he told them that he had dreams about the future where he saw all of them bowing down to him!

One day Joseph went to check on his brothers and they grabbed him, ripped off his beautiful coat, and threw him into a deep hole. Then the brothers decided to sell Joseph to slave traders who were passing by on their way to Egypt.

They tore up their brother's coat, soaked it in goat's blood, and brought it to their father saying, *"We found this in the field—it's Joseph's isn't it?"*

Israel examined it and said, *"Yes, this is my son's coat. A wild animal must have attacked and eaten him."* He began to weep saying, *"I will mourn my son's death until the day I die!"*

Meanwhile, the slave traders sold Joseph to a man named Potiphar, the head guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar noticed that God was with Joseph and blessed everything that he did. So he promoted him, putting him in charge of his entire household and business.

Now Joseph was a young, handsome man, and Potiphar's wife began to desire him. She constantly pressured him to sleep with her. But Joseph refused, saying, *"That would be a terrible thing and a great sin against God!"*

One night after Potiphar got home, his wife told him, *"The Hebrew slave you brought here tried to rape me."*

Potiphar became furious and threw Joseph into the king's prison. But God gave him favor with the head of the jail. God was with Joseph, continuing to give him success in everything he did. Before long, Joseph was put in charge of the other prisoners and everything that happened there! God also gave Joseph the ability to interpret the other prisoners' dreams.

A few years later Pharaoh had some dreams that troubled him. In one of them he saw seven fat cows being eaten by seven thin cows! None of Pharaoh's wisest men could interpret what this meant.

One of the servants who had been in prison with Joseph told Pharaoh about his ability to interpret dreams. So Pharaoh had Joseph brought to him and asked, *"Can you really interpret dreams?"*

Joseph replied, *"That is beyond me, but God will tell you what your dreams mean and ease your worry."*

Pharaoh shared his dreams and Joseph interpreted them saying, *"For the next seven years Egypt will have an abundance of food. This will be followed by seven years of a terrible famine that will spread over the land."*

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The king was so impressed with Joseph that he put him in charge of everything in Egypt—second in power only to Pharaoh himself!

During the next seven years Joseph traveled throughout Egypt making sure that plenty of food was being stored up in each city. Joseph was only 30 years old at the time.

Seven years passed and the famine came, spreading throughout the world. People from all over the land came to Egypt to buy food from Joseph.

When Israel realized his family was running out of food, he sent his sons to Egypt. When the brothers arrived to buy food, they didn't recognize Joseph and bowed down before him. Joseph did not tell them who he was until later.

At first, Joseph was harsh with his brothers, even accusing them of being spies and putting them in prison. But later, after many meetings and two journeys by his brothers, Joseph finally revealed who he was saying, *"I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold as a slave!"*

The brothers stood there speechless—shocked and afraid! They would never have thought that Joseph could still be alive.

But Joseph spoke to them kindly and said, *"Don't be afraid. God turned your evil into something good. He put me in this high position so I could save the lives of many people. Now I will take care of you and your families."*

When Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come, he invited Israel and his entire family to live in Egypt. He gave them a plot of his best land, plenty of food, and all new clothing!

So the family of Israel came to live in Egypt, escaping the drought and enjoying the blessings that God had given to Joseph.



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▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- **What do we learn about Joseph's brothers from the story?**
- **Why did Joseph's brothers not like him?**

- **What do we learn about Joseph from the story?**

He was a dreamer.

He was a tattler.

He was blessed by God and successful in all he did.

He trusted God in a bad situation.

He made good decisions in temptation.

He desired to take care of his family.

- **How did Joseph respond in the difficult situations he faced?**
- **Do you think his response was realistic? Was it helpful?**

- **How does God continue his promise to the Hebrews in the story?**

He did not let the descendants of Abraham—Israel and his family—die in the famine.

- **What does the story teach us about God?**

God knows all things. He can orchestrate events to accomplish his purpose.

He shows them what will happen in the future.

God is the source of all grace.

He promoted Joseph and blessed him in order to save many people.

God keeps his promises. The things revealed in the dreams came true just as God said they would.

God is powerful. He can control the elements by bringing a famine.

God chooses to work through people who are not perfect.

- **Where have we seen God take a situation that seemed bad and turn it into good?**
(From the stories? From your own life?)

◆ **APPLICATION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- What did you notice from the story for the first time?
- What questions do you have about the story? What do you wonder about?
- How did the story challenge or encourage you?
- How does Joseph's life inspire you?
- Do you like things in life planned out or more spontaneous?
- When have you felt mistreated, but in the end God used the situation for your good?