

A Good Shepherd Sacred Story

Joseph in Egypt

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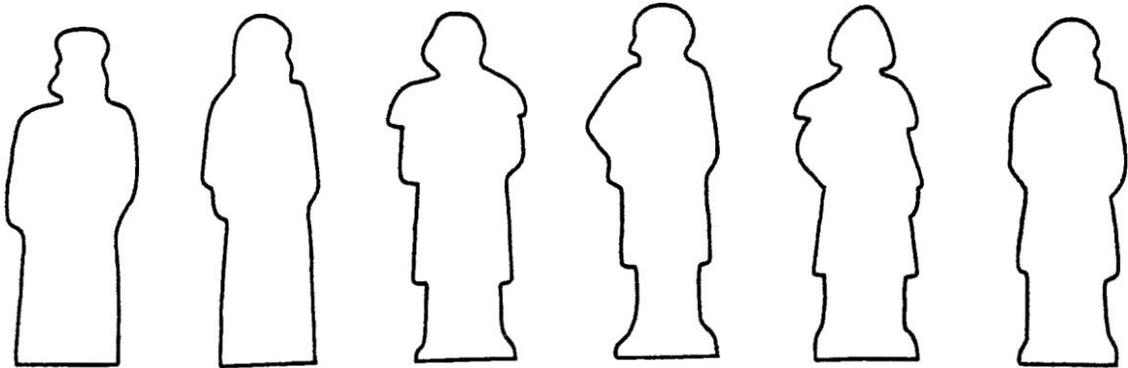
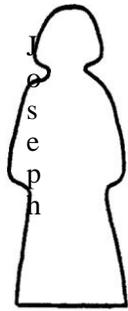
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JOSEPH IN EGYPT MATERIALS

- medium wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden Joseph figure
 - 6 wooden brother figures
 - 6 tan felt grain bags

- desert box (optional)

This story is written to be told in the desert box. During the work/art response time, encourage the children to do it that way. If you have more than 12 children in your circle for the story presentation, we recommend telling the story on the floor without the desert box so all children can see.



Brothers

JOSEPH IN EGYPT GENESIS 38:1-46:7

ACTIONS

After speaking, go to the shelf and carry the story basket back to the circle. Then, walk to the desert box and pull it back to the circle.

After speaking, allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you center yourself and the children by reverently touching one of the wooden figures in the basket to your left.

Place Joseph figure in right center of the desert box as though he were far away from his family.

Stand your hand in front of the Joseph figure to make a "jail".

Hold up seven fingers.

Build up a small hill of sand on the right side in the desert box and place Joseph on it as you say "Joseph was put in charge "

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside me. Will you please make silence with me so I can find all the words to this story?

Joseph, the special son of Jacob, had been sold by his brothers and taken to Egypt.

Joseph's adventures in Egypt were both good and bad. He was put in jail once, but while he was there he helped a man understand a dream.

One day the Pharaoh who ruled the land of Egypt had a very bad dream. He had heard that Joseph could tell people what their dreams meant. So he sent for Joseph.

Joseph listened to the dreams of Pharaoh and said, "Your dream means that for seven years there will be very good crops in Egypt and everyone will have a lot of food. Then there will be seven years when the crops will not grow at all and many people will starve. "

The Pharaoh was so surprised at what Joseph had told him that he decided to make Joseph a ruler in his land. Joseph was put in charge of saving the food during the good years so that there would be enough for people to eat in the years when crops would not grow.

Cup your hand around Joseph's end of the desert box. When you say "But the people of God ... " wave your hand toward the end of the desert box by the basket with brothers in it. Slowly move all but one brother toward the Joseph end of the desert box.

Move each brother to "bow" slightly to Joseph.

Move brothers to center right and stand your hand in front of them to make a "jail".

Take all but one brother and move them back to the basket.

Move all brothers around Joseph. At the words "he had to leave ... " pick Joseph figure up. Then put him back at the words "he came back "

So it was that the people in Egypt had enough food. But the people of God from Joseph's home were very hungry. Jacob had heard that there was food in Egypt. He sent his sons, all except Benjamin, the youngest, to Egypt to try to get food.

In Egypt it was Joseph who would decide who could have food. Everyone had to ask him if they could have food to eat. Joseph's brothers came in and bowed down before him. Joseph knew right away who they were. But they did not know him. Joseph spoke very angrily to his brothers, "Where did you come from?" he asked. "From Canaan, to buy food," they said. But Joseph was mean to his brothers. "No, you didn't," he said, "you are spies." No matter how much his brothers tried to tell Joseph that they were just hungry people, he wouldn't listen. They told him that they had a father and brother at home.

Then Joseph put them all in prison for three days. After that Joseph said, "Leave one brother here and the rest of you take this grain back and bring me your youngest brother." So they left Simeon in Egypt.

When the brothers got back to Canaan they told Jacob what had happened. Jacob was very sad.

He felt like Simeon was dead and he was afraid that he would lose Benjamin just like he'd lost Joseph.

All of the brothers, including Benjamin, went back to Egypt. Then Joseph had dinner made for them. When he saw his brother, Benjamin, he had to leave the room. He went outside and started to cry. He came back and ate with his brothers. They still didn't know who he was.

Place the imaginary silver cup inside one sack.

Pick up a brother and grain sack in one hand and move him to the left of Joseph. Do this with all the brother figures.

Look in each sack and hold up the imaginary cup when you find it in Benjamin's.

Move all the brothers back to the right and place them near Joseph. Move one brother forward as you say "Please sir, do not keep "

Wave your hand as if dismissing the Egyptians.

Move brothers even closer to Joseph and touch each one gently as you say "Joseph forgave his brothers. "

When it was time for the brothers to leave with their food, Joseph made sure that in Benjamin's sack of grain was put his very special silver cup.

After the brothers had left Egypt, Joseph sent his men after them saying, "Ask the brothers why they stole my silver cup after I was kind to them." When Joseph's men said that to the brothers, they said, "We didn't take the man's cup. If you find that cup here, then whoever has it will die. "

Joseph's men looked in all the sacks and found the cup in Benjamin's sack.

The brothers began to cry. They all went back to the city. Then one of the brothers, named Judah, went to Joseph and said, "Please sir, do not keep my brother. My father is an old man and has already lost his son, Joseph. Now if Benjamin does not come back with us, my father will die. Please, let me stay and be a slave for you and let Benjamin return to my father."

Then Joseph couldn't wait any longer. He made all the Egyptians leave and turned to his brothers and said, "I am Joseph, your brother." The brothers couldn't believe that this was Joseph.

Joseph forgave his brothers. He told them, "Y ou meant this for evil, but God meant it for good." Then they went back to Canaan and brought Jacob to Egypt. When Jacob found out that Joseph was still alive, he was very happy. He went to Egypt and there lived the rest of his days with all of his sons.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder how Joseph felt when he saw his brothers?

■ wonder if the brothers felt sad when they remembered what they had done to Joseph?

■ wonder how Joseph felt when he realized the brothers cared a great deal for Benjamin?

Put the bags of grain into the basket.
Return the wooden figures to the basket.

Watch carefully how ■ put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. Pull the desert box to its place. Return to the circle.

Watch carefully where ■ return these materials so you will know where to find them if you choose to work with this story today or another day.

Dismiss the children to their work after EVERYONE has had a chance to choose what they will do.

It's time to choose our work. Let's go around the circle and decide what we will do.

JOSEPH IN EGYPT TEACHER HELPS

We can't help but be disappointed in Joseph when his brothers finally get to Egypt. This man of God seems to degenerate into a spiteful and vengeful man before our very eyes. Joseph must have been shocked to see them. And while he spoke "roughly" to them, he must also have wanted to throw his arms around them. They were, after all, his family.

As the story of Joseph's treatment of his brothers unfolds, it seems that Joseph is unduly harsh, especially when it concerns his younger brother, Benjamin, who is now Jacob's favorite, since he is the only surviving son of Rachel. Rachel was also Joseph's mother. But if we read between the lines, we can see that Joseph was testing his brothers to see if they had grown beyond their jealousy he has known before. And they have. They promise their father, Jacob, that they will take special care of young Benjamin. And when Joseph's silver cup, which he had planted in Benjamin's grain, is found, an older brother, Judah, offers to remain as a slave in Benjamin's place. He tells Joseph that if Benjamin does not return, it will kill Jacob, especially

since Benjamin's brother is already dead. At that point, Joseph can no longer keep the charade going. He tells his brothers his identity and forgives them. He points out that though they meant this event for evil, God meant it for good. Joseph tells his brothers that he has been a tool of God and through him God has saved many from starvation. Joseph is able to see that because he was in Egypt, he had been able to be used by God in a very special way. I do not believe this means that Joseph was predestined to be sold as a slave and become the one who would feed the people of God. But I do believe that Joseph's faithfulness and trust in God, along with his gifts and natural abilities, helped him to recognize a place where he could be used. I also believe it was Joseph's faith that helped him forgive his brothers. Joseph could see God's hand in his life; not all of us can.

The wondering questions put us again into the feelings of Joseph and his brothers. The first question is to allow the children to wonder past the fact that Joseph spoke roughly to his brothers that he has not seen for many years. They may wonder if Joseph was partly happy and partly angry. Or perhaps they will accept only Joseph's anger.

In the second question we wonder how the brothers must have felt many years after they had tricked their father. Do those feelings ever leave? Do we find ways to make ourselves believe they're OK after all? As the brothers spoke of Benjamin they remembered Joseph, what were their feelings?

The third question is really the nugget of this story. It is to help the children begin to understand that the brothers had changed just as Joseph had grown and changed. They were no longer as jealous of the "special" child as they had been of Joseph. In fact, their concern is now for their father and what the demand for Benjamin's presence will do to him.

The Joseph cycle is long and very involved. Please take the time to read Genesis 37-50 at some point in your study. The story for the children paints only with a very large brush. But the details make the story one of great power for adults as well.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

When Joseph's brothers came to him he did not choose to be kind to them. How do you think God felt about Joseph's actions toward his brothers?

Imagine that Joseph had not become a powerful ruler, but had died in prison. Would God still have been with him? Would Joseph have believed that?

At the end of the story Joseph told his brothers, "You intended this for evil, but God intended it for good." Think of a time when you remember someone who tried to do something bad that ended up being good for someone.

Joseph's brothers were unkind to him and he was, in turn, unkind to them. Would it be possible for them ever to love each other again? Can you think of a time when you broke a relationship with someone? How did you deal with that person afterwards?