

Review the last stories a bit, focusing more on the most recent story, Jacob & Esau.

- What patterns do you notice about God in these stories?
- What did Abraham and Sarah learn about God?
- How did God show up in the Abraham and Isaac story?
- What did God tell Jacob in the last story?

Note to Parents/Storytellers: There is a section in this story where Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph, and then accuses him of raping her. You decide whether that is a section of the story you wish to tell and discuss, depending on the age of the children in your group. You may want to just say that "Potiphar's wife made trouble for Joseph and so Potiphar had him thrown into the king's prison."

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 lied and 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 explain the prisoners' dreams to them.

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 explain to him 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 more than enough food. This will be followed by seven years of a terrible famine that will spread over the land, when there will not be enough food for everyone."

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.

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.

Retell the Story

This may seem redundant, but it helps you remember and own the story. You will want to help them retell the story by giving them leading questions like: *So, where did the story begin? What did Joseph's brothers do to him when he was younger? How did Joseph treat his brothers later? What did Joseph say to his brothers at the end?*

Dialogue

These questions are a good start to draw out observations about the story.

- **From this story, what do we learn about Joseph's brothers?**
- **Why didn't Joseph's brothers like him?**
- **What do we learn about Joseph from the story?**
 - » He was a dreamer.
 - » He told on his brothers.
 - » 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 wanted to take care of his family.
- **How did Joseph respond in the difficult situations he faced? What do you think about how he responded – did it help?**
- **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 work things out for his plan.
 - » He shows them what will happen in the future.
 - » 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 questions do you have about the story?
- What will you remember most about this story?
- How does this story make a difference in your life?
- How does Joseph's life inspire you?
- Do you like things in life planned out or as a surprise?

Scripture Memory Verse

The LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. Genesis 39: 23