



Joseph

A narrative focused on the goodness of God even in the most challenging of situations.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 37-39
Genesis 41-50

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

- Dreams can be strange things. Share one of the stranger dreams you've ever had.

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Wisdom of Job – Why do bad things happen to good people?
- Nation – Abram's call to trust God
- Jacob & Esau – Sibling rivalry

Hear the Story

Scene One: Jacob's Favorite Son

Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) and his family returned to 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 years old, 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!

Scene Two: Brothers' Betrayal

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 Joseph's coat and soaked it in goat's blood. Then they 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.

Scene Three: Problems in Potiphar's House

So Potiphar promoted Joseph, putting him in charge of his entire household and business. At this time, 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 him, 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.

Scene Four: Jailhouse Dreams

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 the dreams, 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."*

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

Scene Five: Famine and a Future

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.

After seven years passed, the famine came, spreading throughout the land. People from all over the known world 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 didn't reveal the secret either.

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. They were 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 famine and enjoying the blessings that God had given to Joseph.

Retell the Story

- Who was Israel's favorite son?
- What was the relationship between Joseph and his brothers like?
- What did Joseph say that caused his brothers to turn against him?
- Where did Joseph end up?
- What did he do to get out of prison? What was his new position?
- What happened in the Promised Land, forcing Israel's boys to go to Egypt?
- When Joseph saw them, how did he react?
- What happened to Israel's family at this time?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- What did we learn about Joseph's brothers? Why did his brothers not like him?
- Describe Joseph's personality.
- How did Joseph respond to the difficult situations he faced?

- Did you hear anything that reminded you of **other** stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- From this story, what do you notice about God's character or His qualities?

Join the Story

1) A FATHER'S LOVE

What parallels do you see between the love Israel had for Joseph and God's love for his people? Why do you think Joseph was the chosen one? Why were the Israelites chosen? Why do you think God picked a "child" (the nation of Israel) to bless the world through, as opposed to blessing all his "children" (the other nations)?

2) PUNISHMENT OR PROVIDENCE?

In our story, Joseph is betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, accused of a crime he didn't commit, and thrown into prison. Do you believe these events were a divine act of punishment or providence? And if God allowed Joseph to suffer for a greater purpose, what might this tell you about the priorities of God?

3) EVIL INTO SOMETHING GOOD

After confronting his brothers, Joseph makes the bold claim that "God turned their evil into good." Joseph doesn't let his brothers off the hook for their actions, and yet God does by delivering and restoring the family. What does this quality (turning evil to good) reveal about God? Where else have you seen Him demonstrate this quality?

God,

Thank You for going ahead of us and for providing a way forward when we face difficult and challenging seasons. Give us the courage to remain faithful in the face of injustice and unjust circumstances. May the way we handle our words and our actions when life gets hard point people back to You. Amen.