

Joseph: A Dreamer, an Interpreter of Dreams, and a Preserver of Life

Genesis 37:1–31; 45:7, 49:1,6; 50:20

This lesson comes from *Volume 6 of The Complete Guide to Godly Play*. The lessons in *Volume 6* are all Old Testament Extension Lessons. We generally introduce these lessons to children who have spent at least three years working with the Core Lessons in *Volume 2* and are now developmentally ready for more.

Why did the People of God move to Egypt and become slaves? It was because of a famine in their land. There was also a famine in the land of Egypt, but Egypt had stored up grain during the good years so there was food there. Why did they store the grain? Because of Joseph's leadership. Why was Joseph in Egypt? Because his brothers hated him and sold him into slavery in Egypt. When Joseph's brothers came to ask for grain from Egypt, Joseph said, "God sent me before you to preserve life. You meant it for evil, but God used it for good" (cf. Genesis 45:7).

How to Use This Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense relives—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is not a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had

meaning, and yet another talk about their own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to listen in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. Whether you read the lesson or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today's lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the presentation can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

The Presentation

Jacob had twelve sons. Jacob's favorite son was Joseph and he gave him a special coat with many colors. This made Joseph's brothers hate him. One night, Joseph had a dream. He and his brothers were working in a field gathering wheat. Suddenly, Joseph's bundle rose up and all of his brothers' bundles bowed down before him. Joseph told his brothers this dream and they hated him even more. They wondered if Joseph would rule over them.

Joseph had another dream. In this dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down before him. It sounded like not only the brothers, but also Jacob and his wife would bow down before Joseph.

The brothers wanted to kill him. The oldest brother convinced them not to. Instead they sold him to traders. They dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of a goat, and told Jacob that a wild beast had killed him. Jacob wept.

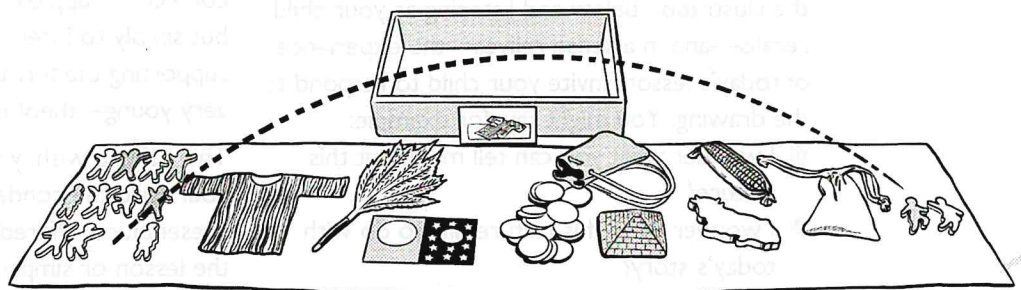
Wondering

- **I wonder** what part of this story you like the best?
- **I wonder** what part of this story is the most important?
- **I wonder** where you are in the story and what part is about you?

Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold as a slave to a captain named Potiphar. Joseph ended up in jail and some of the Pharaoh's servants were with him. They had dreams, and Joseph told them what they meant. When the Pharaoh's servants were released, they heard that the Pharaoh had dreamed many dreams that no one understood. They told Pharaoh about Joseph, and Pharaoh called for him.

The Pharaoh's dream had two parts. First there were seven fat cows and seven skinny cows. The thin cows ate the fat ones. Then he dreamed there were seven fat ears of corn and seven thin ones. The thin ones swallowed up the fat ones. Joseph told the Pharaoh that his dreams meant that there would be seven good years followed by seven bad years. This was a warning to save up grain during the good years so that there would be food for the people in the bad years. Pharaoh agreed and put Joseph in charge.

The bad years did happen, not just in Egypt, but in the lands around Egypt too. People came from everywhere to beg for food, including Joseph's own brothers. They did not recognize him. He gave them grain. When they returned a second time, he told them who he was. The brothers went home one more time and told their father that Joseph was alive. Jacob returned with them to Egypt. Joseph and his family spent the rest of their days in Egypt. Years later their children would become slaves because the new Pharaoh forgot all that Joseph did.



Godly Play The Godly Play Spiral, Part 2, "The Godly Play Session"

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. We sometimes say that Godly Play is organized as a kind of living spiral. The spiral moves upward and outward through early, middle, and late childhood making room for new experiences and new learning. One way the spiral moves is by the way a Godly Play session works, which can be thought of as a kind of circle.

The circle begins as the children cross the threshold into the Godly Play room. The children are then led by the Godly Play mentors through a lesson and the wondering. After

some time to respond to the lesson on their own, they regather for a feast and then the goodbye, thus closing the circle. All of these activities are meant to engage children in the fullness of the creative process (opening, scanning for meaning, insight, development and articulation of that new idea, and a soft closure so it is ready to open again whenever something new happens).

This movement also follows the deep structure of Christian worship, and is an indirect preparation for the children to continue the work of moving the spiral upward and outward long past their experience of Godly Play through their experience of worship.