Joseph Sold By His Brothers

Español



Scripture Reference: Genesis 35:23-26 and 37:1-36

Suggested Theme: God loves people even when they are unkind and sin. We should love and appreciate our family and try to live at peace with them.

Memory Verse: Memorize the names of Jacob's twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin.

Story Overview:

Jacob had twelve sons, but his favourite was Joseph. Joseph's brothers were jealous, so they conspired together and sold him as a slave to some traders heading for Egypt. They told their father that Joseph was dead.

Background Study:

Jacob (or Israel, as his name became) had a very large family! Twelve sons and one daughter! These twelve sons and their descendants would develop into great tribes in the Jewish nation.

Israel's family life was quite a drama, with his wives fighting over him and vying to bear his children. Each wife bore him children and then had their handmaidens bear him children on their behalf.

One would have thought that with the memories he had of his parents playing favourites between himself and Esau, Jacob would have treated his children equally. Instead, he favoured the sons of the wife that he loved the most. Rachel's death while giving birth to Jacob's last son, Benjamin, seemed only to have made Joseph even more obsessed with Rachel's sons, Joseph and Benjamin (Genesis 35:16-20).

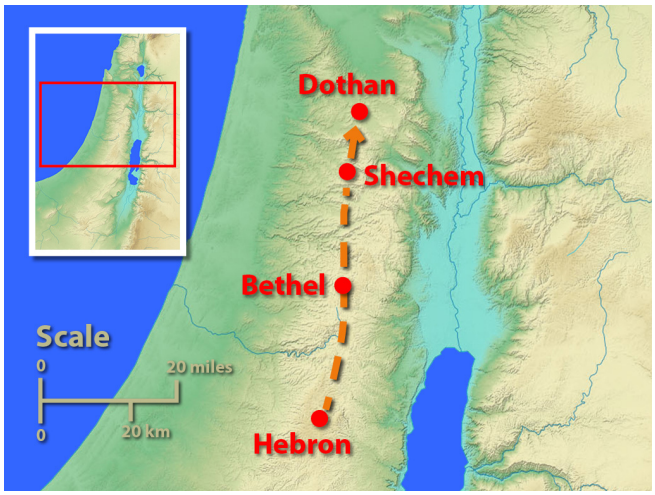
(Genesis 37:1-11) Jacob was obviously showing favour to Joseph over his other sons. He even gave Joseph a richly ornamented coat as a special gift. This provoked resentment and jealousy in the brothers.

Joseph also seemed to do little to endear himself to his older brothers as a youth. Reporting back to his father and giving bad reports certainly didn't make them love him. To top it off, he had dreams of being the leader of the family and went on to share those with his brothers.

- The dream of the sheaves of grain: He dreamed he and his brothers were working in the field, cutting and binding sheaves of grain. In the dream, all of his brother's sheaves bowed down to his sheaf.
- The dream of the night sky: In this dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to him. It was obvious that the eleven stars were his brothers. Even his father rebuked him for talking about his father

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and mother (the sun and moon) and bowing to him.



(Genesis 37:12-28) It is not surprising that Joseph's brothers were annoyed with him, but their deep jealousy turned to hatred.

Joseph was at home in Hebron while his brothers were tending Jacob's flocks. Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers. First, he searched in the usual places near Shechem, and then he went on to where they were in Dothan. Seeing him coming towards them sent the brothers into a rage that led them to conspire to kill him. The oldest brother convinced them to throw him in a pit instead. But, in his absence, Judah led the brothers in selling Joseph as a slave to a passing caravan going towards Egypt.



(Genesis 37:29-36) On Reuben's return, all of the brothers agreed to deceive Jacob into thinking wild animals had killed his son. They killed a goat and soaked Joseph's beautiful coat in it. When shown the torn and bloodied coat, Jacob couldn't be comforted. Even then, the brothers could have told the truth and gone searching for Joseph. But they would not admit their sin even while watching their father suffer and grieve.

Meanwhile, Joseph's pain was of a different sort. Added to the knowledge that his own brothers had sold him into slavery was the reality of going from pampered son status to slave status. Joseph's story will be continued in the Bible lessons Joseph in Egypt and Joseph Saves His Family.

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Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask each child to draw a picture of their family. Let each one stand up and explain their picture. Let everyone count to see how many children are in each family. Who has the most/least sisters, brothers, etc? Note things that are different and things that are the same. Do you and your brothers/sisters ever argue? “In today’s story, we are going to learn about a family that had twelve boys and one girl. The twelve boys did not get along very well.”

The Story:

In families, fathers should love each of their children equally, and all children should love each other. This is not what happened in the family in today’s story.

Jacob had twelve sons, but Joseph was his favourite. Joseph was the son of his favourite wife, Rachel. Everyone knew that Jacob loved Joseph the most. He even gave his favourite son a beautiful coat. Joseph’s brothers were very jealous!

Joseph also used to tell his father when he thought his brothers did bad things. Joseph’s brothers thought he was a “tattle-tell” and did not like him very much.

Then Joseph told his brothers about the dreams he was having. He said that he dreamed all twelve brothers were working in the grain fields together, tying the sheaves of grain. In the dream, Joseph’s sheaf of grain rose, and all of his brother’s sheaves bowed down to his. “What?” they asked, “Do you think we are ever going to bow down to you?”

The brothers were getting angrier at Joseph and were even beginning to hate him. Even though they were angry, Joseph kept having more dreams and telling his brothers all about them. He dreamed he saw the sun, moon and eleven stars bow down to him.

His brothers had had enough! And even his father, Jacob, told Joseph off for this dream. “Joseph, are you saying that the sun and moon represent your father and mother and that even WE will bow down to you?”

Sometimes, Joseph’s brothers would travel far to care for their father’s sheep. Joseph had stayed at home, so his father told him to find his brothers and check on them. Joseph travelled all the way to Shechem because he thought his brothers were there. But someone told him that his brothers were far away in Dothan. Joseph set out to find them.

When his brothers saw Joseph coming in the distance, they said, “Here comes the dreamer!” They began thinking about how much they hated him. They hated him so much that they even wanted to kill him. Reuben, the oldest brother, said, “No, we should not kill him. We should just throw him into that old cistern to teach him a lesson.” So, all of the brothers grabbed Joseph and threw him into an old, dry cistern.

Later, while Reuben was gone, a caravan headed for Egypt passed by. Judah, one of the brothers, thought of a way to get rid of Joseph for good and earn some money: “Let’s sell him to the men in the caravan as a slave!”

So Joseph’s brothers sold him to the men on the caravan, and they took him all the way to Egypt to be a slave there.

When Reuben came back and found out what his brothers had done, he was very upset. “What will we tell our father?” he cried.

So the brothers took Joseph’s beautiful coat and soaked it in blood from a goat. When they went back home and showed their father, he believed that wild animals had killed Joseph.

Jacob was so sad! He cried and even tore his own clothes because he was so sad. Even though they watched their father cry and miss Joseph, the eleven brothers did not tell their father the truth. They just

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decided to act like it had never happened.

All of this was happening back home, but Joseph was on his way to Egypt. What do you think will happen to Joseph there?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- How many sons did Jacob (Israel) have? (12)
- Jacob's favourite son was Joseph. Does Jacob having a favourite son remind you of another Bible character? (Jacob's father, Isaac, had a favourite son, Esau)
- What two dreams did Joseph have that made his brothers angry? (His brothers' sheaves of grain bowing down to his and the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him)
- Why did Joseph's dreams make his brothers angry? (The dreams showed that they would serve/bow down to Joseph, the youngest brother. This seemed arrogant, and typically, the older brothers would have more power or status than the younger ones)
- Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him. Instead, what did they do? (Sold him as a slave)
- What did the brothers tell their father happened to Joseph? (They dipped Joseph's coat in goat blood and told Jacob they had found it. Jacob thought that a wild animal had killed Joseph)

Reflection:

- What part of this story did you find the most interesting?
- What do you think God's plan will be for Joseph?
- What could Joseph have done differently to help him and his brothers get along? What could Joseph's brothers have done?
- What does God want us to do when we realize we have sinned? (repent and ask God to forgive us- and He will!)

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- How would you feel if your brothers threw you in a pit and sold you as a slave?
- How do you think Joseph felt when he was sold as a slave and led away from his home? Have you ever felt like this?
- When you are angry or upset with your siblings or friends, what can you do to end the conflict? (ideas include telling the person how you're feeling, telling an adult and asking for help, asking God to help you forgive the person, praying, etc.)
- When you are upset, how can God help you? (You can pray and talk to Him, and God will listen; He can give you more love and forgiveness for someone you're upset with, He can comfort you, etc.)

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Hello Hello Song
- Jacob Lived in Canaan Song
- Sons of Jacob Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Use coloured chalk and draw Joseph's coat on a chalkboard or footpath.
- Ask the children to define "tattling" and give examples.
- Snack Idea: Sprinkle multi-coloured decorator's candy (i.e. "Hundreds and Thousands") on buttered bread or cookies. At the same time, you are doing this talk about how Joseph's father favoured him by giving him a coat of many colours. Simple cookie recipe at http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/old-fashioned-sugar-cookies-recipe2/index.html.
- Discuss Romans 12:15 and apply it to Joseph and his brothers.
- List ways we can get along with our siblings.
- Help the children learn the names of the 12 sons of Jacob. Click here for ways to do this.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

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Crafts:

- Younger children could use finger paint to paint Joseph's coat.
- Have the children draw a cartoon strip depicting the story.
- Make a Joseph puppet. Instructions for making Spoon or Finger Puppets.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page The sons of Jacob and puzzle worksheets (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page Activities about Jacob's name being changed to Israel (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page (Moody Publishing)
- Colouring page Joseph Sold By His Brothers activities (Calvary Curriculum)
- Craft: Coat of many colours melting crayon craft video (Christian Preschool)

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