

AT HOME FAITH TIME FOR PRETEENS

PRETEEN SECTION

Make sure your parents read the Bible story too! You may read together, or separately.

BIBLE STORY: JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS, PART 1 (GENESIS 37-41)

Jacob (aka Israel) had 12 sons. His favorite son was Joseph.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Notice: *What do the brothers think of Joseph's special treatment?*

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

Notice: *What do these dreams mean?*

When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Go and see if all is well with them and with the flocks, and bring word back to me."

"Very well," he replied. So Joseph went to find his brothers. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

“Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. “Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”

Notice: *What are the brothers planning to do to Joseph?*

When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands.

“Let’s not take his life,” he said. “Don’t shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him.” Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.

Notice: *Which brother is trying to profit off Joseph? Which brother is trying to save Joseph?*

So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. He went back to his brothers and said, “The boy isn’t there! Where can I turn now?”

Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, “We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.”

He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.”

Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “No,” he said, “I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.” So his father wept for him.

Notice: *How does Jacob feel about his son’s death?*

Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

The Lord was with Joseph in Egypt so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Notice: *Joseph is now a slave.
What is God doing about this?*

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he refused.

Then she caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

While Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Notice: *Joseph is now in prison.
What is God doing about this?*

Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison

where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them.

After they had been in custody for some time, each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt—had a dream the same night. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked Pharaoh’s officials who were in custody with him in his master’s house, “Why do you look so sad today?”

“We both had dreams,” they answered, “but there is no one to interpret them.”

Then Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.”

Notice: How can Joseph understand these dreams?

So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, “In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup and put the cup in his hand.”

“This is what it means,” Joseph said to him. “The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.”

When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.”

“This is what it means,” Joseph said. “The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale your body on a pole. And the birds will eat away your flesh.”

Now the third day was Pharaoh’s birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh’s hand— but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.

The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

Notice: *How long has Joseph been in prison?*

He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled.”

So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.”

“I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.”

Then Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams.

Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

Notice: *Where does Joseph say Pharaoh’s dreams came from?*

“And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.”

The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?”

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.”

Notice: *Joseph was a slave, the lowest of the low. What position does Joseph have now?*

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh’s presence and traveled throughout Egypt. During the seven years of abundance the land

Notice: *What does Joseph do to save everyone from the famine?*

produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.”

When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

LET'S SUMMARIZE!

Answer each question yourself.

What is God doing in this story?

What does this story tell me about God?

What does this story tell me about me?

What does this story tell me about my relationship with God?

MEMORY WORK: THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible is a collection of many smaller books. Because these books were written in a different language, they have names that may sound very strange to us. To help us navigate the Bible, it's very useful to memorize their order.

This week is the hardest. Try to **memorize all the Prophets!**

If it helps you memorize, try any of these songs. Pick the version you like best!

- youtube.com/watch?v=g4KEWLNnmCQ
- youtube.com/watch?v=i7ZtWRSCH7E
- youtube.com/watch?v=V__n3oXTBcc
- youtube.com/watch?v=powlzb2Rfdw
- youtube.com/watch?v=v3aRB1xMs5g
- youtube.com/watch?v=5PGW700rOdk
- youtube.com/watch?v=K9DodTRI3vU
- youtube.com/watch?v=OwDywQ5qaqM
- youtube.com/watch?v=4gMcktleVko
- youtube.com/watch?v=eTbSZfc7s1Q

THE 39 BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Pentateuch

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Historical Books

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

Wisdom and Poetry

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon

Prophets

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

THINGS TO NOTICE

Prophets were people who spoke God's word during the time of the kings. They were called by God to warn and guide the people. They warned about decisions that would lead to Israel's downfall, but they also promised a time when God would restore Israel and give it a good king who rules with justice and righteousness. As Christians, we believe Jesus is this good king.

AT HOME FAITH TIME FOR PRETEENS

PARENT SECTION

As you discuss questions with your preteens, these thoughts might help you go deeper.

CONVERSATIONS – BIBLE

What do the brothers think of Joseph's special treatment?

They hate it! It's not fair! Have you ever felt angry at someone when they received something good or shown kindness by others? Why do we sometimes not like it when other people receive good things? Do you think Joseph's brothers had a right to be angry? Did Joseph deserve this treatment?

What do these dreams mean?

The apparent meaning is Joseph, the youngest in the family, will one day rule over the other family members. Even Joseph's father seems offended at this idea! We all have dreams about our future; maybe someday you want to be President! Why would others find our dreams offensive? How could Joseph have approached this situation better?

What are the brothers planning to do to Joseph?

They are going to kill him! :-o And then they are going to try to coverup his death, making it look like an accident (remember, dangerous animals were more common back then). Why would they do this? Killing seems extreme; what do you think causes someone to kill another person? Why do you think things went so wrong in this family? How could they have gone differently?

Which brother is trying to profit off Joseph? Which brother is trying to save Joseph?

Judah tries to make a profit by selling Joseph into slavery. And Judah's plan is the one that succeeds. Joseph is sold into slavery, and Judah was the ringleader of the plot. Remember Judah's name; he's important later in the story.

Reuben tries to save Joseph. Reuben is Jacob's firstborn son and the oldest of all the brothers. After everything that's gone wrong, why do you think Reuben tries to save his brother? Do you think it was because Reuben liked Joseph? If Reuben hated Joseph like everyone else, what other reasons might he have had for saving Joseph?

How does Jacob feel about his son's death?

Jacob is clearly heartbroken. Later in the story, it'll be clear that even years later, Jacob is still heartbroken. Do you think the brothers expected their dad to act this way? How do you think things changed in the family after Joseph's supposed death? Have you ever experienced sadness or grief (it could be from a death of a family member or pet, or it could be when something ended, like having to move or when a friend moved away)? Does it still hurt sometimes even today? It's OK if there's still pain. What do you do when you're sad?

Joseph is now a slave. What is God doing about this?

God makes Joseph succeed at everything, even as a slave. Slavery is obviously bad, but even in slavery people were treated differently depending on their value to their owners. Joseph's master found him very valuable, and put him in charge of his entire household. None of us have ever been slaves, but we've all been put in situations we don't like. For example, maybe you don't like going to school! How does God help us even in bad situations? How does knowing God is on our side change the way we act in bad situations?

Joseph is now in prison. What is God doing about this?

God made those in charge of Joseph treat him kindly. No one wants to be in prison, especially not for something they didn't do like Joseph. But even if Joseph didn't do anything wrong, we all mess up and are punished from time-to-time. How does God help us even when we are being punished? How does knowing God is on our side change the way we act when we're being punished?

How can Joseph understand these dreams?

God gives Joseph the ability to understand. Has anything ever come naturally to you that was difficult or impossible for others to do? Who gave you those gifts and abilities? In the Church, we believe God through the Holy Spirit gives us such things. Paul (someone who knew Jesus) encourages us to use such gifts to show God's love – making other lives better and building up relationships. How can you use your gifts and abilities to show God's love to others?

How long has Joseph been in prison?

For two years! That's a long time. Do you know anyone in prison? What do you think it's like to be in prison today? Politicians often talk about people in prison as bad people, but the Bible calls upon us to show love to people in prison. We have pastors that visit people in prison, people who write letters to prisoners, and ministries that help people when they get out of prison. You may be too young to do any of these things, but there's another population who is often isolated in a similar way to prisoners: Those in nursing homes, especially the ones who are in skilled nursing or memory care units. Have you ever visited someone in a nursing home?

Why do you think the Bible finds it so important that we visit those who are sick or in prison? Why should you or I care about those people or take time out of our lives to visit them?

Where does Joseph say Pharaoh's dreams came from?

God gave Pharaoh the dream. This dream was to help Pharaoh make wise choices that would protect everyone in the future. Do you think God still gives people dreams? Have you ever felt any of your dreams are from God? What was the dream about? What do you think it meant? Why do you suppose God gave you that dream?

Joseph was a slave, the lowest of the low. What position does Joseph have now?

Second in command! Pharaoh's righthand man! Vice President of Egypt! Wow! How did Joseph go from nearly killed, sold into slavery, and imprisoned to the very top? What role did God have in making this happen? Why do you think God looked after Joseph so well? Does God look after you? What role has God had in making things happen in your life? Consider some of the past events in your life and wonder, "What was God doing during that moment?"

What does Joseph do to save everyone from the famine?

He gathers the extra grain and stores it for the future. Do you think this was a good plan? Do you think this is what God wanted? How do we know what God wants us to do?

We won't read this part, but in Genesis 47:13-26, we find out that the famine goes so long that everyone runs out of money buying food from Joseph. Eventually Joseph makes them sell their animals, their land, and themselves into slavery for food. Joseph uses the wisdom God gave him to turn everyone into slaves. Do you think this is what God wanted? How could Joseph have done things differently? What do you think God wanted Joseph to do?

LET'S SUMMARIZE!

Answer each question yourself. I've put in some of my answers but remember: Our answers don't have to be the same. You may have heard and seen things I didn't even notice!

What is God doing in this story?

Giving dreams, protecting, giving success, treating kindly, giving wisdom and understanding.

What does this story tell me about God?

God is with us, even when everything seems to be going wrong. God will guide us through challenging times and eventually things will be right again.

What does this story tell me about me?

Sometimes God may give me understanding no one else has, but it still takes wisdom to know what to do with those gifts.

What does this story tell me about my relationship with God?

I can trust God, even when it seems like everything is going wrong.

CONVERSATIONS – THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Most of the Prophets spoke in poems. In English poetry, we often rhyme words. “The man had a dog / he sat on a log.” In Hebrew poetry, we rhyme thoughts. “The man had a dog / his wife owned the cat.” Those are rhyming thoughts; wife rhymes with man and cat rhymes with dog. Psalm 148 is a clear example of rhyming thoughts. Read Psalm 148 together and notice how the second line is a rhyming thought to the first line.

Sometimes the thoughts rhyme in other ways. “The man had a dog / the chihuahua belonged to the sumo wrestler.” Here, the second thought told us a lot more detail about the first thought. Psalm 23 works like this. Read Psalm 23 together and notice how the second line rhymes by adding detail or meaning to the first line.

If the Prophets were sent to share God’s word with the people, often telling the leaders what they’re doing wrong and what God wants from them, why do you think they spoke in poems?