



God Gives Joseph Dreams

Goal: To know that God is always with us.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Genesis 37:1-11

The Joseph story ends the saga that began with Abraham and Sarah. The story also tells us how Israel came to reside in Egypt, which is the concern of the next book, Exodus. Joseph experienced several highs and lows that eventually brought him to prominence in Egypt. There, in a time of famine, Jacob and his family found refuge. However, working almost imperceptibly behind the scenes is a gracious God intent on fulfilling the promise made to Abraham of having a great family and being a blessing to the world.

God's grace is revealed through Joseph's dreams. When Joseph tells his brothers about the dreams, they assume that they are about Joseph's ambition and perhaps their father's deference to him. However, the dreams are really about God's providence. God's people need to be cared for. Joseph's rise to prominence will ensure the future of the people. The story reminds us that God is committed to the beloved creation, to us and all people, for the long haul. God's grace is a steadfast, yearning love that seeks us out and never lets us go.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Some children may feel closely connected to God and sense God's presence with them. Others may be more anxious or less aware of God's loving presence in their lives. Our dream for them is a life that is reassured by God's continuing presence.

Children first experience the word *dream* as thoughts, feelings, and images that occur during sleep. As they grow in experience and knowledge, they hear the word as expressing hopes and aspirations for the future. Joseph experienced both meanings.

Children love to be helpful in different ways and to different degrees. With age and experience, they can come to see the ways their helpfulness contributes to God's promise through Abraham's family to be a blessing to the world. Dreams for the future take root early in life and can be shaped by visions of helpfulness.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

How do we help our children have faith and hope? One way to begin is by encouraging children to discover and use what some would call "God language." We need to help them understand and use words that are part of our faith—such as *grace, trust, love, compassion, justice, blessing, community, hope, and reconciliation*.

You also can encourage children to have their own dreams of a better world for all. We want them to be able to fill the dreams with heroes who live out Jesus' message, to be buoyed by the energy of their dreams, and to live them out with hope and the reassurance that, no matter what, God will be with them.

God, I am so thankful for your presence and your graceful love that leads me to love you and others. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 4, 19

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

candle

snack

Guided Play

choice 3: two or three
dolls

Exploring

choice 1: card-stock
copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1 and GN 2

choice 2: biblical
costumes (optional)

choice 3: **SCM 18**

choice 4: copies of **GN 3**

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so that their backs will be to the door.

Use **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii-iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children with special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words.

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers. Explain to them that the children will hear a story about Joseph and his dreams.

Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

1. Counting—Spread items to count (such as balls of yarn, blocks, or paper cups) on a table. Have more than twelve of each. The objects need to be large enough so children won't choke on them. Invite the children to count out twelve of each object. Let them mix up the items and count them again. Most three- and four-year-olds will not know how to count all the way to twelve. You, or a helper, will need to help them count.

2. Creating—Provide twelve large craft sticks and washable felt-tipped markers. Invite the children to draw faces on the craft sticks. You need twelve completed faces to represent the twelve sons of Jacob. Ask the children about brothers or sisters they may have, being sensitive to those who have no siblings. Use the completed faces (brother sticks) in “Hearing the Story.”

3. Pretending—Provide two or three dolls. Encourage the children to pretend that the dolls are sisters and brothers. Wonder how brothers and sisters show they love each other, how they show that they're upset with each other, and how they forgive each other.

T *Transition times can be more frustrating to children if they have to wait. Be prepared to move to the next activity and alert children of upcoming changes. If children will need to wait, provide a simple task such as a threading activity, or hand clapping to occupy the time and lessen the frustration.*



Transitioning to Story Time

Call the children to the story corner, singing “This Is the Day”—SCM 19. Encourage the children to sing along, repeating words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Motion Song



Lead the children in the following song and motions (sung to the tune of “Frère Jacques”).

God is with me, (*hug yourself*)

God is with me; (*same action*)

All day long, (*use both arms to make a big sun circle in the air.*)

All day long; (*same action*)

And when I am sleeping, (*put hands together and lean head on hands*)

And when I am sleeping; (*same action*)

God’s with me. (*point to self*)

God’s with you. (*point to another person*)

Repeat the song and motions several times.

Twinkle, Twinkle



Remind the children that we can remember God’s promise to love us by looking at the stars. Learn a motion song to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

Twinkle, twinkle, stars above; (*lift hands in the air and wiggle fingers*)

You remind us of God’s love. (*cross arms over chest*)

God promised a family; (*hold arms out wide*)

That includes both you and me. (*point to someone else; point to yourself*)

Twinkle, twinkle, stars above; (*lift hands in the air and wiggle fingers*)

You remind us of God’s love. (*cross arms over chest*)

T For some children, consistency in transitions is key. Growing in Grace & Gratitude utilizes familiar songs and rhymes as a way to aid in the ease of routine without making it feel stale.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story

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Turn on the candle, saying, "God, your Word is our light." Repeat the phrase, prompting the children to say "light" with you.

Open the Bible to Genesis 37 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible.

Tell the children that today's story is about Joseph and his brothers. Hold the decorated faces made during "Welcoming and Guided Play" choice 2, fanning them out in your hand. Mention that Jacob had twelve sons. Ask the children to count the brothers with you.

Read **SCM 4**. Express the emotions of the story with your voice, gestures, and facial expressions.

Hand out the brother sticks to the children. Name one of the brothers, Joseph. Invite the children to act out the story using the brother sticks as you read it again.

Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Turn off the candle.

F *With twelve brothers, there may not be the same number of sticks per child. One way to talk about fairness is to discuss collaboration. When people work together, everyone sees the benefits.*

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Create a Door Hanger Reminder

FM

Distribute card-stock copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Invite the children to decorate both door hanger templates. As the children finish decorating the door hangers, cut them out. Help the children glue the two door hangers together. As the children create, remind them that God is always with us. God is with our family and friends. God loves all people. God is with us day and night. End with a short prayer: "We thank you, God, for loving us. Amen."

2. Act the Story

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If you have biblical costumes, invite the children to dress up. Suggest that children act out various parts of the story, including being the stars (*with head, outstretched hands, and feet representing the points of the star*) and the wheat (*standing tall with arms above their heads*).

Encourage those who are participating to pretend to do the following: be Jacob giving his son Joseph a new coat; be Joseph showing off his beautiful new coat; be Joseph bragging; be stars and wheat bowing down; be angry brothers.

Remind the children that God told Abraham that he would have as many grandchildren and great-grandchildren as there are stars in the sky. Just like Abraham and all of his children and grandchildren, we are part of God's family.



- B** *Providing opportunities for children to act in front of others can be a fun way to learn from one another and can build children's confidence. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or fidgeting. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*

3. God is With Me

Celebrate God's presence by listening to "God Is with Me"—**SCM 18**. Encourage the children to create motions for the song. Once you have all the motions, go over them and play the song. When they know the motions well, you can sing the song as a group. Consider asking the pastor or worship leader if the group can share the music and motions during worship.

4. Coloring Page



Hand out **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- I wonder, "Why are Joseph's brothers bowing down to him?"
- I wonder, "How would a star take a bow?"
- I wonder, "What might Joseph be saying in the picture?"

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Have each child put away one toy or object. Encourage the children to help as much as possible.

Have the children sit around a table or on the floor. This would be a good time for a snack. Before the snack, say an echo prayer with the children, having them repeat each phrase you speak:

Dear God, /
You made us, /
You love us, /
And you like us. /
Thank you for giving us families. /
Amen.

Play "God Is with Me" while enjoying the snack.

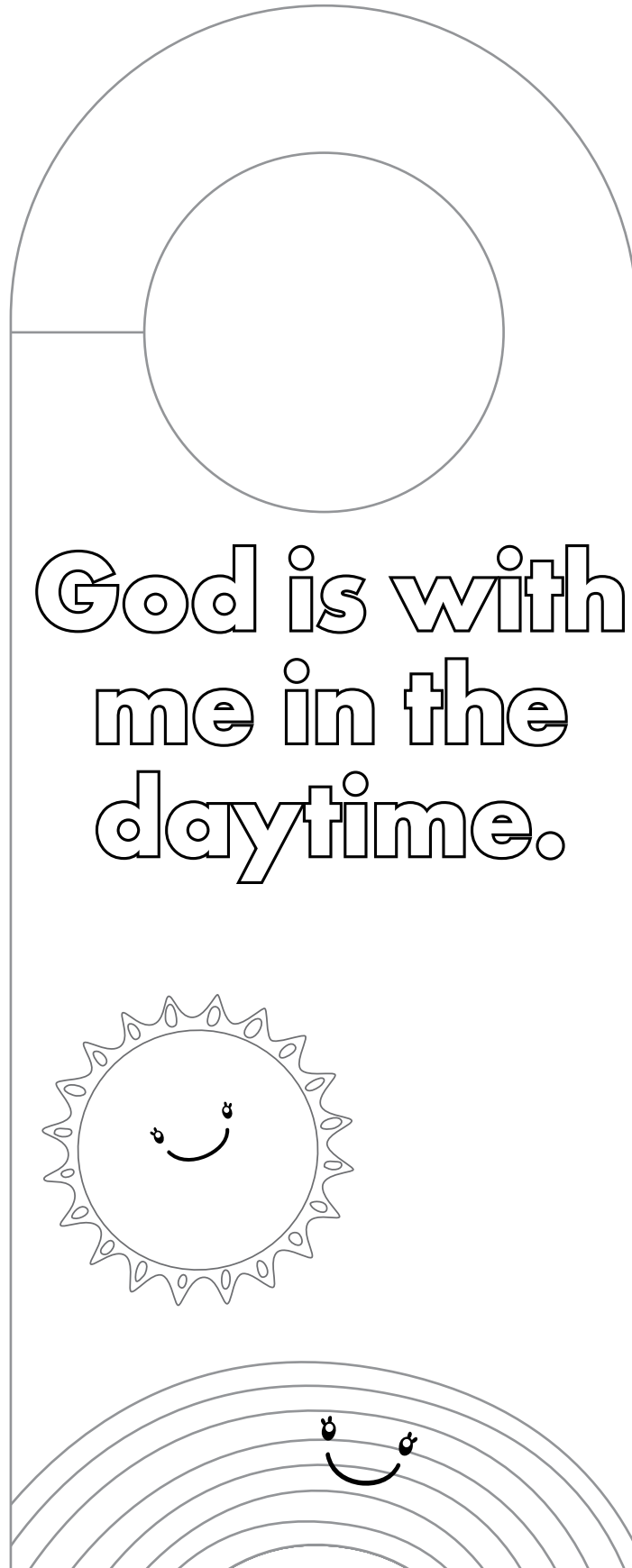
Help the children sense that God is always with them. Say: "I wonder whether something we've talked about or done today has reminded you of ways God is with you. Can you think of a way you could thank God this week?"

As the children leave, bless each one: "(Name), God loves you. The grace of God is always with you."

Use "wonder" questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).





God Gives Joseph Dreams



Joseph dreams about his brothers.

