



God Gives Joseph Dreams

Goal: To consider the hopes and dreams God gives each of 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, 17, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

natural or tan-colored
bedsheet

candle

simple costumes
(optional)

Responding

Claiming

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Praying

sturdy paper plates,
beads

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **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 who have special needs or disabilities.

A bedsheet from the previous session will be used during this session. If you choose not to use the bedsheet, plan to adapt the activities.

“Praying God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG**

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

As they arrive, invite the children to prepare a worship space with a candle, Bible, and the bedsheet. Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Remind the children that God promised Abraham and Sarah a great big family. Their family grew and grew. Their son Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob had twelve sons; one of them was Joseph, whom he loved very much. He gave Joseph a coat of many colors. Tell the children that today’s story is about Joseph.

Provide at least twelve craft sticks and washable felt-tipped markers. Invite the children to draw faces on the craft sticks to represent the twelve sons of Jacob. If you have more than twelve children in your group, they could add sisters or other people in the family.

Ask the children about brothers or sisters they may have. Be sensitive to those who have no siblings. Set the craft sticks aside to use later in the session.

Singing **B** **L**

Gather on the bedsheet, pretending it is the desert. Encourage the children to make room for all. Sing “God’s Promises”—**SCM 17**. As the song plays, point out the words so the children can follow along. Invite the children to create simple movements that express the words.

Praying **L**

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s presence. Invite the children to pray an echo prayer:

Loving God, /
we give you thanks /
because you give us hopes /
and dreams for our lives. /
Amen. /



Preparing to Hear the Story

Tell the children that today's story is about twelve brothers. Hold the craft sticks the children decorated, fanning them out in your hand. Mention that Jacob had twelve sons. Ask the children to count out twelve brothers with you. Then hold one brother in one hand; hold all the others in your other hand. Name the one brother Joseph. Explain that today's story is about Joseph and his brothers.

Explain that one of the reasons Joseph's brothers were angry was because Joseph told them about his dreams of being more important than them.



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

L

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

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

Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Read the story again, or use the story audio. Invite the children to use the craft-stick brothers like puppets to help you tell the story.

Reflecting on God's Grace

B C

Invite the children to act out the story as you read from **SCM 4**. Children may choose to be Joseph, Jacob, Reuben, or the other brothers. Joseph had a sister named Dinah and a mother named Rachel whose characters could also be included. Use simple costumes if available.

When the drama is finished, talk about the different attitudes of the family members in the story. Wonder together how you might have acted if you had been Joseph or one of the other people.

Wonder together about what might happen next in the story.

Singing

Sing "God Is with Me"—**SCM 18**. Help the children learn the song. Sing the words one phrase at a time, and ask the children to repeat each phrase.

Turn off the candle.

LG *Look for opportunities for children to practice leadership and generosity, such as helping set up the space, passing out papers, holding visual aids, or offering help to other children.*



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

T *For children who struggle with transitions, consider a quick physical activity—such as doing chair push-ups, squeezing your hands together or stretching—before the transition.*

Claiming God's Grace

T C

Share with the group that Joseph dreamed of being a leader when he grew up. Suggest that God gave Joseph these dreams to help him understand what he might be or do in the future.

Share with the children a dream or hope you had for yourself when you were a child. Consider what you wanted to be when you grew up, how you wanted to serve God, and ways you did. How were your dreams a way that served God's purpose?

Have a conversation with the children about the following:

- What hopes or dreams do you have for your future?
- What other dreams and hopes do you have?
- Wonder as a group about what God's hopes and dreams are for you, for your family, and for the world.

Distribute markers and copies of **GN 1**. Invite everyone to draw a picture or write a few words sharing their ideas of God's dream for a better world on the star. When they have finished, have the children lay their dreams on the bedsheet.

Offer a prayer that gathers the hopes of the group. Invite the children to share their dreams and hopes with their families throughout the week.

Celebrating God's Grace

MS

Help children celebrate Joseph's dreams. Tell them that Joseph's dreams showed that he would be a leader one day.

Play a game based on "Follow the Leader" by using actions from Joseph's dreams. Have the children take turns being Joseph.

Encourage the leaders to come up with fun, silly motions for the stars, the moon, bundles of grain, and Joseph's brothers.

Discuss how God gave the dreams to Joseph to point to his future and the role he was going to have in God's plan. Help the children express thanks to God for their hopes and dreams for the future.



A Native American legend tells that dreams are caught in the dream catcher. Bad dreams caught in the webs fade away. Good dreams make their way through the web of the dream catcher to enter the life of the dreamer. The activity is a variation of this tradition.

Praying God's Grace

Ask the children to name ways they can make the world better with God's help. Invite them to make "hope catchers" to hold their dreams for changing the world with God's help. Some children will need help, while others can do this craft on their own.

1. Make a ring by cutting out the center of a sturdy paper plate. Punch one hole at the top of the ring, three to five holes at the bottom of the ring, and 6-12 holes around the inner circle of the ring.
2. Thread yarn through the top hole. Add a few beads and tie a knot at the end. This will be yarn to hang the hope catcher.
3. Thread yarn through one of the inner holes and knot it around the hole. Start weaving the web through the inner holes, adding beads as you go. Try to weave diagonally as much as possible. When all the holes have been threaded, tie a knot at the end.
4. In the bottom holes, tie yarn and add beads. (You may want to take a walk, weather permitting, to gather natural items for decorating the hope catchers.)

When complete, invite the children to hold their hope catchers in front of them. Ask them to raise their hope catchers into the air as a movement prayer, dedicating their hopes to God.

TD *Some children who have tactile sensitivities are bothered by everyday items that most people don't notice. Yarn or twine can feel scratchy cause a reaction that may be interpreted as bad behavior. Plan for alternatives.*

GN 2 Solution:

sun, moon, eleven stars

Extra Activity



Remind the children that God gave Joseph dreams that showed him that he would become great and ultimately save his family and his people. Part of Joseph's journey would take him to Egypt, where he might have had to learn to read and write in hieroglyphics. Explain that hieroglyphics was an Egyptian writing system using small pictures. A cartouche is an oval with a line at the end, usually containing the name of royalty. It is meant to look like a carved tablet or a scroll.

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and invite the children to write their name in hieroglyphics in the column on the right. Then have them use the hieroglyphics to figure out the words at the bottom of the page that describe one of Joseph's dreams.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Sing “God’s Promises”—SCM 17.

Remind the children that God promised to be with Joseph’s family. God gave hopes and dreams to Joseph, even when he and his brothers did not understand them, so that he was able to save his family and his people. Wonder about ways that God is active in their lives, helping them have hopes and dreams. Pray the following prayer or one of your own:

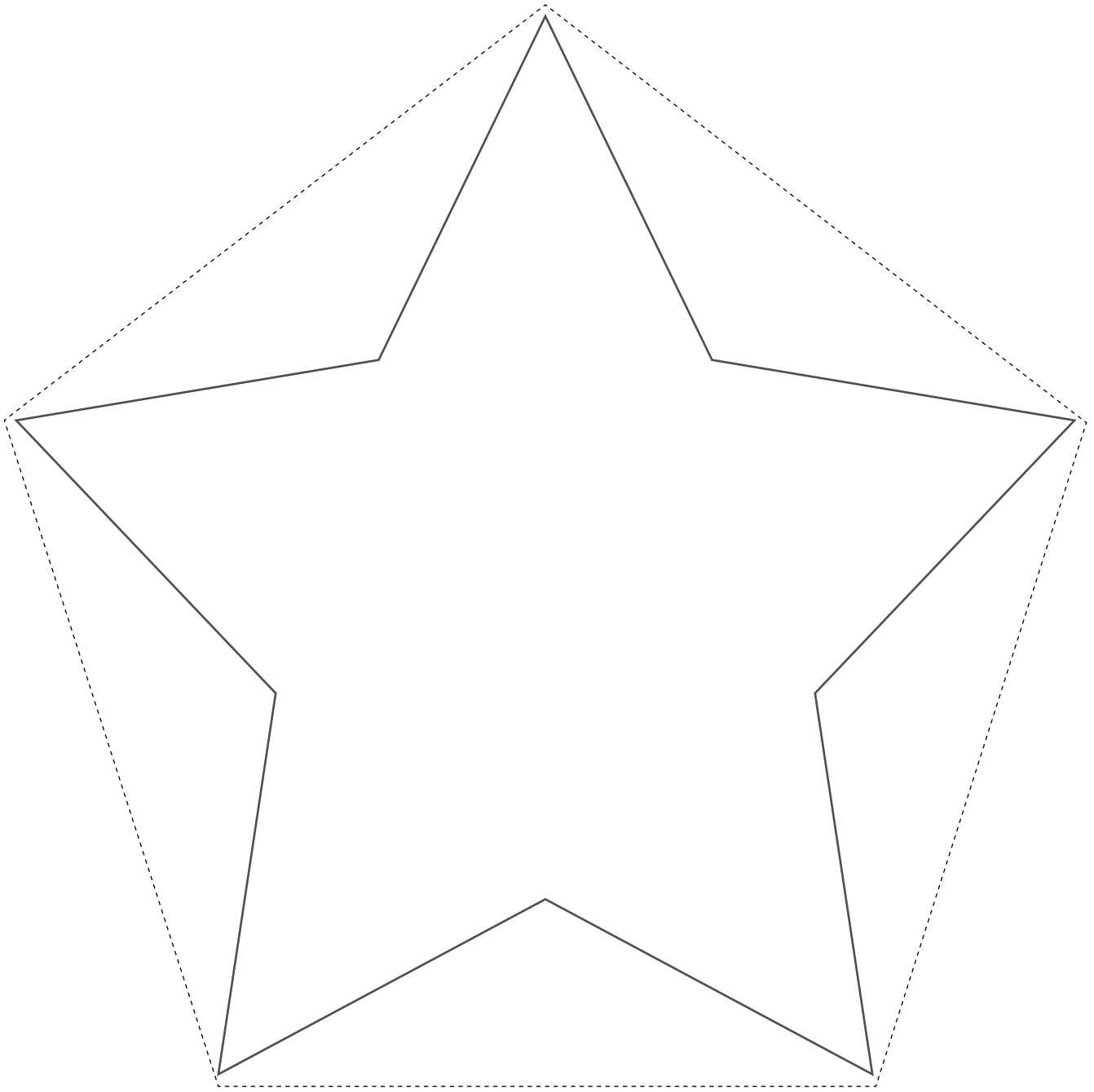
Dear God, thank you for the hopes and dreams you give us.
May we pay attention to your presence in our lives and make
a difference in our world. Amen.

As the children leave, send them by saying, “(Name), go and live
out the hopes and dreams God gives you.”

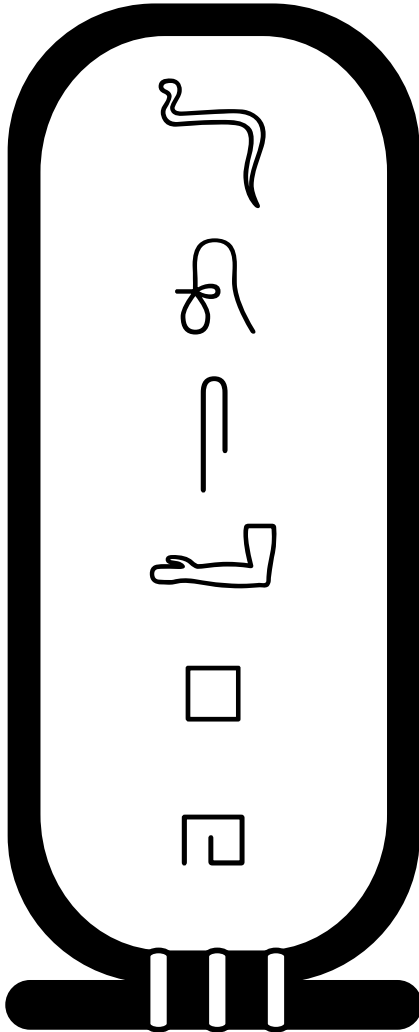
Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to
read the story during the week.



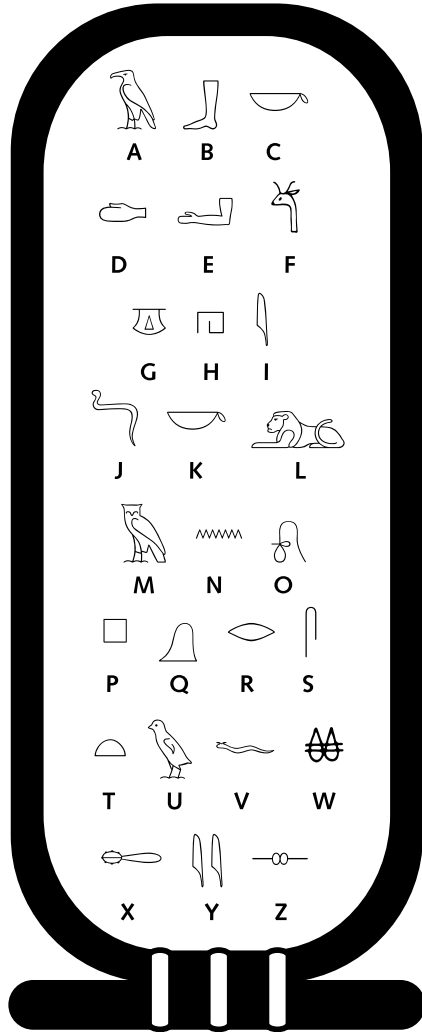
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).



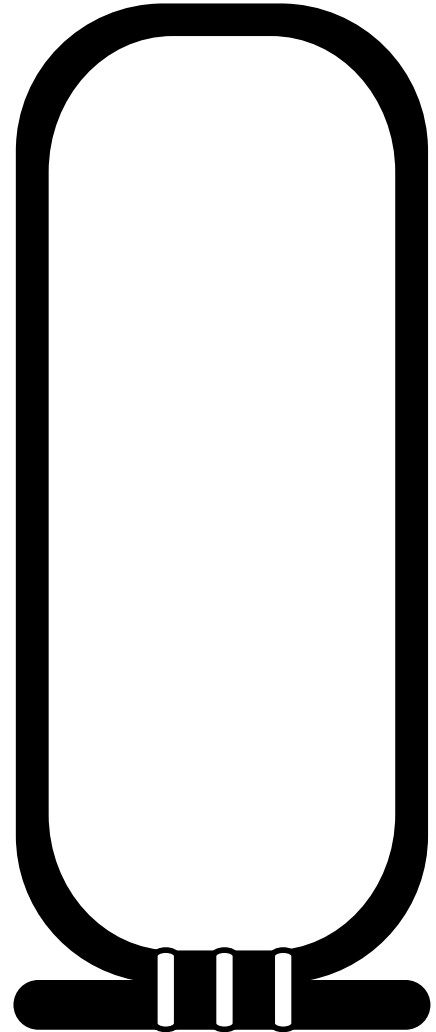
Joseph's Cartouche



Egyptian Hieroglyphics Alphabet



Your Cartouche



What bowed down to Joseph in his dream?

