



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, 4a, 17, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

natural or tan-colored
bedsheet

fabric crayons

simple costumes
(optional)

candle

Responding

Praying

sturdy paper plates

Offering

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

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 say “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

As they arrive, invite the children to prepare a worship space with a candle and Bible.

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.

Invite each child to use fabric crayons to decorate the bedsheet with many colors to represent Joseph. As the children color, cut out the stars on **SCM 4a**.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for a volunteer to practice reading the Scripture passage.

T Consider how much time your planned activities will take and adjust transition times according to remaining time available.

Singing **B** **L**

Gather on the bedsheet that represents Joseph’s coat. Encourage the children to make room for all. Sing “God’s Promises”—**SCM 17**. Invite the children to create simple movements that express the words.

Praying **L**

Turn on the candle as a reminder that God is present among you. 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 C

Explain that, in today's story from Genesis, Joseph's brothers were jealous of him. Invite the children to say the names of Joseph's brothers and sister on the stars from **SCM 4a** and lay them on the bedsheet.

Invite the group to briefly share ideas about dreams using some of the following questions: What are dreams like? When do we dream? How is a daydream different from or the same as the dreams we have while we sleep? What is hope? Is hope the same as or different from a dream?

Explain that one of the reasons Joseph's brothers were angry was because Joseph told them about his hopes and 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 LD

Invite a child to find Genesis 37 in the Bible. Suggest that the children listen for a hope or a dream they hear while the story is read. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 37:1–11. Conclude the reading saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Ask the children what hopes and dreams they heard in the story.

Reflecting on God's Grace B C

Invite the children to act out the story as you or one of the children reads **SCM 4**, a retelling of the story. 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. Wonder how God was active in this story.

- 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.*

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.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Celebrating God's Grace



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 create 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.



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, 3 to 5 holes at the bottom of the ring, and 6 to 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.*

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.



Seek the help of your congregation's mission and outreach committee to locate an agency that will receive the contributions.

Offering God's Grace



Explain that we respond to God's grace and love by helping others.

Invite the children to conduct a service project to conclude Year 1, Fall 6.

As a group, select a local mission agency to receive coats and a location where a coat tree will be placed in your church building.

Form three groups. Have one group create publicity posters on mural paper that can be displayed around the church, have a second group create a short article for your congregation's newsletter or an email blast, and have a third group write a script for an announcement that can be made during worship.

After donations are received, plan to give the coats to people in need. Be prepared to help the children think through the planning and organizing of the project. Ask each child to complete a copy of GN 1 to send home.

Since this project is over several sessions, be sure and remind the children next session and check on the project's progress.

LG *It's important to help children understand the need to share, act generously, and give freely. They learn that they are responsible for their part in creating a caring community. Kindness and generosity are contagious.*

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 ancient 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 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).

Dear _____,

We are growing in grace and gratitude this fall at church! We've learned about Joseph and the special coat his father gave him. To express our gratitude to God for all God's blessings, we are holding a coat collection for people who need them.

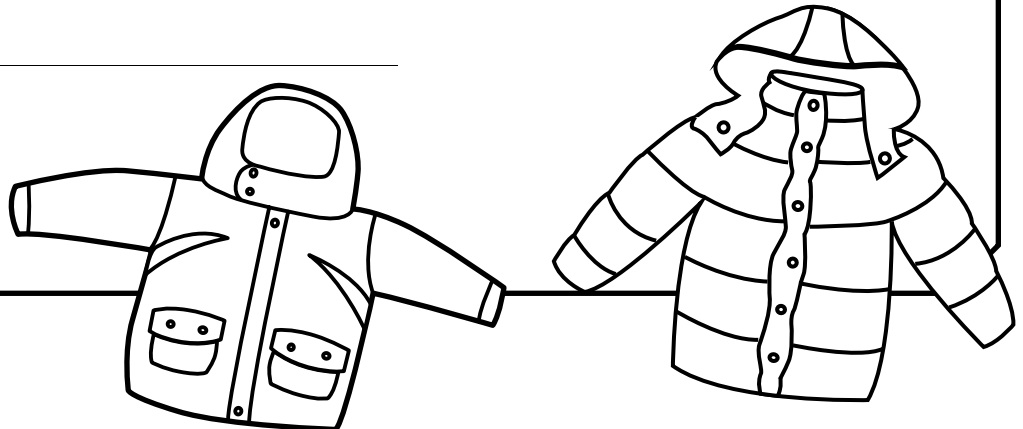
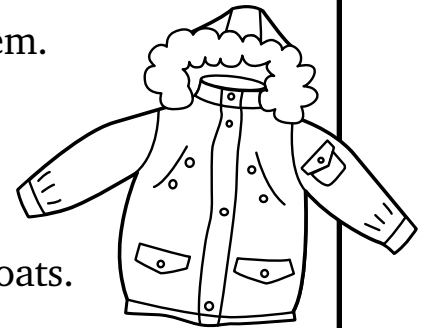
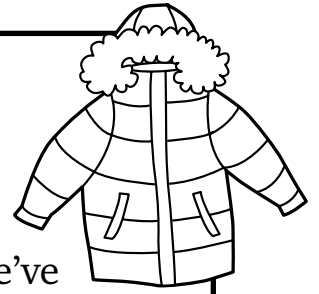
Over the next two sessions, we will plan ways to involve everyone in our congregation. We hope you will help us make a difference for people who need coats.

After _____, we will deliver the coats to a local agency
(insert date)
for distribution.

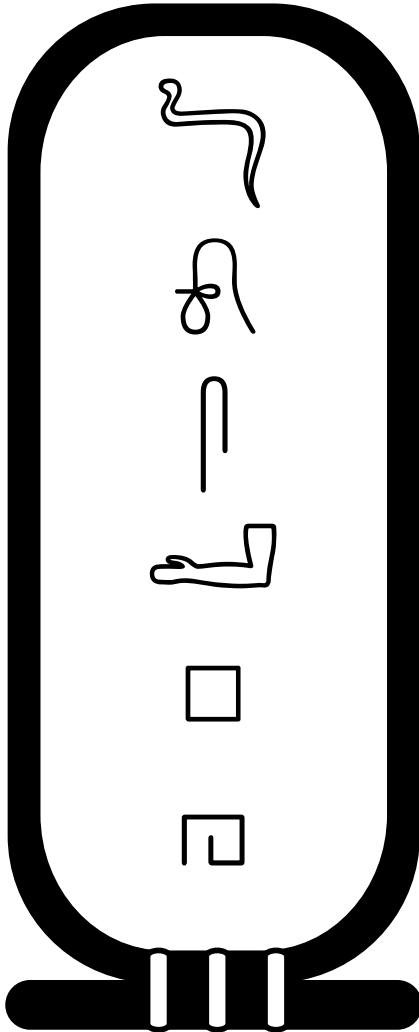
We're asking everyone to supply a new or gently used coat or jacket, for men, women, and children—in all sizes. Look for the collection drop-off in the church building.

Thank you.

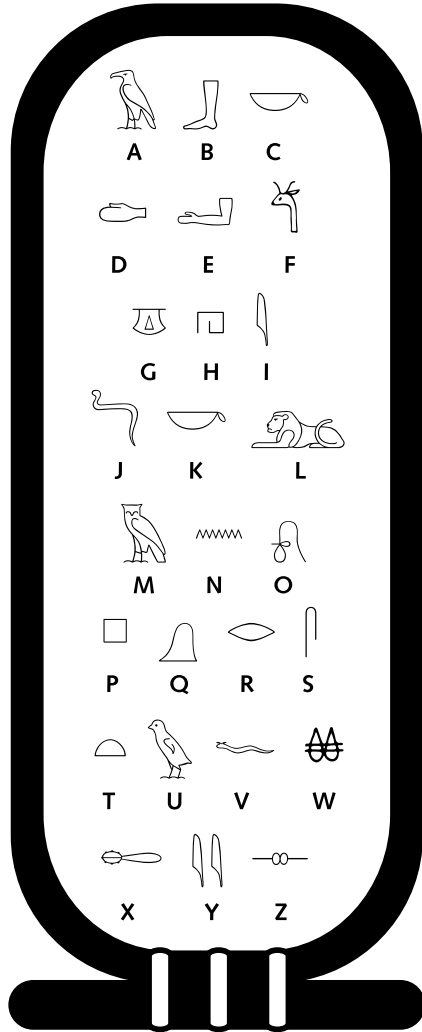
Sincerely,



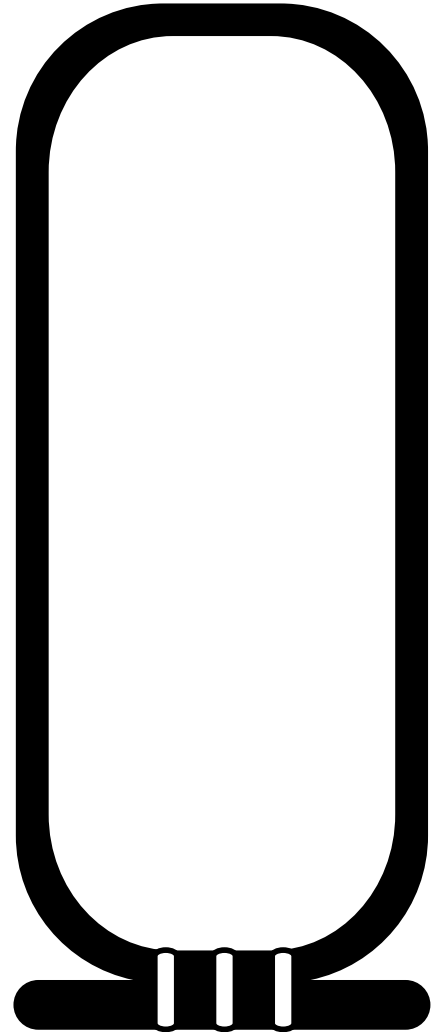
Joseph's Cartouche



Egyptian Hieroglyphics Alphabet



Your Cartouche



What bowed down to Joseph in his dream?

