

JOSEPH: FROM SLAVE TO DEPUTY PHARAOH

Bible Basis: Genesis 37:1–36; 39:1–23; 41:1–45:7

Key Verse: Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. ... You planned to harm me. But God planned it for good.” —Genesis 50:19–20, NIV

Bible Point: God worked things out for Joseph’s good. God knows what’s good for me.

Resource: *The Story for Kids*, Chapter 3: “Joseph: From Slave to Deputy Pharaoh”

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Get the children’s attention by mooing loudly. Get everyone to moo with you. Then give a signal for everyone to stop. Say, **Let’s see what you know about cows.** Ask the following questions and let the group guess the answers:

- **How many hours a day does a cow spend eating?** (Six)
- **How many gallons of milk does the average cow produce each day?** (Ten)
- **How long does a cow live?** (Up to 25 years)
- **How much does a cow weigh?** (1,400 pounds)
- **How much water does a cow drink in a day?** (As much as a bathtub full)
- **How many glasses of milk does a cow produce in her lifetime?** (200,000)

Then ask:

- **How are cows good for humans?**
- **If cows get too skinny, how does that affect humans?**

Say, **Cows are an important part of our Bible story today. Let’s find out what Joseph had to say about them.**

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of *The Story for Kids*, Bibles, From Pit to Palace Emotions Activity Sheet, pencils, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 3*

Give an Activity Sheet and pencil to each child. Tell the story from *The Story for Kids*, Chapter 3, pausing throughout the story for children to draw the emotions mentioned on their papers. Explain that they will use these circles to draw the emotions of Joseph and the other characters in the story. You can also have children find Genesis 37 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

From Pit to Palace

When you come to a word appearing in bold, pause and give the kids a quick moment to sketch the emotion in one of the circles on their paper.

Read Genesis 37:3–4. Joseph’s ten older brothers were **jealous**. (Pause and ask kids to sketch what “jealous” looks like.) One day the brothers had a chance to make Joseph **worried** (pause). Some of them wanted to kill him, but they threw him in a dry well instead. Imagine Joseph’s **surprise** (pause). Then the brothers decided to sell Joseph to a group of traders who were passing. The brothers were **glad** (pause) to be rid of Joseph, and that’s how Joseph ended up in Egypt as a slave.

Even though he was a slave, Joseph had a pretty good job in Egypt with a lot of responsibility. People depended on him, and he always did a good job. Then one day someone told some lies about him, and that’s how Joseph ended up in prison. I’m sure Joseph was **shocked** (pause) and **confused** (pause). But once again, Joseph did a good job and ended up with a lot of responsibility even in prison. He never gave up on being **hopeful** (pause).

After a few years, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, started having bad dreams about fat cows and skinny cows. He didn’t understand what these crazy dreams meant and was **puzzled** (pause) and **exhausted** (pause) from not sleeping. So Pharaoh asked Joseph. Joseph explained that the seven fat cows meant Egypt would have seven good years with plenty of food. But the seven skinny cows meant there would be seven bad years without enough food for everyone. Joseph told Pharaoh to save food during the good years to feed everyone during the bad years. Pharaoh was **pleased** (pause). Because of that great idea, Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of saving food. Read Genesis 41:39–40. Joseph could have been **proud** (pause), but he wasn’t.

Years later, people from all around came to Egypt looking for food. Joseph’s ten older brothers were part of that crowd. They had no idea what had happened to Joseph, and they didn’t recognize him. Joseph could have been **angry** (pause), but he wasn’t. Joseph had to turn away **crying** (pause). But Joseph didn’t tell his brothers who he was. Finally, though, Joseph couldn’t take it any longer. He wanted to show his **love** (pause). Read Genesis 45:3 (pause), 4–5. That’s how Joseph ended up saving his whole family with sacks and sacks of food.

When Joseph’s brothers put him in a dry well and then sold him as a slave, they wanted bad things to happen to him. Instead, God worked out everything so that good things happened for the brothers and lots of other people. God always has amazing ideas that we never think of!

When the story is finished, ask:

- How did God turn things around for good for Joseph?
- How would you like God to turn things around for good in your life?

Say, **Time after time, Joseph had to trust that God knew best. We can learn a good lesson from him!**

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 3*. Ask children to look at the picture and tell you about the emotion shown in the picture. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- **Tell me how God made something good come out of the bad things for Joseph.**
- **Why are the feelings in this Bible story important to understanding what God did?**

Collect the cards for now. You'll send them home with the children later.

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose any or all of these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

OPTION 1: STORY PICTURES

Stuff You Need: pictures or items representing parts of the story, paper bag

Before class, gather at least five pictures or items that represent different parts of the story. You might choose a colorful piece of cloth, an empty water glass, a pyramid, toy handcuffs, a stuffed animal cow, and a family picture. Place all these items in a paper bag. Let each child draw an item from the paper bag and explain what part of the story it represents. If you have more children than items, pair children up.

When each item has been explained, discuss how Joseph trusted God throughout the story. Then discuss how children could trust in God this week.

OPTION 2: FAT COW FOOD

Stuff You Need: paper lunch bags, colored duct tape, decorating supplies

Say, **God used the circumstances of Joseph's life to provide food for untold numbers of people. Joseph saved grain in warehouses then distributed it when the famine struck. Today we are going to make reusable lunch bags that will remind you of when Joseph gave his brothers sacks of food.** Give each child a paper lunch bag and ask them to cover the bag with duct tape and decorate it. On one side of the bag, have each child write, "God knows what's good for me." As they work, ask:

- **What things are happening in your life that you'd like God to turn into something good?**
- **How can God use what happens in your life to help others?**

Say, **God knows what's best and can use anything for good.**

OPTION 3: GOD KNOWS BEST DRAMA

Stuff You Need: Optional: Bible-time clothes

Have the children participate in a drama about today's Bible story. Let the children use their Bibles and *The Story for Kids* to help them, but encourage children to do the drama using their own words. When children use their own words, you can not only check their understanding of the Bible story, but the story and the lessons learned will stay with the children longer.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

At the end of the lesson, pray in small groups about situations the children would like to see God work for good. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 3*, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents' Page.