

Dreaming Big

Genesis 37 is the beginning of the story of how the people of Israel end up as slaves in Egypt, before the Exodus and their journey into the Promised Land. This story is not one of noble deeds; indeed, it is the opposite. Here is a story of family jealousy and deceit (again). The narrative is remembered in today's psalm as the writer highlights the hardship that Joseph endured before he became the salvation of the people of Israel.

Focus scripture: Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28

Jacob has twelve sons, they will become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is the story of Joseph, Jacob's son with his beloved wife, Rachel. It begins with family jealousy, something we might well imagine as we have gotten to know Jacob and his family in previous weeks.

Joseph gives "an ill report" of his brothers to their father. In response, Jacob doesn't defend or stand up for his other sons, rather he shows even more favouritism toward Joseph by giving him a special coat, one with long sleeves (not multi-coloured as a certain musical has it) in a style that suggests royalty. Tensions build further when Joseph tells his brothers about his dreams, in which he sees the whole family bowing down to him. Joseph is seen as an upstart, and his dreams are considered imaginings and not the divine messages they would later be revealed to be.

Joseph's brothers are working as shepherds in an isolated part of Canaan, and Jacob sends Joseph to check on them. With no one around to monitor or witness their actions, the brothers give into their anger and envy and plan to kill Joseph. Reuben argues against murder, and suggests that Joseph be left in "a pit," a hole dug by shepherds to capture rainwater. The others agree and strip Joseph's coat off him before tossing him into the pit. Reuben's intent was to

come back and rescue Joseph, but before this can happen Joseph is sold to passing traders and taken to Egypt as a slave. Through this strange salvation, Joseph is now in the place where he will become a saviour to the people of Israel.

Psalm 105:1–6, 16–22, 45b proclaims that it was God who sent Joseph to Egypt and gave him the gift of interpreting dreams.

As Joseph is rescued, so are the disciples in **Matthew 14:22–33**. Caught in a storm out on the lake, they experience a strange salvation. They are in fear for their lives when, suddenly, they see Jesus walking across the water toward them. Jesus is amazingly comfortable with the churning water, which, for the Hebrew people, was a symbol of chaos.

In **Romans 10:5–15**, Paul reminds us once again that God's saving love is for everyone, and all who hold the word of God in their hearts and proclaim it from their lips are saved. He recalls Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

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God's persistent presence and goodness to Abraham's descendants continues, despite their behaviour – they continue to show themselves to be so much less than perfect. Once again, we see God use the most unlikely of people to bring about salvation.



Focus scripture

Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28

Additional scriptures

Psalm 105:1–6, 16–22, 45b

Romans 10:5–15

Matthew 14:22–33



Seasons of the Spirit is based on semi-continuous readings of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Liberating God, we raise our voice with thanksgiving and praise for the presence of your spirit that is continually at work among saints and sinners, bringing into being the hope of your love and justice for all creation. Amen.

Lection Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

Most young children view the world around them as a delightful gift to them. They wake up every morning ready for new discoveries. Many experience the unconditional love of family and friends and will be able to identify with the love Joseph received from Jacob in this week's biblical story. Emotions like pride, jealousy, and anger also play a part in Joseph's story, but the focus of the session will be to highlight the positive side of Joseph's special status in the family, rather than his brothers' reaction to it.

In a time when families are dealing with challenges as varied as divorce, abuse, poverty, blending, and labour mobility, it is difficult to generalize about family dynamics. However, as you explore the story of how Joseph responded to his family situation, remember that some of the children in your group may be living with and reacting to situations of equal complexity and challenge. Pray that each child feels specially loved by someone, as Joseph was loved by Jacob, and that the children in your group will come to trust the promise of God's love, no matter where they are and no matter what is happening.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 57).
- ❑ Set a worship space with green cloth, candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Music CD*, and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring "Welcome Song" (on resource sheet ["Additional Songs and Poems,"](#) p. 82) or "Family Thank You" (p. 8 in *SGF Songbook*; #4 on *SGF Music CD*).
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ❑ Bring story figures of Jacob and Rachel (from poster [Storytelling Resources #1](#)) and figures of Joseph and the Brothers, and striped coat (from poster [Storytelling Resources #2](#)).
- ❑ Bring resource sheet ["Meet Joseph."](#)
- ❑ Cut out four large paper happy faces;

print one phrase around the edges of each face: God loved Joseph, God loves you, Your family loves you, and Your friends love you; bring recording of lively music.

- ❑ Bring song "I'm Loved" (on resource sheet ["Additional Songs and Poems,"](#) p. 82)

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ❑ **Headbands:** wide strips of card stock, craft materials (feathers, stickers); print "I am loved" on each strip.
- ❑ **Booklet:** copies of resource sheet ["Special Booklet,"](#) small self-sealing plastic bags (four per child), construction paper; follow instructions for preparing materials.
- ❑ **Sewing card:** yarn, cardboard (cut into 15 cm/6 in squares); print on each piece of cardboard "You are specially loved" and punch holes around the edges about 3 cm/1 in apart; cut yarn into 45 cm/18 in lengths and dip one end of each into glue to harden into a "needle"; tape the other ends to the backs of the squares.

Bless

- ❑ Bring "Blessing Song" (on resource sheet ["Additional Songs and Poems,"](#) p. 82) or "I Am Amazing" (p. 11 in *SGF Songbook*; #7 on *SGF Music CD*).

For groups consisting mostly of three-year-olds, supplemental resources can be downloaded from the Library at www.seasonsonline.ca.



Dreaming Big

Scripture

Genesis 37:1–4,
12–28

FOCUS To introduce Joseph, a dreamer, loved by his father and by God

Gather

Welcome each child, saying “Hello, *(child’s name)*, we’re happy you’re here.” Invite them to share experiences from the past week.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space. Light the candle, saying, “This candle reminds us of God’s love which is all around us.”

Pray Thank you, God,
for the stories in the Bible,
that help us learn about your love.
Thank you that we can be
with our friends here today. Amen.

Sing “Welcome Song” (p. 82) or “Family Thank You” (p. 8 in *SGF Songbook*, #4 on *SGF Music CD*).

Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

☐ Puppet conversation

Priscilla: Hi *(names each child)*. I’m feeling so happy today.

Leader: I’m glad you are, Priscilla. Is there any special reason?

Priscilla: My grandmother says she loves me and that I’m very special.

Leader: Sounds like you love your grandmother, too. Boys and girls, who thinks that you are special? *(Encourage responses.)* What are some of the ways that people can show how much they love someone? *(Encourage responses.)* Our story from the Bible today is about someone who felt very special. *(Say goodbye to Priscilla.)*

- ☐ **Feeling special** Invite children to name some of the people who love them and who make them feel special. What can we do with our hands to make someone feel loved and special? *(Hug, blow kisses to each other.)* What can we do with our faces to show how much we love someone? *(Smile, cheer, wink.)* Explain that this week’s story from the Bible is about someone who felt very special.

Engage

Before the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Genesis, and remind the children that we have been hearing stories from this first book of the Bible. Look together at the figures of Jacob and Rachel (from the poster [Storytelling Resources #1](#)) and recall that when Jacob ran away from home after playing a trick on his brother he went to visit an uncle and there he fell in love with Rachel and

they were married. This week we have another story about Jacob.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet “[Meet Joseph](#),” and the figures of Joseph, the Brothers, and the striped coat (from the poster [Storytelling Resources #2](#)) to tell the story based on **Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28**. Encourage the children to participate as indicated.

After the story

Game Show the large happy face with the words, "God loved Joseph." Then ask the children "Who loves you?" After they have called out several names, show the other three faces and read the phrases: "God loves you. Your family loves you. Your friends love you." Scatter the faces on the floor and start the music. Encourage children to dance around the faces. When the music stops,

the children choose a face to touch. Move to one face, read the face, and say each child's name that is touching that face. Repeat with the other faces. Start the music again and continue the game until children have had a chance to touch all three faces at least once.

Sing "I'm Loved" ("[Additional Songs and Poems](#)," p. 82)

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ☐ **Headbands** Jacob's colourful coat was a reminder of how much Jacob loved him. Distribute the prepared strips of cardstock and read the words "I am loved." Invite children to decorate their headbands with a variety of colourful craft materials. When completed, staple the edges of the strips together to fit around each child's head. Encourage children to wear their headbands as reminders of how much they are loved.
- ☐ **Booklet** Being loved specially means being loved all the time and everywhere, no matter what happens. Distribute materials and follow



instructions on the resource sheet "[Special Booklet](#)" to help children make the little booklets. Encourage children to have their families read the booklets to them often so that they can eventually "read" them on their own.

- ☐ **Sewing card** (*for older children*) As Joseph was special to Jacob and to God, we too are specially loved. Distribute the prepared sewing cards and read out the message on each card. Invite children to print their names above the message. Demonstrate how to sew around the cards. When children have finished, trim remaining yarn ends and tape them to the backs of the cards.

Bless

Gather in the worship space. Light the candle again and remind children that God loves them very much.

Pray Thank you, God,
for your BIG (*stretch arms wide*) love,
that is always with us
wherever we go. Amen.

Sing the "[Blessing Song](#)" (p. 82) or the song, "I Am Amazing" (p. 11 in *SGF Songbook*, #7 on *SGF Music CD*).

Send each child out with the words, "(Child's name), you are specially loved by God."

Reflect

If there were any children who were particularly sensitive to questions about how special and loved they are, how might you show love and concern for them?



Story Tip

Emotions are powerful. They give a story life, point to what is important, and help to shape faith. Pay attention to the emotional reactions of the children – obvious or subtle – since a feeling may be a child's key learning from an experience or a church session.

Meet Joseph

(based on Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28)

(Each time you hold up the figure of Joseph, encourage children to repeat after you the words in bold.)

Long ago Jacob had many children. One child was named Joseph. Jacob loved Joseph very much.

Meet Joseph, a son. *(Hold up Joseph.)* **Hello, Joseph, a son.**

Joseph worked at one job for the family. Joseph's brothers did other work for the family. *(Show brothers.)* Sometimes Joseph helped the brothers – but other times Joseph did not want to help.

Meet Joseph, a brother. *(Hold up Joseph.)* **Hello, Joseph, a brother.**

One day, Jacob gave Joseph a special coat. *(Place striped coat on Joseph.)* It was a beautiful coat with long sleeves. Joseph's brothers were angry. *(Show brothers.)* They wanted beautiful coats too.

Meet Joseph, with a special coat. *(Hold up Joseph.)* **Hello, Joseph, with a special coat.**

Joseph had dreams from God. When Joseph told his brothers about the special dreams, the brothers got angrier. *(Show brothers.)*

Meet Joseph, the dreamer. *(Hold up Joseph wearing striped coat.)* **Hello, Joseph, the dreamer.**

Joseph was a storyteller, *and* a tattle taler.

When Joseph told stories on his brothers, the brothers got even angrier. *(Show brothers.)*

Meet Joseph, the tattle taler. *(Hold up Joseph wearing striped coat.)* **Hello, Joseph, the tattle taler.**

One day Jacob sent Joseph to go and see his brothers. *(Show brothers.)* When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they remembered the things that made them angry. The brothers took Joseph's beautiful coat away from him. *(Remove Joseph's coat.)* Some traders came along. (Traders are people who buy and sell things.) The brothers had an idea. "Let's sell Joseph. These traders will take Joseph far, far away. Then we won't have to see him again." And so that's what the brothers did. Joseph went to Egypt, a land far away from his brothers. Joseph must have been very sad. Meet Joseph, very sad. *(Hold up Joseph.)* **Hello, Joseph, very sad.**

But God had a plan for Joseph.

Joseph was far from home, but God was with him.

And Joseph's brothers would see Joseph again.

Meet Joseph, loved by God. *(Hold up Joseph.)* **Hello, Joseph, loved by God.**



Special Booklet



God loves Joseph.
God loves me.

My family loves me.

My friends love me.

I am special.

Materials needed for each child

- four small self-seal plastic bags
- construction paper
- copy of this resource sheet.

Before session – for each child

- Cut out the set of four strips.
- Cut out the picture showing Joseph and the child.
- Cut out three construction paper sheets – the same size as Joseph and the child.
- Cut out a construction paper cover.
- Print “(Child’s name) is special” on the cover.

With the children

- Hand out a set of strips and read them to the children.
- Insert one strip into each self-sealing plastic bag.
- Decorate the figures of Joseph and the blank figures as themselves.
- Draw pictures or use colourful bright colours to decorate the remaining three papers.
- Insert each picture into a self-sealing plastic bag.
- Seal the bags (removing the air) and stack them together.
- Place a construction paper cover on top and staple together to form a booklet. (Note: don’t staple the opening edges of the bags.)
- Suggest to the parents that they read these books to their children often. Optional: these pictures could be periodically changed or photos of their children could be inserted as well.



ADDITIONAL SONGS AND POEMS

WELCOME SONG

(tune: "London Bridge")

Gather round with us today,
to sing and pray, to learn and play.
Gather round with us today,
God loves us in every way.

BLESSING SONG

(tune: "London Bridge")

God is with us as we go,
as we go, home today.
God is with us as we go.
God loves us in every way.

GOD'S LOVE

(tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")

God's love for me goes on and on,
on and on, on and on.
God's love for me goes on and on,
everywhere I go.
(Repeat song using the words "you" and
"us" instead of "me.")

I CAN SING AND PRAY

(tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

I can sing and pray and grow.
I can draw and laugh and throw.
I can push and pull and lift.
I can choose to share my gifts.
I can sing and pray and grow,
all because God loves me so.

I'M LOVED

(tune: "Head and Shoulders")

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes, knees and toes.
Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
all of me is loved!
(Other verses: Wiggly fingers, wiggly
toes... Eyes and ears, and mouth and
nose... Neck and elbows, hips and
feet...)

LISTEN, LISTEN

(tune: "London Bridge")

Listen, listen, God loves us,
God loves us, God loves us.
Listen, listen, God loves us,
God helps us to be friends.

SLEEP LITTLE BABY

(August 23)

Sleep little baby (close eyes and lay
head on folded hands),
safe in my arms (hug arms around
self).
I'll hug and rock you (cradle arms and
rock back and forth),
and keep you from harm (pretend to
hug a baby).
Hush little baby (put finger to mouth
and say "Shhh"),
don't start to cry (wave finger back
and forth and shake head),
I'll hug and rock you (cradle arms and
rock back and forth),
'cause I love you, that's why! (Fold
arms over heart.)

