



God Preserves Joseph

Genesis 37



LESSON GOALS

Students will learn that God cares for His people.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved his other sons.
- Joseph had a dream that he would rule over his brothers.
- Joseph's brothers were jealous and angry.
- Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave.
- God still had a plan for Joseph.
- God's plan is always good.

KEY VERSE

"And his brothers said to him, 'Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?'"
(Genesis 37:8).

APPLICATION

- Confess anger and jealousy.
- Speak true words with the right motive and at the right time.
- Trust and honor God, even when you have problems with others.

NEXT WEEK

God Delivers Joseph
Read Genesis 39–50.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

4

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are

- _____
- _____
- _____

Materials Needed

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

When evil is allowed to go unchecked, God sometimes uses a traumatic experience to force the evildoer to consider the ramifications of his deeds. The person is forced out of isolated subjectivity and confronted with objective evidence of the turmoil he has caused others. That is exactly what happened in Genesis 37.

Throughout the book of Genesis, we have seen that each patriarch’s importance to God’s plan depended on his having children and teaching those children how to properly relate to the Lord. The period leading up to marriage and childrearing was important because the nature and strength of a man’s faith was crystallized during this time. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were relatively old when they began having children (respectively, 100, 70, and about 85). Therefore, their relationship with the Lord and the faith they would pass on the future generations had plenty of time to mature. Although Genesis 37 portrays the relationships among Jacob’s sons, it is the “history of Jacob” in the sense that Jacob’s relationship with God influenced his dealings with his children and their dealings with one another. Isaac was still alive and would continue to live for another 12 years, but the story of God preparing a people was now in Jacob’s hands.

After returning from his experiences with Laban at Haran, Jacob moved to the area east of the Jordan. He then migrated west, to the land God had given Abraham 150 years earlier. Jacob had come to love 17-year-old Joseph, the son of his old age, more than he loved any of his other sons. Joseph’s mother, Rachel, had died, and Joseph must have looked to Jacob for the reassurance and protection he formerly had received from her (Gen. 33:7). A loving bond had formed between father and son. It seems that Joseph was more like his father in spiritual commitment than were his brothers.

Joseph was an amateur shepherd, not yet experienced enough to rank higher than a servant. The negative report he carried to Jacob about his brothers reflects his close alliance with his father—a closer alliance than the other sons enjoyed. In a family where bitterness had existed among the four wives for years, the father’s use of one son to gather evidence about the others could serve only to further fracture the already divided household.

In Genesis 37, Jacob demonstrated his love for Joseph by giving him a multicolored tunic. This communicated that Joseph was to become the ruler of the family and an heir to special blessings. But the tunic quickly became a curse. It brought jealousy into the already strained relationship between Joseph and his brothers. The brothers’ hatred became so intense that they could not say a kind word to Joseph. They silently seethed with hatred for him, as well as for Jacob.

With this context in mind, it is easy to understand why Joseph’s brothers received his dreams as they did. The Hebrew literally says, “They added still to hate him.” In Joseph’s first dream, the brothers’ sheaves demonstrated their inferiority to Joseph’s sheaf by making obeisance to it. Needless to say, the dream was not

Additional Reference Materials

The MacArthur Study Bible by John MacArthur

Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis by John J. Davis

received well. Joseph was much younger than his brothers and thus enjoyed much less status. "Do you really expect to reign over us?" they asked.

Then Joseph had another dream and again rushed off to tell his brothers. In this dream, the sun, moon, and 11 stars were making obeisance to him. When Jacob heard about the dream, he scolded Joseph but continued to ponder the meaning of the dreams. After this, Joseph's brothers went to feed the flocks in Shechem. In the past, Jacob had not allowed Joseph to journey northward with his brothers to graze the sheep. Now, however, he sent him out for a report on their welfare and progress.

Joseph finally caught up with the others after an 80-mile trek from Hebron to Dothan. The brothers may have been forced to move from Shechem for lack of water. (The cistern they would throw Joseph into was completely empty.) Before Joseph arrived, they plotted to kill him. Based on Joseph's later discussions with his brothers at the reunion (Gen. 42:24), we might surmise that Simeon was the ringleader in this proposal. They mocked Joseph, saying, "Here comes this master of dreams." They planned to kill their brother and throw his body into one of the deep cisterns. Reuben saved his life, suggesting that they instead simply throw him into a cistern and leave him there to starve. He intended to help Joseph escape later on. Reuben strongly asserted that they should not even strike Joseph. When Joseph finally reached them, the matter already had been decided, and the decision was quickly carried out. Joseph's cloak, the symbol of all they hated about him, was taken from him, and he was cast into the large cistern.

Soon the brothers noticed a caravan of Ishmaelites traveling from Gilead toward Egypt. The caravan carried medical remedies, as well as a variety of gums that the Egyptians used for embalming. Judah, the brother who ultimately demonstrated higher character than the rest, suggested that they sell Joseph to the caravan as a slave, a fate just short of death. He used language reminiscent of the murder of Abel by Cain. Blood was regarded as an element that cried to God for vengeance and would, therefore, have to be covered up. Joseph was sold for 20 shekels of silver.

When Reuben returned to discover what had happened, he was horrified. He had done too little, too late. He was responsible as the oldest son, and yet he had failed to protect his brother. Reuben was not a leader, despite his sibling position. The brothers dipped the cloak in goat's blood to provide an excuse for Joseph's disappearance, and they gave it to their father.

On receiving the garment, Jacob refused to be consoled and wanted to join his son in death. He put on sackcloth, the coarse garment of mourning. The depth of Jacob's sorrow seems to have brought out his sons' more generous side. They must have misjudged his love, and they probably feared that their evil deed would indirectly kill their father. While Joseph was being sold to the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguards (literally, the "slaughterers" or "executioners"), his brothers' guilt welled up as they watched their father mourn. Bickering had led to jealousy, anger, hatred, bitterness, and even attempted murder. What initially had seemed to be a minor problem was completely out of control because Jacob's sons had failed to deal with their feelings when they should have. The brothers saw in their father's haggard face the inevitable outcome of unconfessed jealousy and strife. They never forgot that sight. Their surprise at his reaction and concern for his life led them to repentance. The next time we see them, there will be no trace of animosity among them.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth”
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

What twin brothers did we learn about last week?

Jacob and Esau.

Why was Jacob afraid to see his brother Esau?

Jacob was afraid that Esau was still mad at him and would try to hurt his family.

What did Jacob do when he was afraid?

Jacob prayed to God, remembered God’s promises, and asked God for help.

What happened that made Jacob walk with a limp?

The “Man,” who was the Lord God, wrestled with Jacob all night and touched Jacob’s hip, putting it out of joint.

What happened when Jacob and Esau saw each other?

They hugged and cried because they were so glad to see each other.

What did Jacob do when he arrived at Bethel again?

He built an altar and thanked God for keeping His promise to bless him.



Fancy Robes

Bring brightly colored robes, coats, shawls, capes, or sweaters for the students to try on. Have a large mirror available for them to see how they look. The Bible lesson will tell us about a beautiful robe that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph.



Magnet and Colors

Cut out small squares of colored construction paper, and attach a paper clip to each. Mark a line on the floor, and place the squares behind it. Let the students take turns “fishing” for colors with a magnet on the end of a string. When they get a color, they can glue it onto the shape of a coat that has been drawn on a piece of butcher paper. Watch the coat become beautiful with colors. Tell the students that Joseph will receive a coat of many bright colors in the Bible lesson today.



Leaf Family

Bring a selection of small leaves to class. Let each student choose 12 leaves to glue onto his paper. Use markers and crayons to draw a head, arms, and legs onto the leaf “bodies.” These represent Joseph and his 11 brothers. Have the students count the leaves. Name two or three of them—Joseph, Reuben, and Judah. It is from the name “Judah” that we get the name “Jew.” The Jews were God’s blessed people.



No Room for You Here

During the Point time, have a helper go from table to table (or seat to seat). At each table, he should be rejected from joining in because there isn’t room for him. As you gather for the Bible lesson, ask the students, “Was it fair not to let Teacher ___ join the table? Did Teacher ___ let it discourage him? No; he just worked harder and didn’t let it bother him. Joseph is treated unfairly in our story today. Listen and find out how he acts.”



Large Box

Bring a box that one student can comfortably fit in. Have him crawl in and, if he agrees, close the top so it will be dark inside. The Bible lesson tells of Joseph being thrown in a deep well, where he was alone in the dark. Ask the student how he feels about being inside the dark box.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included to use during worship time. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Genesis 37.

Last week, we learned about Jacob going back to meet his brother Esau. Was God with Jacob? Yes, He was, so Jacob didn’t have to be afraid. This week, we’re going to learn about Jacob’s son, Joseph. Some scary things are going to happen to Joseph, but he doesn’t have to be afraid either because God is with him, too.

Jacob had a big family when he returned to the promised land of Canaan. He had 12 sons. [Count to 12 on your fingers.] One of Jacob’s 12 sons was named Joseph. Can you say “Joseph” with me? [Repeat several times.] Joseph was Jacob’s next-to-youngest son.

Joseph had 11 brothers and one sister. Joseph and his brothers all lived in tents that were close together. Do you think you would always get along with all those brothers and sisters? No, probably not. Sometimes children in a family get jealous and feel that their parents like one brother or sister better. That is what happened

to Joseph and his brothers. Jacob loved Joseph very much. In fact, Jacob loved Joseph more than all his brothers. It is wrong to favor one child over another, but because Joseph was one of the youngest, Jacob gave him a gift that the other boys didn't get.

Jacob gave Joseph a special robe to wear; it was much better than the plain ones that his brothers wore. When Joseph walked around, you could see him from far away because that special robe was brightly colored. Joseph probably loved his robe and wore it as much as he could. [Pretend to put on a fancy robe and admire yourself.]

Joseph had a dream one night. He dreamed that he was a tall bundle of grain. His brothers also were bundles of grain. That sounds funny, doesn't it? The bundles of grain all bowed down to Joseph. The next day, Joseph told his brothers about the dream he had. They did not like the dream. They did not like Joseph thinking that they would serve him, their little brother. This made them mad.

Joseph's brothers hated him when they saw him wearing his fancy robe. One day, when Joseph was about 17 years old, his brothers were out in the field taking care of sheep far away from Hebron. Because they were a long way from home, Jacob asked Joseph to go check on his brothers and see if they were all right. Joseph obeyed and went to find his brothers. He put on his beautiful robe and walked to the fields.

When the brothers saw him coming toward them wearing that robe, they couldn't stand it anymore. They said to one another, "Let's kill him and say that a ferocious animal ate him." It was not right for the brothers to be jealous and angry and hateful, but that is how they felt. The oldest brother, Reuben, said, "Let's not kill him. Let's put him down in this deep well." The well didn't have water in it, but it was deep and dark. Reuben planned to go back to the well later and get Joseph out.

Poor Joseph! It was cold and dark down in that hole. He felt alone, but God was with him wherever he went. Joseph could hear his brothers talking about him. Joseph listened and cried out to his brothers, "Reuben! Judah! Please help me! Please!" But they would not.

While the brothers were eating, they looked up and saw Midianite traders with camels loaded with spices on their way to Egypt. "Let's sell Joseph to the traders," said Judah, one of the brothers. Then Joseph would be gone, and they wouldn't have to see him anymore. Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave for 20 pieces of silver. [Count out 20 silver coins in your hand.] He was taken to Egypt, all by himself. [Walk your feet slowly with a sad look on your face.] He didn't speak the language. Joseph felt alone because he was away from his family, but he wasn't all alone, was he? Who was with Joseph? God was with him, and this was part of His plan for Joseph. Much later, Joseph would realize that God used this terrible event for the good of many people. Even when bad things happen to us, we can trust that God has a good plan.



Lesson Questions

Did Jacob have a favorite son?

Yes. He loved Joseph more than he loved his other sons.

Why did Joseph's brothers hate him?

Jacob favored Joseph and gave him a special robe to wear. Joseph's brothers were jealous and wanted to kill him.

What happened to Joseph when he went out to the fields to see his brothers?

Joseph's brothers put him into a deep well and then sold him as a slave to

Midianite traders who were traveling to Egypt.

Was God with Joseph?

Yes. Even though these bad things happened, God was with him.

Is God with you when bad things happen?

Yes. He has a plan, even when bad things happen.



Questions from the Well

At the end of the Bible lesson, pull the lesson questions out of a “well,” or have the questions written on numbered stripes that the students can pull off a robe. Read the questions, and see whether the students can remember the story.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



That’s Not Fair

Ask a student or teacher to move a box to the corner of the room. Then ask that same person to move the garbage can over by you. Next, ask him to bring your Bible to you. Do this several times. Then ask the students whether you are being fair. Discuss with them that things don’t always happen fairly. It is how we react to unfairness that is important. In the Bible lesson, Joseph will show us how to act when treated unfairly.

Praise and Worship

God Is So Good

He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands

In His Time

Rejoice in the Lord Always

This Is the Day

Trust and Obey



Joseph’s Dream

Joseph had a very strange dream.

(Hold hands to face; close eyes.)

His big brothers were not pleased.

(Shake head back and forth; make fists with hands.)

Joseph said, “We were in the field.

(Point to right.)

We all were binding sheaves.

(Make wide circles with outstretched hand, as if wrapping an imaginary object.)

My sheaf stood up straight and tall.
(Stand up stiffly with arms at sides.)

And yours all bowed down low."
(Bend at waist.)

They said, "Will you rule over us?"
(Point out; then point to self with thumb.)

And their jealousy did grow.
(Start with hands close together; then spread hands out wide.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



4
5

My Multicolored Tunic

Before class, cut several large brown paper bags into vest shapes. Depending on how many students typically are in class, you can prepare one for each student or use one vest per table. Have the students cut various shapes and sizes of construction paper with decorative-edged scissors. Then glue the pieces all over the paper bag to make Joseph's coat.



4
5

Joseph in the Well

Color the bottom half of a piece of white construction paper brown to represent the ground around the well. Cut a four-inch slit at the top of the dirt, in the middle of the page. Let the students make a Joseph figure by covering a wide tongue depressor with a piece of cloth. They can tape yarn on the tongue depressor for hair. Tape Joseph to a piece of yarn that is strung between a reinforced hole in the middle of the top and bottom of the page and tied together at the bottom. Pull the knot up, and Joseph goes into the well.



Stop Sign

Explain to the students that Joseph's brother Reuben knew it was wrong to kill Joseph. He told his brothers to throw Joseph into the pit instead. He knew this was wrong as well, but he did not stand up for what was right. Have the students make a stop sign to remind them that they should stand up and say "no" when someone tries to convince them to do wrong. Have the students cut an octagon from a piece of red cardstock. They may need an outline to help them cut the right shape. Next, have them paint the word STOP on the paper with quick-drying white paint. Give them pieces of white masking tape to make a frame for the sign. For a handle, have them glue a wooden craft stick to the back of the sign.



5

Paper-Chain Brothers

Give each student an 8.5 x 14-inch piece of paper. Have him fold the paper in half six times. Give each student a simple cutout of a boy to trace on the paper. After



4
5

tracing, have him cut out the boy. When each student unfolds the paper, there should be a total of 12 boys. Have each student color a multicolored tunic on one of the boys to represent Joseph.

“What to Do” Flap Page

This lift-the-flap page is easy to make on a home computer. At the top of the first page, type the title “What to Do When Trouble Comes.” Beneath the title, make eight text boxes of equal size, evenly spaced on the page. In four of the boxes, type the word “Do,” and in the remaining boxes, type the word “Don’t.” Copy and paste these boxes onto a second page. On the second page, write one of each of these words or phrases in a “Do” box: *trust God, pray to God, sing praises to God, and remember Bible verses*. In the “Don’t” box, type one of each of the following: *get mad, complain, strike back, and doubt God*. In class, give each student a copy of both pages. Have the students cut the boxes on the first page so they will open like flaps. Then have them glue the top sheet to the bottom sheet.

The students can draw pictures inside each of the boxes to represent what they should and should not do. For younger students, find clipart pictures for each action and copy them into the second page “Do” and “Don’t” boxes.



Coloring Sheets

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of this lesson. The students can color the pages in class or at home.

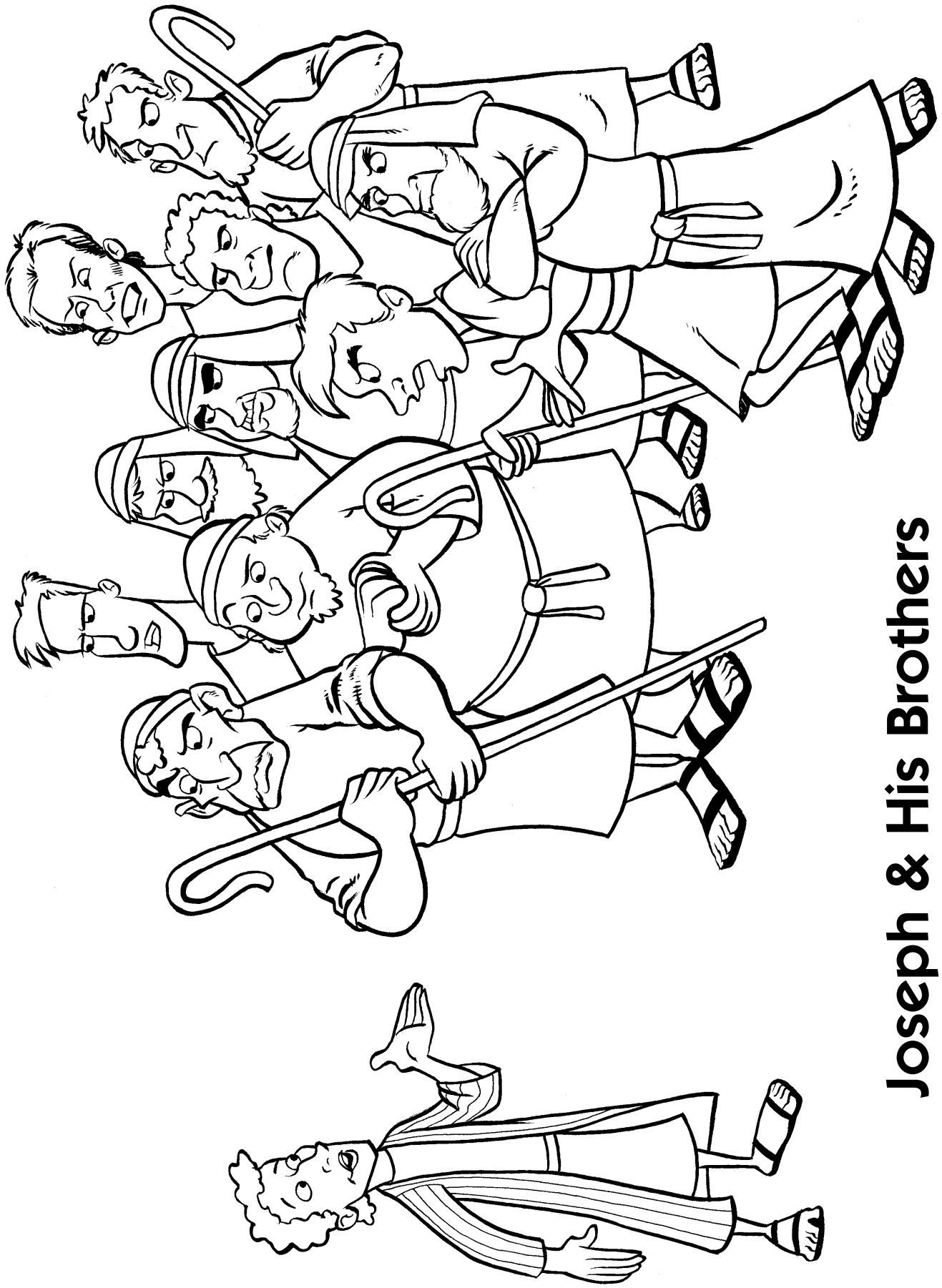


MEMORY-VERSE

“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:20).

Memory-Verse Game

Tape a butcher-paper “robe” on the wall, and have the students toss a beanbag at Joseph. Have them try to hit a certain color on the robe. Another option is to have the students toss a beanbag down the “well” to Joseph or at a camel that was taking Joseph to Egypt. As the student throws, everyone can say the memory verse.



Joseph & His Brothers



**“Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers;
and they hated him even more”
(Genesis 37:5).**



Joseph's brothers took his coat and threw him into a pit and then sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:18–28).

