



# STORIES AND RITUALS

## LESSON 3

### Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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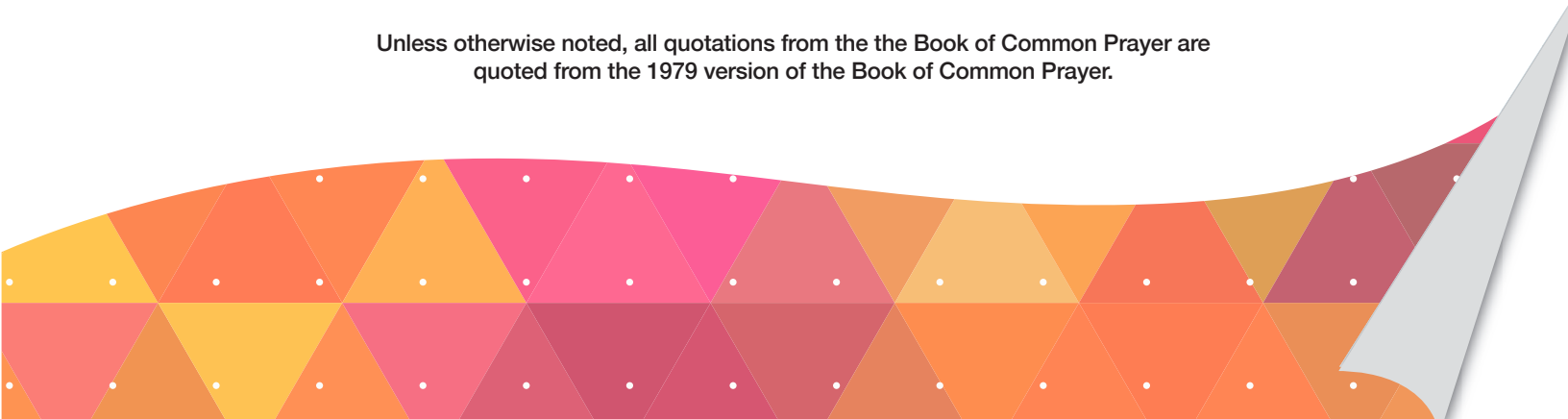
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# God Uses Joseph for Good

**Texts:** Genesis 37:12-36; 39-41

**Big Idea:** God is with us in times of struggle.

## Lesson Objectives

### Participants will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of leaning on others by completing a challenge as a group.
2. Recognize God's presence during times of struggle by hearing a re-telling of the story of Joseph.
3. Explain God's presence in their own struggles by writing and offering a letter to God.

### ACTIVITY (TIME)

Dive In (10 minutes)  
**Group Check-In**

Community Builder (15 minutes)  
**Back to Back**

The Story (15 minutes)  
**God Uses Joseph for Good**

The Ritual (15 minutes)  
**Offering Our Struggles**

Dig Deeper (10 minutes)  
**Always Present**

Wrap it Up (5 minutes)  
**Closing Prayer**

### MATERIALS NEEDED

• Nothing

• Nothing

• Copy of Lesson Sheet 3.1

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Pens or pencils (1 per person)
- Paper
- Envelopes (1 per person)
- Basket

- Objects to make an obstacle course
- Blindfolds (1 per person)

• Nothing

# LESSON OVERVIEW



## What's the Story?

Today your group will explore the story of Joseph in Genesis 37:12-36 and chapters 39-41. Joseph was one of the sons of Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, but favored Joseph more than the others. This favoritism led Joseph's eleven other brothers to hate him and show jealousy. In today's story, your group will hear how Joseph's brothers sold him to slavery in Egypt, and how God used Joseph's hardship to ultimately save the Egyptian people from terrible famine.

This story is important in the narrative of the Old Testament. Joseph is the link that connects the movement of God's people from the land of Canaan (where Jacob's family lived) into Egypt (where the Israelites would eventually be enslaved). Today's lesson only focuses on one small part of the entire Joseph narrative. To read the complete story of Joseph, skim through Genesis chapters 37 through 46.



## What's the "Big Idea?"

Today's lesson focuses on the big idea that *God is with us in times of struggle*. In today's story, Joseph faces several different hardships. First, he is sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers. Then, when he becomes successful working in the house of Pharaoh's officer, he is deceived and thrown in prison. Joseph doesn't seem to have much luck! However, God remains faithful to Joseph and helps Joseph use his gifts and talents to win the favor of Pharaoh. At the end of the story, Joseph overcomes his struggle and becomes an officer himself.



## What's the Symbol?

The symbol for this lesson is a large container of grain. Fill a large, clear container with rice, wheat, or other whole grain and set it on the altar. In the story, Joseph wins favor with Pharaoh after successfully interpreting the king's dream about the coming famine in Egypt. Joseph becomes an officer in charge of overseeing the gathering of food (grain) during the seven years of prosperity prior to the start of the famine. This container of grain is a symbol of Joseph's success and prosperity after God's faithfulness helped him overcome his struggles.



## What's the Ritual?

Today's ritual will encourage participants to think about their own personal struggles and help them find strength to overcome these struggles by offering their thoughts and prayers to God. Participants will do this by writing their thoughts, feelings, and prayers in a letter to God, sealing it in an envelope, and offering it at the end of the ritual.



## Setting Up Your Space

Set up your "altar" area. Cover a large table with a piece of fabric or linen. On the altar place a cross, some candles, and the large container of grain. Place a basket in front of the altar to collect participants' letters during the ritual. Have paper, envelopes, and pens or pencils accessible (you may wish to display them on the altar, too) for the ritual.

## DIVE IN (10 MINUTES)

### Group Check-In

#### Materials:

- Nothing

#### During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:  
**Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**
- **This week we have all faced our own joys and struggles. What are some of the struggles you faced this week? What are some of the things that helped you get through these struggles?**  
Invite youth to share their responses. You may wish to share both low points and high points of the week.

## COMMUNITY BUILDER (15 MINUTES)

### Back to Back

#### Materials:

- Nothing

#### During the session:

- **Today we're going to try to overcome a challenge together. I need two volunteers to start.**
- Pick two volunteers to start the game. Have them sit on the floor, back to back, linking arms. Invite them to stand up while leaning back to back, without touching the floor.
- Once these two people have completed the challenge, ask a third person to join the group. Have them sit in a circle on the floor, facing away from each other, linking arms. Invite them to stand up together.
- Once these three people have completed the challenge, include a fourth person and try the challenge again. Continue adding one person to the group each time the challenge is completed.
- Continue playing the game until the whole group is standing up together. The team's goal is to get everyone standing!
- **What were some of the obstacles you faced while completing this challenge? How did you overcome these obstacles?** [Answers will vary.]



# THE STORY

## (15 MINUTES)

# God Uses Joseph for Good

### Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 3.1

### Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 3.1.
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

### During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 3.1.
- After the story, ask: **What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: God is faithful to us when we face struggle; God will always be with us; God will always provide for us when we need it.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: We face trials and struggles in our lives; when we face struggles, we turn to God for help and comfort.]*
- **What is this story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: The world is filled with trials and struggles; living is not easy.]*
- **Joseph did not live an easy life. He was sold into slavery by his brothers and thrown into jail after being accused of something he didn't do. Even in these difficult times, God was faithful to Joseph and used him for good and to help the Egyptian people.**



# THE RITUAL

## (15 MINUTES)

### Offering Our Struggles

#### Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Pens or pencils
- Paper (one per person)
- Envelopes (one per person)
- Basket

#### During the session:

- If you have not done so, light the candle on your altar area. If you are playing music, begin playing it softly.
- **Our world is full of struggles. We all face them: conflicts with people, lack of resources, and doubt in faith... these things exist.**
- Give each group member a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen. **Think about some of the struggles that you face on a daily basis. What are some of your “lows” or things that challenge you? Write these things as a prayer in a letter to God.**
- Give the group time to write.
- As the group finishes, read Philippians 4:13. **Life is hard. We all face difficulties. But, when we bring these struggles to God, we find new strength. Our faith in Jesus gives us the strength and courage we need to tackle anything!**
- Hand each person an envelope. **In a moment, I am going to invite you to fold your letter to God and place it in the envelope. Then, seal the envelope. This is your personal message between you and God. We will then bring our struggles to our altar and offer them to God.**
- Invite the group to seal their letters into the envelopes. Then, invite students to come forward one at a time and “offer” their struggles to God. After everyone has offered their letter, continue.
- **You don’t have to share anything you wrote if you don’t want to. However, I do want to give you the chance to share some of your struggles and how God has helped you through them. What are some of the challenges you have faced, and how has God proven faithful to you during these times?** *[Answers will vary. Make sure to create a safe space for the group to share.]*

# DIG DEEPER

## (10 MINUTES)

### Always Present

#### Materials:

- Objects to create an obstacle course
- Blindfolds (one for every two people)

#### Before the session:

- Find objects to create an obstacle course. You can use chairs, cones, etc. The course should be set up in a large space in a way that people can easily maneuver around the objects.

#### During the session:

- Invite the group to split into pairs.
- Give one partner a blindfold. Have each of these partners put on the blindfold and stand at the start of the obstacle course. Have the second person in each pair stand next to their blindfolded partner.
- One at a time, instruct the pairs to go through the obstacle course. The non-blindfolded person must successfully guide their partner through the course using only verbal commands (they cannot touch their partner).
- Once each of the blindfolded partners has completed the course, switch so the second person now wears the blindfold. Send them through the course, using the same rules.
- **What struggle did you face going through this obstacle course?** *[Not being able to see.]* **What helped you get through this struggle?** *[Your partner helping you; your partner telling you where to go.]*
- **How was having your partner to help you through your struggle like having God to help you when times get tough?**

# WRAP IT UP

## (5 MINUTES)

### Closing Prayer

Invite the group to share any prayer concerns or requests they may have for the week. Close your time together in prayer. Use the following or pray your own prayer:

**Almighty God, you were with Joseph in both times of pain and times of prosperity. Help us see your hand at work in our daily lives, even when we face our own struggles every day. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

# Lesson Sheet 3.1

## God Uses Joseph for Good

### (Genesis 37:12-36; 39-41)

Joseph was loved by his father, Jacob. He was loved more than his eleven brothers. This made his brothers very jealous. Joseph could also interpret dreams. One day, he told his brothers about a dream he had. He said to them, "I dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." This made his brothers even more jealous of him, because they didn't like the idea of bowing down to their brother.

Jealousy led the brothers to do something that was unjust and unkind. One day, Joseph was sent to check on his brothers, who were tending his father's sheep. As he approached his brothers, they said amongst themselves, "Let's kill him, throw him in this ditch and say that a wild animal did it. Then we'll see what will happen to all of his dreams!"

But Reuben, one of Joseph's brothers, heard what the others were plotting and said, "Don't kill Joseph. Maybe you should think about just throwing him in the ditch?" (Later, Reuben would save Joseph and take him home.)

So, the brothers listened to Reuben. When Joseph approached, they took off his robe and threw him into the ditch. Then, as they sat down to eat, a group of Midianite traders traveling to Egypt approached them. Judah, one of the eleven, said to his brothers, "Instead of killing him, let's sell Joseph." So Joseph's brothers sold him to the traders for twenty pieces of silver. The traders took Joseph to Egypt. He was sold as a slave to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officers. God was with Joseph as he worked Potiphar's home, and Joseph became very successful. However, Joseph's success didn't last long. Joseph was tricked by Potiphar's wife and was thrown in prison for being unfaithful to his master. But God was still with Joseph, and he was still successful.

A while later, the Pharaoh sent both his cupbearer and baker to prison because they had offended him. They ended up in the same prison as Joseph, and he was asked to wait on them. One morning, the cupbearer and baker woke from their sleep after each having a strange dream. When Joseph saw their distress, he asked them to describe their dreams. Joseph told the cupbearer he would be released from prison and return to his job. To the baker, Joseph said that Pharaoh would hang him in front of the other servants. Three days later, these things happened to them.

Two years later, Joseph was still in prison, and Pharaoh had a dream. Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing near the Nile, and there were seven healthy cows standing before him, and seven ugly and scrawny cows appeared and ate the healthy ones. Then, Pharaoh dreamed a second dream: seven healthy ears of grain were devoured by seven unhealthy ears of grain. Pharaoh woke up confused. He sent for his magicians and interpreters, but none of them could interpret the dream.

The cupbearer heard of Pharaoh's problem. He told Pharaoh about Joseph and the correct interpretation of his and the bakers' dreams. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and asked Joseph to interpret his dreams. Joseph said, "God has revealed what is about to happen to the people. Right now, the land of Egypt will have seven years of prosperity. There will be plenty of food. Then, the country will have seven years of famine, and the land will not yield enough food. To survive the famine, you should prepare now by saving food." Pharaoh was impressed with what Joseph had said to him. Pharaoh asked Joseph to oversee the saving of food for during the famine.

Joseph was released from prison and became an officer of Pharaoh. During the years of prosperity, Joseph collected food and stored it for the people of Egypt. There was so much food they couldn't keep track of it all! Then, the seven years of famine descended upon the land, and people from every country travelled to Egypt to buy food from Joseph, for the people of Egypt were the only ones prepared. Even in times of trouble and distress, God was with Joseph, and used Joseph for good in the land of Egypt.