

Monday
Genesis 37

Jacob loved his son Joseph more than any of his other 11 sons. Jacob had a robe of many colors made for Joseph. The other brother saw that Joseph was their father's favorite, and they hated Joseph because of it. Joseph's brothers could not even talk to Joseph without getting angry.

Something else made the brothers hate Joseph, too. It was his dreams. Joseph told his brothers that, in his dream, they were all tying up bundles of grain in the field. Joseph's bundle stood up straight. And all the brothers' bundles gathered around Joseph's bundle and bowed down to it.

His brothers said, "Do you think you'll reign over us? Do you really think you're going to rule over us?" And Joseph's brothers hated him even more.

Then Joseph had another dream. He told this one to his brothers and to his father. In this dream, Joseph said, "The sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." Even Joseph's father scolded him for sharing this dream and implying that they would all bow down to him.

A short time later, Jacob sent Joseph out to check on his brothers, who were taking care of their sheep far from home. Joseph's brothers saw him coming. "Here comes the dreamer," they mocked. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." When Joseph came to them, the brothers tore off his many-colored robe and threw him into a pit.

Later, the brothers saw some Ishmaelite slave traders coming with their camels. These foreign men bought and sold many things. They were on their way to the great country of Egypt. Instead of killing Joseph, the brothers decided to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelite traders and make money off of him. The brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for 20 pieces of silver. The Ishmaelites then took Joseph with them to Egypt.

To hide their sin, the brothers lied to their father about Joseph. They dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in goat blood and brought the robe home to their father Jacob. He knew it was Joseph's special coat. Seeing the blood, Jacob was sure a wild animal had killed Joseph.

The angry and jealous brothers kept their secret, and Jacob was sad for a long time. He did not know that Joseph was still alive or that God would use Joseph in Egypt many years later to save people's lives.

Even though Joseph had many troubles, God always was with him, preparing him for the big job God wanted him to do. Joseph's dreams came true – he became a great ruler and a deliverer in the country of Egypt. Because Joseph trusted in God and his faithfulness, God used Joseph in a mighty way to save his people from famine and starvation. One day, many, many years later, Jesus was born. He was descended from the people that Joseph saved from starving.

• **Can you think of a time in your own life when God took something bad and turned it into something good?**

Close with prayer.

Tuesday
Genesis 39

Joseph was one of Jacob's sons. His brothers were jealous of him because Jacob loved him best and because God gave him dreams that Joseph interpreted as promising him an important future. In his dreams, Joseph saw that someday he would be a great ruler. He didn't know when it would happen, but he knew God had plans for him.

One day, his brothers sold Joseph to slave traders. The traders took Joseph to the great country of Egypt, where they sold him as a slave. So Joseph now lived far away in Egypt, working as a slave for a rich army officer named Potiphar.

Joseph worked hard for Potiphar. The Lord was with Joseph, and everything Joseph did turned out well. Joseph's master, Potiphar, saw this. So Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his whole house, all of his workers, and all of his things. The Lord blessed Potiphar and all he had because of Joseph.

One day, Potiphar's wife was feeling lonely and bored, and tried to get Joseph to sin with her. Joseph knew that Potiphar would not want him to sin with his wife. Joseph told Potiphar's wife that her husband trusted him. "How then could I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Joseph asked her.

Day after day, Potiphar's wife kept talking to Joseph, trying to get him to sin with her. Day after day, Joseph would not listen to her. One day, when her husband was away, Potiphar's wife grabbed Joseph by his shirt and asked him once again to sin with her.

Joseph refused to sin with her and ran away. But she held on to his shirt and it came off in her hands. Potiphar's wife began to scream and cry. The servants came running. Potiphar's wife lied and said that Joseph had attacked her and tried to hurt her. She told them that when she had screamed he ran away, leaving his shirt there with her. When Potiphar came home, his wife told him the same lie.

When Potiphar heard his wife's story and saw Joseph's shirt in her hand, he was angry. Potiphar locked up Joseph in the king's prison.

When Joseph was in prison, just like when he was in Potiphar's house, the Lord was with him and showed him faithful love. The keeper of the prison also liked Joseph and put him in charge of all the prisoners. Just as God had done in Potiphar's house, the Lord now made everything that Joseph did in prison turn out well. Even though Joseph had many troubles, the Lord was always with him, caring for him, and blessing him. Today, no matter how scary or hard life can be, we know that Jesus had promised that he will never leave us or forsake us.

- **What did Joseph do when Potiphar's wife wanted him to sin with her?**
- **What should we do when someone tempts us to sin?**
- **Where else in the Bible is someone accused of something he did not do wrong?**

Close with prayer.

Wednesday
Genesis 40-41

While Joseph was in prison, a couple of Pharaoh's (the king's) servants got in trouble and were put in prison. Pharaoh's cupbearer and his baker were the ones imprisoned with Joseph. One night, both the cupbearer and the baker had dreams that troubled them. Joseph told them that only God knows what dreams mean, but that God sometimes told the meanings of dreams to Joseph. Joseph asked them to tell him about their dreams.

In the cupbearer's dream, he saw a grapevine with three branches, which grew buds and then clusters of grapes. The cupbearer squeezed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup, making wine for him. Then the cupbearer gave the cup of wine to Pharaoh. Joseph said that the three branches were three days. The dream meant that in three days Pharaoh would free the cupbearer from prison and give him back his job. Joseph asked the cupbearer to tell Pharaoh about him, so that Joseph could get out of prison, too.

Then Joseph listened to the baker's dream. The baker dreamed that he was carrying three bread baskets on his head. The top basket was full of baked foods for Pharaoh, but birds were eating the food. Joseph explained to the baker what his dream meant – that in three days the baker would be killed for what he had done wrong.

Three days later, the chief cupbearer got his job back, but the baker was hanged. All this happened just as Joseph had said. He remained in prison, but God did not forget about him. One night two years later, Pharaoh had two mysterious dreams. He wanted to know what his dreams meant. Finally, the cupbearer remembered that Joseph had explained his dream, and he told Pharaoh about Joseph. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, who was brought from prison to the palace to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph told Pharaoh that God would reveal to him the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams.

In Pharaoh's first dream, seven plump, healthy cows came up out of the river. Seven ugly, scrawny cows came up after them. The seven skinny cows are the seven fat cows. In Pharaoh's second dream, seven full ears of grain grew. Then thin ears of grain grew and swallowed up the good grain.

Joseph told Pharaoh that God was showing him what God was going to do. The seven good cows and the seven good ears of grain meant there would be seven good years for farming. Right after the good years, though, seven bad years would come – there would be a great famine throughout all the land of Egypt and the surrounding area. Joseph advised Pharaoh to put someone in charge of saving up food during the good years, so that the people of Egypt would not starve to death during the famine years.

Pharaoh chose Joseph. Pharaoh asked Joseph to be in charge of saving up food. He made Joseph the highest ruler in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh – his right-hand man. Pharaoh gave Joseph fine clothes, a golden ring, and a special chariot. During the seven good years, Joseph worked hard at storing up grain. He stored so much that it could not even be measured! When the seven years of famine began, Egypt had plenty of food.

God used Joseph to keep people from starving in the famine – and to save Joseph's own family, from which God's only Son, Jesus, would one day be born. Jesus would be an even greater Savior, not just saving his people from famine and starvation, but saving them from sin and hell, and giving them eternal life.

- **Why can we trust God even when bad things happen?**

WEEK TWENTY-SEVEN – JOSEPH

Thursday

Jacob's sons hated their brother Joseph. They sold Joseph as a slave. Then they tricked their father. They dipped Joseph's coat in goat's blood and showed it to Jacob. Jacob thought a wild animal had killed Joseph.

But Joseph was still alive! God was with Joseph in good times and in bad times. In Egypt, the slave traders sold Joseph to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar's wife wanted Joseph to do something that was wrong. She tried to coax him and coax him. She tried to get Joseph to sin, just as the serpent tried to get Adam and Eve to sin long before in the Garden of Eden. But Joseph would not listen. One day, Potiphar's wife told a lie about Joseph, so Potiphar put Joseph into prison. But God blessed Joseph even when he was in prison. There, Joseph met Pharaoh's butler and baker. The butler and baker both had dreams.

God told Joseph the meaning of their dreams. Then Pharaoh let the butler get out of prison. Later, Pharaoh had a dream. The butler told Pharaoh about Joseph. Pharaoh asked Joseph, "Can you tell me what my dream means?" God told Joseph the meaning of Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh made Joseph a ruler in Egypt. When Joseph's family was without food, Joseph saved them all by giving them the food they needed.

Joseph forgave his brothers for being mean, and he brought his family to live with him in Egypt. Jesus forgives all that we have done wrong and will bring us to live with him someday in heaven.

- **What did Joseph do when Potiphar's wife coaxed him to sin?**
- **How can God keep you from sin when you face temptations?**
- **How can Jesus help you when you slip and you do sin?**

Dear Jesus, forgive me when I slip away from you. Send your Spirit to show me the right path and keep me in your grace. In your name I pray. Amen.

Friday

Genesis 42–46; 50:18–21

Joseph's family had run out of food because of a great famine throughout the land. Because there was food in Egypt, Jacob sent 10 of his sons on a journey to buy some food there. When the brothers arrived in Egypt, they bowed down to the ruler of Egypt, who was in charge of selling the grain. They didn't realize or recognize that ruler was their brother Joseph, whom they had sold into slavery! Joseph didn't have a beard anymore like the last time when they saw him. He looked like an Egyptian now. But Joseph recognized them.

Joseph sold them grain, but he made one of them, Simeon, stay in prison while the rest went home. Joseph said that Simeon could go free if the brothers brought their youngest brother, Benjamin, back to Egypt with them.

When the brothers arrived back home, they told their father Jacob about the ruler in Egypt and his desire to meet Benjamin. Jacob said he would never let Benjamin go to Egypt. But when the family ran out of food again, Jacob had no choice but to allow his youngest son to go to Egypt with his brothers.

When Joseph saw Benjamin with his brothers again (he was especially happy to see Benjamin), he still did not tell them who he was. Instead, he prepared a great feast. Then, when it was time for the brothers to go home, Joseph had his servant secretly place Joseph's special silver cup in Benjamin's pack.

The next morning, the brothers started on their way home again. Soon, they saw Joseph's servant coming after them. When the servant caught up with them, he asked them why they had stolen his master's cup.

The brothers said they had not stolen it, and opened their packs to prove it. But to their great surprise, the cup was in Benjamin's pack! The brothers went back to Joseph, and bowed down in respect before him once more.

Joseph said that the one whose pack had the cup inside would need to stay in Egypt and be his servant. The rest of them could go home in peace. One of the older brother's, Judah, stepped forward. He told Joseph that if they went home without Benjamin, their father would die of sorrow. He asked Joseph to please let him stay and be his servant instead.

Then Joseph could no longer keep his secret hidden. "I am your brother Joseph," he said, "whom you sold into Egypt." He told them that it was God who had sent him there to save lives during the famine. Now they must hurry home and get Jacob and the rest of the family, because the famine would continue for five more years.

All of Jacob's family and servants, 70 people in all, went to live in Egypt. They had plenty to eat through the rest of the famine years. But Joseph's brothers were still afraid of him. Joseph told them not to be afraid. "As for you, you meant to harm me," he told them, "but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done – the saving of many lives."

Joseph could forgive his brothers because he knew that God had used even the terrible things that they did to him to bring about good. God had sent Joseph to Egypt to get ready for the famine. In this way, God kept alive the family from whom the Savior would one day come.

Close with prayer