

Joseph

The Dreamer

Making The Bible Come Alive

Who was this person?

- Joseph as the son of Jacob (who God gave the name “Israel”) and his mother’s name was Rachel. They lived in the land of Canaan. Joseph was Rachel’s firstborn and Jacob’s eleventh son (that’s a lot of boys!)
- Joseph was the second youngest child, with ten half-brothers, one full brother, and at least one half-sister. Jacob’s twelve sons would become the founding fathers of the tribes of Israel.
- Of all the sons, Joseph was his father’s favourite. The preferred treatment that Joseph received didn’t go well with his other siblings.
- Joseph was a well-built and handsome young man (Genesis 39:6)
- The story of Joseph is told in Genesis chapters 30 through 50.



What is this person known for?

- Joseph received a very special coat from his father, Jacob. It was an original design, a one-of-a-kind creation made from many different colours of bright fabric. (Genesis 37:2-3)
- His brothers became so angry and even jealous of Joseph that they wanted to get rid of him due to their father’s special treatment of their younger sibling. (Genesis 37:4)
- Not only did God speak to Joseph through dreams, God also gave him the ability to interpret the meaning of them. In one dream, Joseph revealed that he would become a leader and his family would bow before him! (Genesis 37:5-11) This revelation seemed to send the brothers over the top with anger and they wanted revenge. None of the boys had the courage to outright kill him, so they stripped Joseph of his special coat, threw him in a cistern (well) then sold him for 20 shekels of silver to a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants who were on their way to Egypt. Joseph was only about 17 when this occurred. (Genesis 37:19-28) Then they took Joseph’s coat, killed a goat and dipped the coat in the blood to disguise their terrible actions against their brother. Joseph’s brothers could have won an academy award as they presented Joseph’s soiled and bloodied coat to their father, lying to him by





saying Joseph had been killed by a lion. Jacob was heartbroken. (Genesis 37:31-35)

- After much travelling for many days, Joseph ended up in the land of Egypt. He was sold as a slave and ended up working in the home of Potiphar, who was one of Pharaoh's officials in Egypt. God was with Joseph as he worked hard and earned the trust and favour of Potiphar. He was given great responsibilities, ruling over the daily operations of this household. (Genesis 39:1-6)
- Potiphar's wife, thought Joseph was attractive and tried to entrap him into a compromising situation. Joseph resisted as he knew she was the wife of his employer and it was not right for him to be in a relationship with her. Time and again, she tried to tempt him yet God gave Joseph strength to refuse her deceitful words and advances. After being rejected many times, she accused Joseph of harming her and making improper advances towards her. While trying to escape one day from Potiphar's wife, she grabbed him by his coat. He tried to escape so quickly that his coat was left in her hand! Potiphar's wife lied as to why she had Joseph's coat. She told her servants that Joseph had come to sleep with her, but that was not true! Sadly, Potiphar believed his cunning wife. (Genesis 39:7-20) Potiphar was so angry. He felt betrayed by a young man whom he had valued that he ordered for Joseph to be tossed into prison.
- But, even while in prison God was with Joseph. The prison warden put Joseph in charge of everything that went on there. While there, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt landed in prison and one night they each had dreams. Sure enough, Joseph encountered these two men and asked them why the 'worried faces'? They revealed their puzzling dreams and Joseph gave them the meaning. The cupbearers' dream was a good report and he was reinstated to his position. (Genesis 40:9-15) Unfortunately, things didn't go so well for the baker as he ended up being hanged to death, as was the interpretation of his terrible dream! (Genesis 40:16-22) Joseph had asked the men to remember him and put in a good word to the king. The cupbearer forgot all about Joseph when he was freed and unfortunately the baker died.
- Joseph continued to serve the prison warden when one day Pharaoh had a dream that was troubling to him. As he spoke about his dream to his staff, the cupbearer all of a sudden remembered Joseph, the man who revealed the meaning of his dream that occurred two years prior.

(Genesis 41:1-13) Joseph was summoned before Pharaoh to interpret the ruler's dream. (Genesis 41:14-37)

- Almost 13 years after being sold by his brothers, Joseph was elevated to second-in-command over the entire land of Egypt, and he was only 30 years old! Talk about a promotion! (Genesis 41:39-43) For the first seven years of his rule things were plentiful just like Joseph revealed from Pharaoh's dream. Crops and grain were stored and provisions were made to sustain the nation for the seven years of famine. (Genesis 41:44-56)
- As the famine spread over the whole country and surrounding lands Joseph's wisdom and good planning enabled Egypt to prosper even more as people travelled from far distances to buy grain from the storehouses of Egypt. His brothers were some of the travelers who would make this trip to buy supplies. (Genesis 42:1-7) Joseph recognized his brothers, but because he was now the governor who sold the food to the people, and was dressed differently, they didn't recognize him. He looked like, dressed like and spoke like an Egyptian. Oh, how the tables had turned!
- By his comments and questions Joseph appeared to be very suspicious of their actions. He accused them of being spies but they assured Joseph they had traveled to buy grain. (Genesis 42:8-18) After a few days of questioning, the brothers felt they were somehow being 'punished' for what they did to Joseph all those years before. Joseph continued to 'play' with them, as he said the only way to prove their honesty was to leave one brother behind in prison, and go back to take the grain for their households, but then return bringing back their youngest brother so he could confirm what they were saying so they would not be killed. (Genesis 42:19-22) Joseph took Simeon into custody and sent the brothers on their way with their grain sacks full and all their money returned. They were shocked when they looked into their bags on the trip home! (Genesis 42: 24-27)
- Joseph was moved by his brothers' guilty actions but he didn't let his guard down. The brothers returned to Egypt when the food ran out. As Joseph demanded, they also brought the youngest sibling (Benjamin) with them, much to their Father's great dismay. The brothers also brought some of the finest 'gifts' from Canaan to hopefully 'butter-up' this harsh ruler (Joseph) as well as extra silver to pay back the money returned to their sacks. (Genesis 43:1-23)
- When Joseph met the brothers and his youngest brother, Benjamin, his heart was moved, and he had to run out of the room and gain his composure. (Genesis 43:24-31)
- When they were preparing to leave, Joseph had his special silver cup planted into the bag of Benjamin. When Joseph found out





where the cup was discovered, he ordered Benjamin to be taken as a slave for this act of theft. The brothers begged Joseph for mercy, explaining that if Benjamin didn't return home their father would die. (Genesis 44)

- Joseph couldn't control himself anymore. He certainly didn't want to cause more pain to his beloved father. He ordered all the staff out and revealed himself to his brothers. They were shocked! Joseph knew that even though their actions were meant for evil, God turned it around for their good! (Genesis 45: 1-10)

WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PERSON HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN GOD'S STORY?

- **God still speaks to us.** As a young man, God spoke to Joseph in a dream. God STILL uses dreams to speak to people. God will use a variety of methods to communicate with His children. The messages He brings to people will be unique and special. It might be a message for the person who had the dream (the baker and the cupbearer). Or perhaps the dream is for someone else (Pharaoh and the land of Egypt). Throughout Scripture God gave dreams and visions to younger and older people! (Joel 2:28; Proverbs 29:18; Job 33:15; Acts 2:17; Daniel 1:17; Matthew 1:20)
- **God will never leave us:** I am sure at the age of 17, when your brothers sell you to a band of strangers who take you to Egypt you, too, might feel scared and alone. However, Joseph was confident that God would always be with him. We can be confident of that too! (Deuteronomy 31:8; Hebrews 13:6; Genesis 28:15; Joshua 1:9; Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 139:1-18; Romans 8:35-39)
- **God will make ALL things work together.** It is a safe bet that Joseph did suffer even though we don't read about it. I am sure he cried himself to sleep many nights. However, deep inside he somehow knew that the God of Abraham, Isaac and his father, Jacob, was a faithful God. Even though he suffered, he probably knew deep down that this God that he served was at work, doing things behind the scenes and that He would bring ALL the details together at the right time! God is always working out the details of our lives when we trust Him to. There is a song called "Waymaker" that speaks of this very thing. It says...
- Even when I can't see it, You're working. Even when I can't feel it, You're working. You never stop, You never stop working. You never stop, You never stop working.
- Even when I can't see it, You're working. Even when I can't feel it, You're working. You never stop, You never stop working. You never stop, You never stop working.

- Waymaker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the darkness, My God, that is who You are!
(Romans 8:28, James 1:17; Ephesians 3:20; Psalm 139:7-10; Luke 12:6-7)

- **Work hard at whatever you do:** Whether working in the fields of Canaan tending sheep, working in Potiphar's house, the prison, or the biggest mansion in Egypt, Joseph gave his best and earned a good reputation and the favour of each person he worked for. Whether it be cleaning your room, washing the dishes, or singing a song in church, ALWAYS work hard and do your best. It might not seem like an exciting or important job, but God will honour you and elevate you at the right time, for giving your best efforts. (Colossians 3:23-24; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 15:58; Hebrews 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:15)

- **Obedience will always bring blessings:** When Joseph refused to give in to Potiphar's wife's advances, she claimed that Joseph mistreated her. Joseph didn't defend himself or call her a liar. Even though he did what was right, he was put in prison. But that didn't bring him defeat. He stood by his convictions and he honoured God by his life choices. Thirteen years is a long time to wait for a promotion, but with each step of Joseph's life he was learning something for the next season. As difficult as they were, each of his experiences gave him exactly what was needed to save the country of Egypt and surrounding nations, and especially his own family. We never know what lies ahead, but God does. Ask Him to lead you and guide you each and every day. When things are difficult, we must remember the words of Joseph to his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." Genesis 50:20 (ESV)

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Pose the following two questions to your children, one at a time. Allow for interaction and discussion, letting them share their thoughts while you guide the conversation.

- What life lessons can I learn from this Bible character about how I should and should not live?
- Based on what I have learned from this Bible character, how can I live in a way that is pleasing to God.

MORE IN GOD'S WORD

Look up the following verses. Describe how they speak of having perseverance and what comes as a result of being faithful and holding onto what God is doing:



Romans 12:12—
Colossians 1:11-12—
Galatians 6:9—
Revelation 3:10—
Revelation 2:10—
James 1:12—

