

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

Joseph



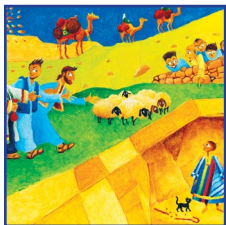
Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

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Joseph and His Brothers 9
Genesis 37:1-36



Joseph Helps His Brothers 21
Genesis 42:1-2; 44:1-5, 16-46:7



Joseph Helps Out in Egypt 15
Genesis 39-41

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🌱 **Goal:** To explore anger and big feelings within families and how to love and live as families.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

The book of Genesis is full of stories about family rivalries—Jacob and Esau, Cain and Abel, and Sarah and Hagar, to name a few. As we all know, tensions or conflicts are a part of life in a family. As you read this story in your Bible, pay attention to both the background of the story and the actions of the brothers. In their culture, it was normative for the firstborn son to be favored and to receive a majority of his father's inheritance. In this story, we read about how Jacob favored his youngest son, Joseph. It was this favoritism and Joseph's response to it that provoked his brothers' plot to get rid of him. Think about viewing this story from the perspective of one of the characters: Jacob, Joseph, or maybe one of the brothers, such as Reuben, who wrestled with the decision his brothers had made. The story raises questions about privilege, family relationships, and the results of our behavior.

For additional reading on this passage, visit bit.ly/GLJosephsDream.

Connecting with the World

- 🌱 What recent news items reflect similar disagreements within families or other groups? What is the source of the conflicts? What similarities and differences do you notice?
- 🌱 What help is available in your community for families who are experiencing disagreements or conflict? For example, some churches offer space where divorced parents can meet to pass their child or children into the other's care. Some churches offer day care for adults with dementia, offering a few hours of respite for their caregivers.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

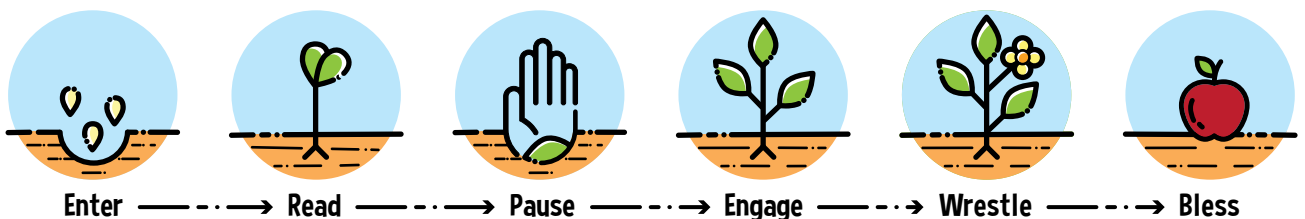
Note that this story falls in the "Rivalries" section of *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. Children know what it's like to compete. Siblings can disagree and even fight with one another like in this story of Joseph and his brothers. Family systems changed by divorce or remarriage must reorganize and help children find their place in the new structure. When children grow up in families where faith is nurtured at home and in a faith community, their spiritual formation is alive and well. When children know that their honest questions and feelings can be heard and acknowledged, they grow up knowing they are beloved children of God.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

Families sometimes have serious disagreements about issues such as politics, race, gender, and faith. Family members who all call themselves Christians sometimes experience different perspectives on how faith is both understood and expressed. Just as with Joseph and his family, people of faith face hard conversations, ones in which there seem to be no way to resolve differences.

We grow spiritually when we hang in with family conflict and when we make wise decisions that enable all voices to be heard. We grow spiritually when we make sure all family members are honored and loved and when we make hard decisions that enable our children and youth to trust that they are free to grow into faith in a space that is supportive and safe.

Loving God, you created us in families. Help us learn to live in peace with them. Amen.



Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Pillows, cushions, or carpet squares
- ✓ Cloth or scarf
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Card-stock copies of Resource Page 1
- ✓ Decorative supplies, such as cloth scraps, rick-rack, sequins, ribbon
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ *Simon and the Big, Bad, Angry Beasts* by Ian De Haes (Flyaway Books, 2018) or Internet-connected device
- ✓ Copies of Resource Page 2
- ✓ Coloring supplies

Preparing to Lead

This is the first of three sessions about Joseph and his family. This set of stories reminds us that families are complicated and that disagreements happen, but with God's help, forgiveness and reconciliation are possible. This first story focuses on the tension and conflict between Joseph and his brothers and looks at what can happen when feelings of jealousy and anger take over. Read Genesis 37:1–36 in the Bible. As you read, make notes about the family dynamics in the story. Then read “Joseph and His Brothers” from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 38). In particular, note the emotions the story brings up in you.

Think about the following questions:

- ✓ Other than jealousy, what emotions might Joseph's brothers have felt toward him, knowing he was their father's favorite?
- ✓ How do you think Joseph felt as the favored son?
- ✓ Where do you see yourself in this story?
- ✓ Recall a time your family has struggled with a disagreement. What emotions were felt during the disagreement? What was the outcome?
- ✓ Which parts of this story do you think children will most relate to?
- ✓ Which parts of this story might bring up questions from them?

Think about the children you will lead. Review their names and recall their faces. Keep their names and faces before you this week. Pray for them and for yourself, that you all will grow in God's love together.

Prepare a gathering space before children arrive. This space can include pillows, cushions, or carpet squares arranged in a circle. Place a cloth or scarf on a small table or on the floor with a battery-operated candle centered in the middle.



Enter into sacred space together.

Welcome the children by name and invite them to sit in the gathering area. Turn on the candle as a reminder that God is present as you hear today's story. When the children have settled, go around the circle and invite each child to say their name and share who is in their family.

Remember that all families are structured in many different ways. Allow the children to define their family however they would like, and accept all answers for who is in each child's family.

Tell the children that God loves families and wants families to love each other. Today's story is about what happened when one of God's families did not show love to one another. Open with prayer by inviting children to repeat after you:

God of love and families, /
open our ears so that we can hear, /
open our eyes so that we can see, /
open our hearts to love as you love. /
Amen. /



Read a story of God's people.

Turn to page 38 in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* and show the children the illustration for “Joseph and His Brothers.” Ask them what they see in the picture. Point out the facial expressions, body language, and clothing of Joseph and his brothers. Invite the children to wonder aloud about what they think is going to happen between Joseph and his brothers. Read aloud the story.

Invite children who like to read to help you read the story by taking turns reading a paragraph at a time.



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Encourage the children to sit quietly for a moment and reflect on the story. Invite them to think about the different people in the story and what each of them might have been feeling. Leave the book open on the floor or propped up against the small table so that the children can use the illustration as a focal point if needed. After the time of reflection, turn off the candle.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Invite children into a conversation about the story using the following prompts:

- ✦ Why did Jacob give Joseph a fancy robe?
- ✦ What were the brothers angry about, and what did they do because of their anger?
- ✦ Have you ever felt jealous or angry toward someone in your family? What did you do?
- ✦ What happened to Joseph in the end of the story?
- ✦ What surprised you about the story?

Choose one or both options:

- Joseph's Fancy Robe
 - ✦ Have a conversation about Joseph's fancy robe:
 - What was special about Joseph's new robe?
 - Why did it make his brothers so jealous?
 - How do you think Joseph felt about it?
 - ✦ Note for the children that no one knows what Joseph's robe looked like. Ask them to think about how they imagine Joseph's robe to look.
 - ✦ Provide card-stock copies of Resource Page 1, coloring supplies, decorative supplies, and glue. Invite the children to make their own versions of the robe.
 - ✦ As the children finish, encourage them to share their fancy robe designs with the group.
- Acting It Out
 - ✦ Today's story is full of action and drama. It also includes a lot of characters, making it perfect for the children to act out.
 - ✦ Help the children assign one another different roles and work together to make a skit of the story. To accommodate various group sizes, you can have as many or as few brothers as your group allows.



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Ask the children where they see themselves in this story. As a group, brainstorm all the emotions that might have been felt by the people in this story. For example, Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph and of their father's favoring him. Joseph may have felt scared when his brothers sold him to the trader. Jacob was obviously sad about losing Joseph. Other emotions may include anger, frustration, resentment, remorse, disbelief, and so on. Explain to the children that it is OK to feel all these different emotions, and it is how we respond to our emotions that is important.

To help keep kinesthetic learners involved, invite the children to demonstrate each feeling with their face and body as the feelings are named.

Choose one or both options:

- Angry Beasts
 - ✦ Remind the children that anger is one of the prominent emotions in today's story. Explain that it's not right or wrong to feel anger. Anger is not bad or good; it just *is*. Suggest that sometimes it can be hard to know what to do with our anger.
 - ✦ Read aloud the book *Simon and the Big, Bad, Angry Beasts* by Ian De Haes or show the YouTube video "OML Story Time: Simon and the Big Bad Angry Beasts by Ian De Haes" (bit.ly/GLSimonBeasts, 3:41)
 - ✦ Wonder together:
 - Simon was angry about many things. When was a time you felt angry about the same thing that made Simon angry? What did you do?
 - Each time Simon was angry, a new animal appeared. When you get angry, what animal do you think would appear? What would it look like? What would it do?
 - Simon did not know how to get rid of his angry beasts. What do you do when you are angry?
 - ✦ Distribute copies of Resource Page 2 and coloring supplies. Invite the children to draw what they imagine their angry beast would look like in the box on the left. Then have them draw what their beast could turn into once it calms down. Invite the children to share their pictures as they choose.

Colorful Feelings

- ✦ Emphasize to the children that we cannot control our emotions, but we can control how we respond to them. For example, when a sibling makes us angry, instead of hitting or pushing them, we can step away from the situation and give ourselves time to cool down. The first step to managing our emotions is acknowledging them in a safe space.
- ✦ Lead the children in a deep breathing exercise. Have them take a deep breath in, focusing on a feeling, then slowly blow out so as to release the feeling.
- ✦ Provide each child with a piece of paper and a colorful variety of markers or crayons. Invite each child to pick a few colors that represent how they are feeling at this moment. Wonder which feeling goes with which color. Wonder where they can feel that color somewhere in their body.
- ✦ Invite them to imagine that each color is an extension of themselves and their feelings. When they color, imagine the color moving through their body, down their arms, out their hands and fingers, through the crayon or marker, and into the picture.
- ✦ Invite the children to scribble each of their chosen colors on their paper. The intention is not to create a picture but simply to color. Allow time for all colors and feelings to be released.
- ✦ Wonder together:
 - How do you feel after coloring?
 - What color/emotion takes up the most space on your paper? Does it take up a lot of space in your body?
 - When might be a time to use this calming practice at home?



Bless one another with God's grace.

Invite children to return to the gathering space. Thank them for spending this time with you and growing in God's love together. Ask each child what they will remember from today's story. Then close with this echo prayer:

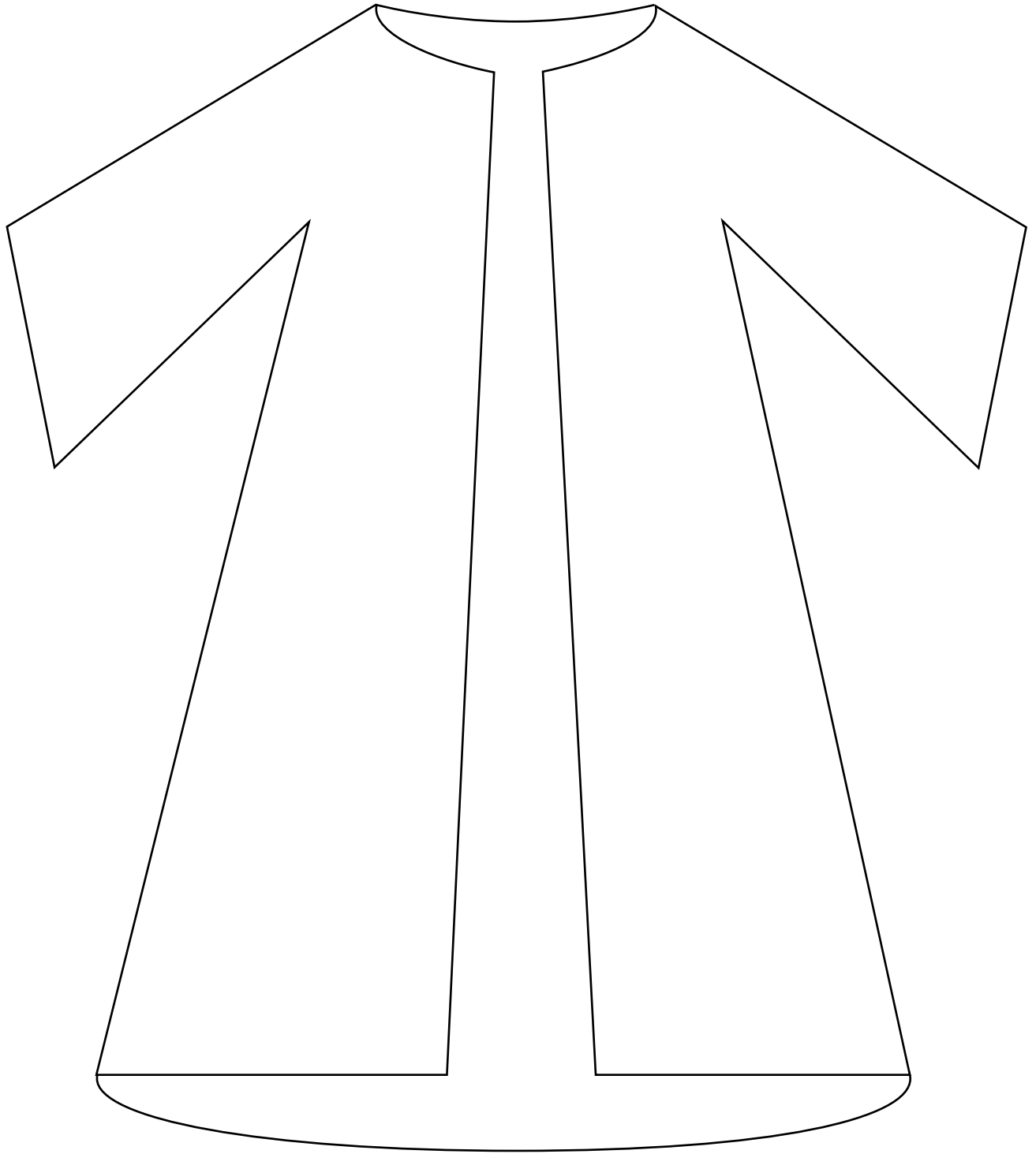
God of love, /
 thank you for the gift of family. /
 Help us to be slow to anger /
 and quick to love. /
 Amen. /



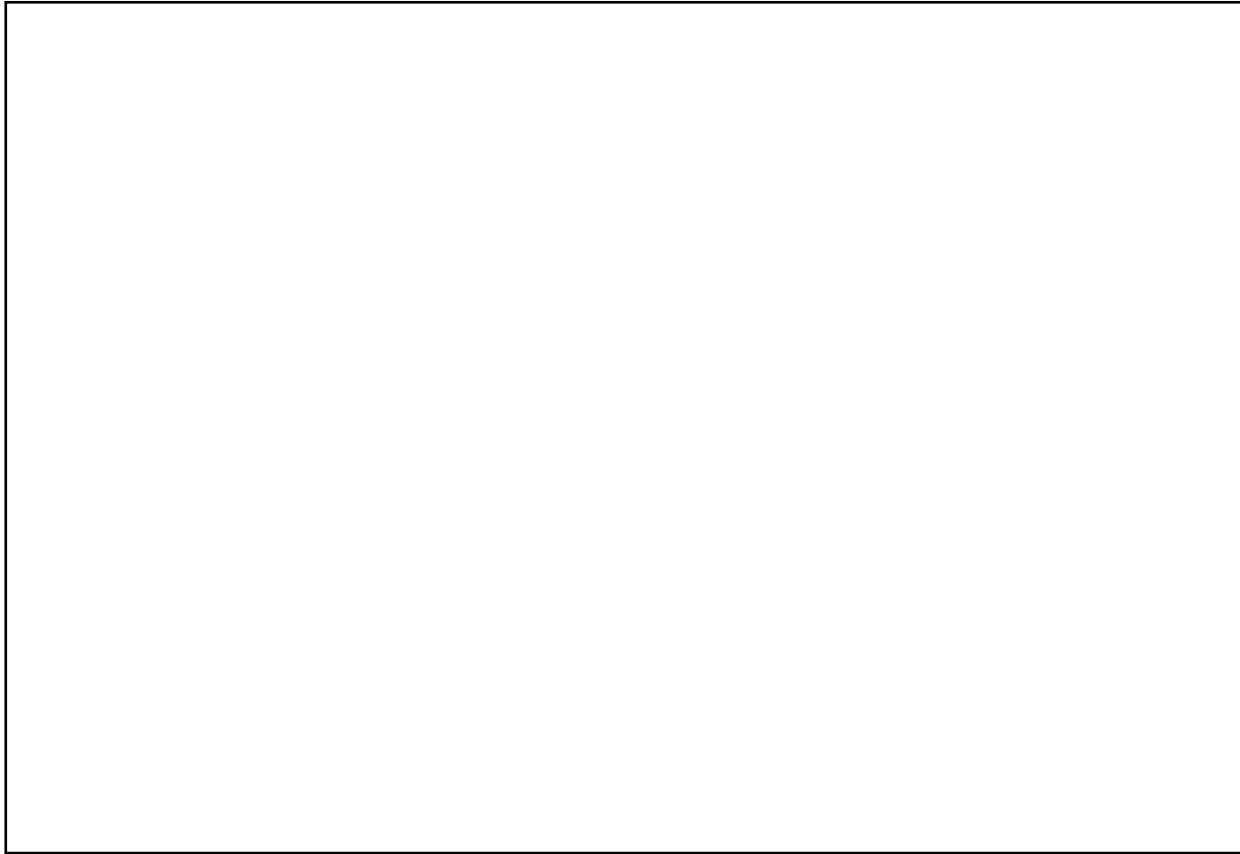
Grow with more.

Family Stories

- ✦ Share with the children that our story reminds us that families love to tell stories. The story of "Joseph and His Brothers" is just one story passed down for many, many years.
- ✦ Challenge each child to think of a family story that is told repeatedly in their family. Ask the children if they have heard stories about their parents, grandparents, siblings, or themselves. Invite each child to share if they would like to do so.



turns into _____



My angry monster

